

Afghanistan

As an extension to the Pakistan trip or on its own

Afghanistan -15 days (14 nights) 11 – 25 November 2026



Our photo tours focus on taking you to places which have unique appeal to photographers. We seek the beauty of landscape and seascape, the heritage of cultural diversity and the bustle of streets and marketplaces – effectively photography through geography.

We also strive to promote eco photo tourism where we have a sustainable, un-intrusive, approach to our photography. We strive to seek the best moments, light and opportunities to compose shots which reflect upon those inimitable moments.

There is also great value in the immersion in local customs and culture, making the journey and photography more meaningful. It is recommended that participants bring a laptop or tablet to enable us to review the images or get help with editing if wished.

We welcome participants, whatever their photographic experience, as well as partners or family members who simply would like to join in the journey!

'It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see'.



**Alternative
Visions**

Photo tours
Our mission



The photo tour to Afghanistan will take us to Kabul, Mazar e Sharif, Balkh, Bamyán, Banda Amir lakes, Chikhchiran, Minaret of Jam, Herat and Kandahar. We will drive from Kabul to Bamyán and the wonderful lakes at Banda Amir and also drive to the Minaret of Jam from Bamyán. We fly to both Mazar e Sharif and Herat.

Desert landscapes with irrigated valley floors, ancient ruins, bustling markets, diversity of culture (Pashtun, Hazara, Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik), green tea and very friendly people.

The photography

With street and cultural photography the approach is different. We use very good local guides. We are sensitive to the impacts that tourism can cause, aiming to make visits sustainable and a positive cultural interaction. It is all a delicate balance, and the local guides are often best in deciding which strategy to adopt and they know the people and culture. We have to be discreet in a conservative society.

It is interpersonal skills, which help to make the moments count. And in that moment, we want to capture light, colour, emotion, insight, character and spirit. We try to shoot in the golden hours or at least where there is shade from the sun. In the right light, at the right time, the ordinary becomes extraordinary – bringing incredible opportunities for portraits of the Kuchi and on the street.

The travel

We travel in comfortable vehicles to get to some of the very best locations but some of the inter city travel takes time, especially getting to Bamyán. It is also possible that we may change the itinerary spontaneously if we hear of a local festival or celebration.

You do need a sense of adventure for this trip, but I will help with good preparation and packing advice. There are a few essentials, such as a good first aid kit and appropriate insurance, but I will send out a list well in advance. We will be off the beaten track but will not be doing any arduous treks but will walk short distances to and around some of the villages and through the streets and their market places.

It is, in my opinion, an extraordinary part of the world. The people are warm and friendly and whilst there are vestiges of colonial influence there are also ancient ruins from centuries before. Afghanistan has been described as the Graveyard of Empires, its ancient and modern history is fascinating.

Proposed itinerary

Day 1, Wednesday 11 November 2026, Fly from Islamabad to Kabul

You will provide us with your flight details if you are joining us here (from Dubai for example). Group meeting with tour overview, Q&A session at 5.30/6pm.

Overnight at Kabul Intercontinental or similar.

Days 2,3 and 4 Thursday 12 November - Saturday 14 November 2026

Fly from Kabul to Mazar e Sharif and Balkh. Here we can wander through the markets, visit Balkh, once the centre of Bactrian civilization, and go to the ruins of Gunbad mosque which was the first mosque in Afghanistan after the Buddhist period when Islam was forced upon the people by armed Arab missionaries. We may also have the opportunity to visit a Turkmen village and watch the women, traditionally attired, weaving rugs and go to an Afghani brickworks. We may also get to another Turkmen village at Jawzjan Aqcha City. There is a possibility of a Buzkashi match ('goat pulling') in Mazar - where horse mounted players attempt to place a goat or calf carcass in a goal.

Overnight at Rahat guesthouse or similar.

Day 5, Sunday 15 November 2026

Drive from Mazar-e-Sharif to Samangan and Bamyan. Bamyan is the epicentre of Hazara culture (Hazaras and Tajiks together outnumber the Pashtuns). The Taliban, a minority, are largely comprised of Pashtun. The Hazaras are different in appearance with more central Asian looks and often pale skin.

Overnight at Gholghula or similar.

