



## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ❑ Driving is on the right.
- ❑ Drivers are required to carry a valid driving license, a 1968 version of an International Driving Permit (IDP), passport, vehicle documents and insurance. Most national licenses are recognized for up to 30 days, but this depends on the issuing country.
- ❑ Local drivers are not required to carry insurance. Many are uninsured.
- ❑ Passports must be carried at all times; copies certified by the U.S. Embassy, or legally certified copies from other countries, are acceptable. Failure to produce a passport or certified copy if requested by police or other authorities may result in being detained for questioning.
- ❑ The Kyrgyzstani Som (KGS) is the official currency.
- ❑ Road lighting is poor or nonexistent in most areas. Avoid driving after dark.
- ❑ It is unsafe to walk or travel alone at night.
- ❑ Pedestrians are at high risk, and account for an estimated 40% of all road traffic deaths.
- ❑ Serious traffic crashes and hit-and-runs are common.
- ❑ Legal blood alcohol limit is zero. Despite legal limits, alcohol is a major factor in road crashes.
- ❑ There are 13.8 road deaths per 100,000 people in the Kyrgyz Republic, compared to 2.2 in Sweden and 2.3 in the UK.



Source: CIA Factbook

## ROAD CULTURE

- **Traffic laws** are regularly ignored.
- **Drivers often** do not stop at red lights, and may race through other intersections without slowing or stopping.
- **Motorists** are frequently aggressive.
- **Dangerous** overtaking is common.
- **Many** drivers do not use seatbelts, and may operate vehicles that lack seatbelts.
- **Motorists** may drive into oncoming traffic.
- **Many drivers** swerve suddenly into other lanes to avoid potholes.
- **Taxi and bus** drivers are often reckless and disregard traffic laws and safety practices.
- **Drivers** generally do not stop or slow for pedestrians.
- **Pedestrians** frequently step into roads and ignore oncoming traffic.
- **Many** local pedestrians wear dark clothing, making them difficult to see at night.

## ROAD CONDITIONS

- **There are** 34,000 km (21,126 miles) of roads; 18,810 km (11,687 miles) are classified as public roads and 15,190 km (9,438 miles) are village, agricultural and private, unmaintained roads.
- **Most** roads are two lanes.
- **Many roads** have uneven pavements.
- **Roads are** generally in poor condition, and are worse beyond cities.
- **Large potholes** are common, even in urban centers.
- **City streets** often have uncovered manholes.
- **Many** damaged roads and construction zones are not signed and do not have adequate lighting to alert drivers of possible hazards.
- **There are** frequent power outages which affect traffic signals, warning signs and road lighting.
- **Fuel stations** may be located long distances from one another, and may not have adequate supplies.
- **If driving** outside of major city centers, carry extra fuel, food, warm clothing, tools, a first aid kit, extra phone batteries, a list of emergency numbers and spare tires.
- **Roads** outside of city centers are often not cleared of ice and snow during winter weather. Routes between Tashkent and Bishkek, Uzbekistan are particularly treacherous.
- **The road** connecting Bishkek and Almaty in Kazakhstan has many police checkpoints.
- **Pedestrian infrastructure** is underdeveloped in cities, and largely undeveloped in small towns and rural areas.
- **Avoid** walking alone or after dark, especially in Bishkek and surrounding areas. Street lighting is poor. Muggings regularly occur.



