

FIVE STANS 26 – A CROSSING

Posted on 2024-04-02 2024-04-03 by spd_wp_admin



Out a bus window. The Karakum desert covers approximately 80 percent of Turkmenistan. We will end up crossing the desert twice.

Dear Reader (2023-04-02),

An element of this grand adventure that I have not mentioned yet is border crossings. They range from non-trivial to Byzantine. The latter is very much the case for the crossing from Uzbekistan into Turkmenistan.

The following is not fiction. These are the steps we went through in September of 2023. I checked with our guide, and she confirmed the steps. She also added the dance she had to perform. Any gaps or errors in logic or flow of this record are mine.

00 – Before the trip had begun, the tour company had secured Letters of Invitation from the Turkmenistan government. You can't get into the country without them.

01 – Our Uzbek guide and driver take us to a gate where we say our goodbyes.

02 – We enter through a gate after our passport is checked for an Uzbekistan entry stamp.

03 – We walk 300 / 400 meters to an Uzbekistan immigration building and get an Uzbekistan exit stamp.

04 – On exiting the building our passports are checked for an exit stamp.

05 – We board a bus and drive 1 / 1½ km to a gate where a Turkmen guard checks each of our passports for an Uzbekistan exit stamp.

06 – A Turkmen official takes all our passports before we each in turn enter a small building, possibly made from a half length shipping container, through a single door where we are tested for Covid. The swab barely touches the front of my tongue, let alone the cavity where my tonsils once were. The bored woman taking the swabs writes down each of our names and passport numbers onto a sheet of paper.

07 – Once we are all tested, a second bus takes us a kilometer to a Turkmenistan Immigration building where we get very nice full-page visas added to our passports. The immigration building is filled with merchants clamouring to complete the process, and a surprising number of tourists. Four or five large women are carrying in bundles of what look like moving blankets. Each dark blue bundle is the size of a car tire. A couple of our group need to use the facilities, which are rated as some of the most toxic so far.

As we wait our guide, K is jumping through a series of hoops.

07.1 – K hands in the passports along with the invitation letter and waits at a wicket inside the immigration building.

07.2 – K receives a receipt for the passports and a list of charges to be paid.

07.3 – K goes to a second wicket, which is 2 meters away from the first, to pay the administration fee, covid test fee, and visa fee. We have previously each given Kara about US \$90 to cover the fees.

07.4 – K returns to the first wicket with a second receipt. The visas are entered into each passport and are then returned to each of us.

08 – Each of us in turn shoves are way to the first wicket. Some get fingerprinted.

09 – Our baggage is scanned. I don't know if the scanner is actually working or not. Perhaps only the belt is operational.

09.1 – K hands in a registration document.

10 – We board a third bus for a less than ½ km bus ride. Before the bus departs, a Turkmen guard checks each of our passports for the existence of a visa.

11 – We arrive at a bolted gate, which is then unbolted by a Turkmen guard, and we each show our passports one more time.

12 – Welcome to Turkmenistan

You are welcome to share a link to this page with others.
As always, all comments are welcome and sought.
Cheers, Sean

2 Replies to “Five Stans 26 – A Crossing”

1. **Keith Cartmell** says:

2024-04-13 at 19:49

My heart rate and blood pressure went up just reading that. I get stressed about border crossings even to friendly countries, like UK, Bermuda, or New Zealand. Last time crossing the US border was a horror show so I don't go there any more.

1. **spd_wp_admin** says:

2024-04-14 at 10:58

I too find crossing into the US a very unpleasant experience, and one that I try to avoid. It is a shame because, Utah looks like a land worth exploring further.

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