

Drivers Notes Appendix

China

19 Nov 11

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Detailed information on Ports of Entry and Exit

1 The Torugut Pass

To get to the pass you will firstly need to go to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. I recommend staying at the Silk Route Lodge Hotel which can accommodate up to 4 vehicles. If there are more, then other arrangements can be made.

42.88082 N 74.59393 E

The contact there is Ian Claytor who is part owner of the hotel. He is English.

ian@celestial.com.kg

He also runs a Travel Agency – Celestial Mountains Travel Agency. You will need his services to arrange the paperwork and Kyrgyz guide to take you to the border with China. This is due to Kyrgyz regulations. It is about 3 days to the border with stops at the Celestial Mountains Guest House in Naryn (a part of Ian's business)

41.42914 N 76.02157 E

and at Tash Rabat - a fabulous caravanserai.

40.82187 N 75.28932 E

At present the road is partly under construction and is mostly gravel. Towards the top of the pass it gets worse with mud in places and may be difficult for motor caravans with low ground clearance to get through. It might be advisable for the guide to use a 4x4 to provide assistance if you have problems. It can also snow at any time of year but the big tracks keep the road open.

Hotel Seman in Kashgar has been the usual overland truck stop for many years. Recently however the hotel has taken to overcharging significantly – up to £50 per vehicle per night. Your guide may be able to find an alternative.

Note that the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek has recently moved to the outskirts of the city.

2 Across the Irkeshtam pass from Kyrgyzstan to Tashkorgen (and Kashgar)

This pass is an unmade track on the Kyrgyz side and a 4x4 is probably essential as it can be deep mud at times. As in the case of the Torugut pass you will need a guide in Kyrgyzstan. This can be arranged through Ian Claytor as above.

All the paperwork on the Chinese side is completed in Kashgar.

Other comments as in 1 above

3 Using the Karakoram Highway from Pakistan and across the Kunjerab pass to Tashkorgan (and Kashgar)

The Karakoram Highway is a spectacular drive. However the road is subject to closures due to landslides. In 2010 a major earthquake created a lake 21 km long and washed away the road. The only access is across the lake by boat. The boats are small and can only carry a landrover size vehicle and that is somewhat precarious.

The pass is only open from 1 May each year depending on snow conditions.

New visa regulations are in force in Pakistan. These require that all visas have to be obtained in your country of origin – they are not available at consulates in other countries. It is possible however to complete the process entirely by post. Note that processing by post can take 3 weeks plus delivery. Also note the validity period of the visa may allow insufficient time before you enter Pakistan.

4 Across the Lalung La pass from Katmandu in Nepal to Lhasa

This route is quite easy although the Nepali border system is chaotic.

The road rises very rapidly in Tibet so you should be aware of the possibility of altitude sickness. The road in Nepal is paved and in reasonable condition. In Tibet the road is mostly paved and easily passable by any vehicle.

The usual route is through Iran, Pakistan and India. Visas for UK and US nationalities are difficult or impossible to get for Iran. You may also be required to have a guide. I would recommend Magic Carpet travel agency as they specialise in Iranian Visas. Pakistan has recently introduced a regulation that visas can only be issued in the applicants country of origin or country of permanent residence

5 From Muang Namo in Laos through the border to Kunming

Another easy border – formalities are quickly dealt with on the Lao side and are reasonably good on the Chinese side. Laos accepts the Carnet de Passage unofficially.

The road in Laos has just been completed (Oct 11) from Oudomxay to the border (Route 13N) with a good surface. It is however very winding and hilly so its quite slow. Traffic is light but there are a number of large trucks using it. Before that there is an 80km section full of potholes and gravel patches.

The road on the Chinese side is motorway standard although only single carriageway.

6 By ship to Hong Kong

This is another option but I have little information. The road network from Hong Kong is by Expressway and is a good standard.

7 From Ulaan Batar, Mongolia and through the border at Erlianhaote

Some paved, the rest is under construction. I have no other information.

8 From Korgas, Kazakhstan to Urumqui

The roads in Kazakhstan are mostly in poor condition. There is an Expressway to the border on the Chinese side from Urumqui. The Kazakh procedures are straightforward but the Chinese procedures are strict and long winded so using this crossing to enter China is not recommended.