## Road Conditions, continued

- **There are** frequent demonstrations that may occur in response to political and economic issues, during international events and on politically significant holidays. Avoid all public gatherings, which may become confrontational and disrupt road travel and public transportation.
- **Mountain roads** are generally narrow and dangerous; roads may close without warning because of heavy snow, ice or rockslides.
- **Most** mountain roads lack guardrails and barriers. There are often steep dropoffs.
- **Loose livestock** on roads is common, especially in rural areas.
- **Avoid** travel to the Oblasts (provinces) of Osh, Batken and Jalal-Abad; or near the borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which are considered high risk due to continued political tensions.
- **There are** ongoing skirmishes along the Kyrgyz-Tajik and Kyrgyz-Uzbek borders. Conflicts include the use of firearms and heavy artillery. Land mines are present in undisclosed locations and some marked areas. Do not drive to within 30 km (18 miles) of borders.
- **Use only** official border crossings. These locations may change or be closed without notice, particularly the border near the Vorukh enclave.
- **The following roads** may present particular challenges to motorists:
  - » **The A371** is a high mountain road in the Alay Mountains connecting Sary-Tash to the Chinese border at Irkeshtam Pass. The road is paved and surfaces are generally in good condition. It reaches an altitude of 3,545 meters (11,630 feet) above sea level. Altitude sickness is a risk. The twisting road passes through remote regions with few services. Severe weather conditions occur, particularly during winter months.
  - » **Dolan Pass** along the Bishkek-Torugart highway is a high mountain pass at 3,030 meters (9,940 feet) above sea level. The gravel road is located in the Naryn Province. Weather is unpredictable. Frequent harsh conditions include deep snow and icy surfaces. This road is heavily traveled by large transport trucks traveling between Bishkek and China. Avoid this road.
  - » **Pereval Akbeit/Ak-Beyit Pass/A365** is a high mountain pass in the in Naryn Region. The road is 3,289 meters (10,790 feet) above sea level, and runs through the At-Bashi mountain range. The surface is paved, but may be closed without notice due to heavy snow, icy surfaces or other harsh conditons. The road is 119 km (73.94 miles) long, and runs from Torugart Pass to Kara-Bulu. There is no lighting. Do not attempt this road at night.

## REGIONAL AND SEASONAL CONDITIONS

- **Many locations** are at high altitude. Be alert to symptoms of altitude sickness. Dizziness, lack of coordination, headache, fatigue, shortness of breath and nausea can impair driver judgment and increase road risks.
- **Fasting** during the religious month of Ramadan may result in drivers and pedestrians being dehydrated and less alert.
- **The Kyrgyz Republic** is located within an active seismic zone. There is a high risk of earthquakes, which may be followed by strong aftershocks.
- **Tremors** are common. Frequent seismic activity in mountainous areas often results in landslides, avalanches and blocked roads.
- **Avalanches** and landslides often occur in the spring.

Maximum Speed Limits

Type of road	Maximum speed
Urban areas	60 kph (37 mph)
Rural areas	90 kph (56 mph)
Highways	110 kph (68 mph)

Always adjust speed according to signage, hazards and weather conditions.

Signs are generally pictorial and may not follow European Union conventions.

Lane ends	Dangerous curve in road	No parking on even numbered days	Road with contraflow bicycle lane	Minor road at three-way intersection	Traffic lights ahead	Detour on the right	Pedestrians prohibited	Priority over oncoming traffic



## Regional and Seasonal Conditions, continued

- **Be familiar with emergency procedures.** The Red Cross provides a website and free, downloadable emergency app: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies>

## TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation options** include cars, taxis, shared taxis, unlicensed “gypsy cabs,” buses, “marshrutka” minibuses, trolleybuses, trams and trains.
- **Public** transport is limited.
- **Buses are** poorly maintained and generally regarded as unsafe and unreliable.
- **Buses and** minibuses are often overcrowded.
- **Bus drivers** usually wait until vehicle is full before departing. Schedules are not adhered to.
- **Violent** muggings have occurred on buses.
- **There are** trolleybuses and trams in Bishkek.
- **Use only** official taxis ordered by phone or through a reputable hotel.
- **Hailing** taxis on the street is not recommended.
- **Most taxi** drivers do not speak English. Carry a copy of your destination written in Kyrgyz or Russian.
- **Many** newer taxis are equipped with meters, but driver may fail to activate them or claim they do not function. Drivers may charge higher rates for passengers who are visitors. Negotiate fare with driver prior to entering vehicle.
- **Taxis** ordered by phone generally charge set fares to specific destinations; drivers use mobile phone apps that function as a meter, showing mileage and fare.
- **Phone** taxi dispatchers in cities generally speak or understand some English.
- **Do not** enter a taxi where passengers are already present. Insist that driver not pick up additional fares. Driver may require that a fee be paid for all seats in the vehicle if passengers demand a private ride.
- **Avoid** “gypsy cabs.” These are unregulated private vehicles offering passenger services.
- **Shared taxis** have queues at most bus stations.
- **Rideshares** are available, but are usually operated by taxi companies such as Namba Taxi and Yandex. Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver’s name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- **Bicycles** are popular. There are bike rentals available in urban areas, and mountain bike rental shops in mountain and rural areas.