Days 6, 7, 8 & 9 Monday 16 November - Thursday 19 November 2026

Exploring Bamyan, driving to Chikhchiran and Minaret of Jam.

Photographing blacksmiths at work, forging tools in ways that are lost in the west. Visiting the woman's bazaar, where women ply their artisanal crafts and sell jewellery, textiles, carpets and many other things. They wear scarves but not hijabs. They are all Hazara and such wonderful people. A ruined city lies perched above Bamyan which is known as The Screaming City. It was laid to ruin by Ghengis Khan in 1221 and all the inhabitants were slaughtered. We will visit the cliff that had the Buddhas carved out. So so sad as it's magnificent and truly ancient - 1500 years approximately. It's a UNESCO world heritage site!! We also visit, time permitting, the Red City also destroyed by Ghengis Khan.

The Buddhas of Bamiyan (or Bamyan) were two 6th-century monumental statues carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamyan valley of central Afghanistan 130 kilometres (81 mi) northwest of Kabul at an elevation of 2,500 metres (8,200 ft). Carbon dating of the structural components of the Buddhas has determined that the smaller 38 m (125 ft) "Eastern Buddha" was built around 570 CE, and the larger 55 m (180 ft) "Western Buddha" was built around 618 CE, which would date both to the time when the Hephthalites ruled the region. It was a holy site for Buddhists on the ancient Silk Road. On orders from the Taliban the statues were destroyed in March 2001, after it was declared that they were idols. International and local opinion strongly condemned the destruction of the Buddhas.

On Tuesday 17 November we drive to Chikhchiran and stay the night before going to the Minaret of Jam on 18 November. We return to Chikhchiran the same day and spend the night there. On the 19 November we return to Bamyan.

Overnight at Gholghula or similar.

Day 10 Friday 20 November 2026

We will visit Bandi Amir lakes west of Bamyan in the early morning. Possibly the most beautiful lakes I've ever seen. Turquoise water set in beautiful limestone canyons. In the afternoon we return to Kabul.

Overnight at Kabul Intercontinental or similar.

Day 11 Saturday 21 November

We fly from Kabul to Herat. Here we visit the Friday mosque, the five remaining 16th Century minarets and the tomb of Gawharshad Bigum. The British in their conflict 103 years ago deliberately knocked some of them down, others have fallen due to earthquakes.

Overnight at Tejarat hotel or similar.

Day 12 and 13 Sunday and Monday 22 and 23 November

We have two full days to explore Herat, visiting the fortress of Alexander the Great, wandering around the old city where there are markets, caravanserai, sesame oil production using camels to grind the seed and just photograph the street life which is fascinating. In the afternoon we will go in search of Kuchi nomads and hopefully find some to photograph. They live in tented enclosures and are very photogenic. If we find them we will only be able to photograph men and children. This is the same for most of Afghanistan.

Overnight at Tejarat hotel or similar.

Day 14 Tuesday 24 November

We fly from Herat to Kabul (10th highest capital city 1800 meters) and again may have time to explore a little and go to antique shops or browse the markets.

Overnight at Kabul Intercontinental or similar.

Day 15 Wednesday 25 November

End of tour. Fly from Kabul to home destination, probably direct to Dubai and onwards.

Services included for Afghanistan

- All accommodation
- Meals – breakfast, some lunches and dinners may not be included but the costs are low.
- Transfer to and from airports at the start of the tour at the end of the tour.
- Photo tour leader
- Internal flights
- Local guides
- All transport
- **The cost of the tour is €6250**
- **The single room supplement is €500**
- **To confirm the booking a deposit of €2000 is required.**

Services not included/additional costs

- Occasional stops for coffee/tea/snacks
- Tips for guides and drivers. Tips for guides and drivers **(recommended €30 per guide/driver per day – divided amongst the group)**
- Sometimes it is nice to give to a local good cause. The Turkmen ladies for example.
- The e-visa (you apply for your visa in advance with a copy of your passport and a proper digital passport photo, together with letter of invitation etc). Details of what is needed are issued well in advance.
- Insurance - it is an imperative to have travel insurance.

You can contact me directly on WhatsApp 00353872825851 or trevcole1@me.com

Please take note to bring warmer clothing for the higher altitudes and cool nights.