- **Travel by** bicycle can be difficult due to steep terrain, lack of cycling paths, narrow roads and dangerous driving practices.
- **Trains** are operated by Kyrgyz Railways. There are two lines unconnected to one another.
- **Train** schedules are unreliable. Travel by rail is slow.

## TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

- **Drivers** must be at least 18 years of age and no older than 64 to rent a vehicle. Some rental companies may have additional restrictions.
- **Seat belt** use is not required for motorists driving in residential areas. For safety, all drivers and passengers should wear seat belts.
- **Children** under the age of 12 riding in front seats must be secured in a child safety restraint. For safety, all children should be secured in child safety restraints appropriate to age and size.
- **Helmet use** is compulsory for motorcycle drivers and passengers. Helmets must be fastened.
- **Children under** 12 years of age may not be passengers on motorcycles.
- **Pedestrians** are required to use sidewalks or footpaths where available. Otherwise, pedestrians must walk on road verges facing traffic.
- **Pedestrians** must cross at zebra crossings, foot bridges or walking tunnels if provided; or at intersections where no crosswalks are available.
- **Cyclists** must use bike paths where available.
- **Right turns** on red are prohibited.
- **A flashing** green traffic light warns motorists that the light is about to change.
- **Flashing** yellow/amber lights indicate that pedestrians may cross. Many drivers disregard this signal.
- **Overtaking** is prohibited close to pedestrian and railway crossings.
- **Laws are** being developed regarding the use of e-scooters (electric kick-scooters). A rise in their popularity has resulted in many crashes between e-scooter drivers and pedestrians, and e-scooter drivers and other motorists.
- **The following** are prohibited from motorways: pedestrians, bicycles, mopeds, e-scooters, and other self-propelled devices such as kick-scooters that have a maximum speed of less than 40 kph (24.8 mph).
- **Traffic police** (known as the “GAI”) may demand on-the-spot cash payment for arbitrary infractions. Do not offer cash; fines should be paid at local banks, or by credit card if police vehicle is equipped with an electronic card reader terminal.



## Traffic Regulations, continued

- **Harassment** and extortion by law enforcement individuals, and persons pretending to be police or other authorities, occurs regularly. The US State Department suggests that if possible, the officer's name, badge number and license plate number should be recorded.
- **Police may** carry out random breath tests.

### Bishkek (Capital)

- » Largest city. Transportation options include cars, taxis, shared taxis, unlicensed "gypsy cabs," buses, "marshrutka" minibuses, trolleybuses, trams and trains.
- » Driving is not recommended. Roads are in poor condition.
- » Drivers are aggressive and undisciplined. Drink driving is prevalent.
- » Taxis include registered vehicles, shared cars or vans, and gypsy cabs.
- » Use only official taxis ordered by phone or through a reputable hotel. Hailing taxis on the street is not recommended.
- » Avoid taxis that already have passengers, and insist that driver not pick up additional fares. To have a private ride, it may be necessary to pay for all seats in the vehicle.
- » Many drivers do not speak English. Carry a copy of your destination written in Kyrgyz or Russian.
- » Drivers may refuse to activate taxi meters, or say they do not function.
- » Drivers often charge higher rates for visitors. Negotiate fare prior to entering vehicle.
- » Many phone taxi dispatchers speak some English; taxis ordered by phone usually have predetermined fares to various destinations. Drivers use phone apps that function as meters and show both mileage and fee.
- » Avoid "gypsy cabs." Vehicles are unregulated.
- » Shared taxis generally wait at parking areas along streets near bus stations.
- » Ridesharing is usually operated by taxi companies such as Namba Taxi and Yandex. Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver's name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » Buses include city buses, marshrutka minibuses, long-distance buses and trolleybuses.
- » The bus network is extensive. The city bus fleet was updated in 2009.
- » There are four bus stations: Western Bus Station, Eastern Bus Station, Alamedin Bazaar and Ala-Archa National Park bus stop.
- » Most buses are minibuses/marshrutkas with 14 seats, but carry many more passengers. Standing is allowed.
- » Marshrutkas may be flagged; passengers may request that driver stop anywhere along a route.
- » Route numbers are displayed in Russian on the front of marshrutkas.
- » Long-distance buses link the city with Osh, and with international destinations in Kazakhstan and China.
- » The trolleybus system operates until 10 pm. Trolleybuses pick up and drop off passengers at designated stops.
- » Enter at the back door and exit from the front on trolleybuses. Fares are paid when leaving the bus.
- » Electric trams are often out of service.
- » Trains connect the city and Balykchy on Issyk Kul Lake.
- » There are two train stations: Bishkek-1 is west of the city; Bishkek-2 is 1.5 km (0.9 miles) from Ala Too Square.
- » There are long-distance train routes connecting the city with Moscow, Russia; Almaty, Kazakhstan; and Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan routes are currently suspended.
- » Pedestrians should use caution. Although there are crosswalks, pedestrian bridges and tunnels at some intersections, surfaces are often in poor condition and pedestrian right-of-way is ignored by motorists.
- » There are multiple dangerous intersections in the city where fatal crashes involving children and pedestrians occur. These intersections are close to schools and child care facilities. Some lack crosswalks. Locations are Ryskulov Street and Molodaya Gvardiya Boulevard; Mambetov Street in the Vostok-5 micro-district; Moskovskaya and Beishenaliev streets; Akhunbayev and Maldybaev streets; and Akhunbayev and Shota Rustaveli streets.



## Bishkek, continued

- » Legislation is being developed regarding the use of e-scooters (electric kick-scooters). A rise in their use has resulted in many crashes between e-scooter drivers and pedestrians.
- » Pedestrians should be cautious of e-scooter drivers on sidewalks and footpaths. Drivers should be alert to e-scooter drivers on streets.
- » Many people travel by bicycle, despite a lack of bike lanes and cycling infrastructure.
- » Drivers often disregard cyclists and fail to maintain safe distances on busy roads.
- » Manas International Airport is about 25 km (16 miles) northwest of the city.
- » Be alert to airport scams that include persons in the arrivals area carrying signs with your name, claiming to be a private driver. This may include persons impersonating police officers or other authorities.
- » Marshrutka 380 connects the airport and city at the Jash Gvardiya stop.
- » Taxis can be found outside of the arrivals area. Use only registered taxis with company logos on doors, and avoid unlicensed “gypsy cabs.” Gypsy cab drivers may aggressively solicit for fares in the luggage area.
- » Some major rental car agencies are represented at the airport. Check condition of vehicle before agreeing to rent.

## Osh

- » Second largest city, located in the Fergana Valley in the south of the country.
- » Transportation options include cars, taxis, shared taxis, unlicensed “gypsy cabs,” buses, “marshrutka” minibuses and trains.
- » Driving is not recommended. Traffic is chaotic. Drivers generally disregard traffic laws.
- » The city is the location of the Great Silk Road Bazaar, one of the most crowded street markets in Central Asia. Pedestrians may be forced to walk in streets.
- » Public transport is limited.
- » Bus stations are located at the corner of Lenin and Kasymbekova streets; under the bridge at Alisher Navoi Street; and at Alay-Baza 4 km (2.4 miles) outside of the city.
- » Buses are generally poorly maintained and considered unsafe and unreliable.
- » Many buses and minibuses are overcrowded. Drivers may wait for all seats to be filled before departing. Schedules are unpredictable.
- » Violent muggings have occurred on some buses.
- » Taxis include registered vehicles and shared cars or vans.
- » Do not hail taxis on the street. Order official taxis by phone or through a reputable hotel.
- » Phone taxis may offer set fares to specific destinations. The driver’s mobile phone is equipped with an app that functions as a meter, showing mileage and fare.
- » Some phone taxi dispatchers may speak limited English.
- » Taxi drivers generally do not speak English. Carry a copy of your destination written in Kyrgyz or Russian.
- » Some newer taxis are equipped with meters, but driver may not turn them on. Some drivers may claim that meters do not function.
- » Taxi drivers may charge visitors higher rates. Agree on fare before entering vehicle.
- » Avoid taxis where passengers are already present.
- » If traveling by taxi, insist that driver not pick up additional fares. Passengers may be required to pay for all seats in the vehicle in order to have a private ride.
- » Do not use “gypsy cabs” (unregulated private vehicles offering passenger services).
- » Shared taxis are generally found in queues near bus stations.
- » Marshrutkas and shared taxis provide transportation to other towns in the Kyrgyz Republic, and to some destinations in Tajikistan.



## Osh, continued

- » The city is linked to Arslanbob and to some destinations in China several times weekly by long-distance bus. Buses to China require overnight travel.
- » Rideshares are available, and are usually operated by taxi companies such as Namba Taxi and Yandex. Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver's name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » There are many e-scooters. At this time, laws are being developed regarding the use of e-scooters (electric kick-scooters). There has been an increase in crashes between e-scooter drivers and pedestrians.
- » Pedestrians should be alert to e-scooter drivers on sidewalks and footpaths.
- » Drivers should be cautious to the presence of e-scooter drivers on streets.
- » Bicycle transport is popular. Infrastructure is underdeveloped.
- » Train service is currently suspended.
- » Osh International Airport is 11 km (6.8 miles) from the city.
- » Buses, marshrutkas and taxis (including shared taxis) link the airport and the city.
- » Airport buses and marshrutkas may be crowded and in poor condition.
- » Taxis can be found outside of the arrivals area. Use only registered taxis with company logos on doors, and avoid unlicensed "gypsy cabs." Gypsy cab drivers may aggressively solicit for fares in the luggage area.
- » Some major rental car agencies are represented at the airport. Check condition of vehicle before agreeing to rent.

## ACCOMMODATIONS AND INCLUSIONS FOR MOBILITY CHALLENGED

- **Laws prohibiting** discrimination against persons with physical, sensory or other challenges are not enforced.
- **Accessibility** is limited in public transportation, lodging and public infrastructure; approaches to sidewalks and public buildings may be difficult due to a lack of ramps.
- **Rural areas** and small towns are less accessible than urban settings.
- **Resources are** generally unavailable for the repair or replacement of personal aids and devices, or for equipment such as wheelchairs.
- **There are few** sign language interpretation options. Personal assistants are available, but training and experience may be limited.

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- **Pre-program** emergency numbers into your phone before departure.
- **Responders** to emergency numbers and medical personnel, including doctors, generally do not speak English. The services of an interpreter may be required to communicate with doctors and medical staff.
  - » Police and general emergency: 112
  - » Ambulance: 103
  - » Tourist police in Issykkul oblast (administrative region) can be reached via WhatsApp at +996 705 00 91 02 (phones are staffed by Russian and English speakers).
- **Ambulance services** and emergency response teams are unavailable in most areas outside of Bishkek, Osh and other large metropolitan centers. Ambulances are not equipped with state-of-the-art equipment.
- **Training and availability** of emergency responders may be below western standards. Most ambulance staff are not trained paramedics.
- **Injured** or ill persons may wish to take a taxi or private vehicle to the nearest major hospital. Serious injury or illness may require evacuation to another country.
- **Public** medical clinics do not have basic resources, or adequate supplies of medicines or equipment.
- **Prescription medication** from another country must be in the original packaging and be accompanied by a doctor's prescription translated into Russian. Some medications from other countries may be illegal in the Kyrgyz Republic.
- **Cash payment** is generally required by hospitals and doctors prior to the administration of care. Credit cards are usually not accepted.



## Emergency Information, continued

- **Roadside** assistance is unavailable.
- **If involved in a crash:**
  - » Activate hazard lights.
  - » Call police and emergency services.
  - » Attend to any injured persons. If there is no ambulance response, providing transport of the injured to the nearest medical center is required by law.
  - » Move vehicle if necessary to clear road for other road users, police and emergency responders.
  - » Notify rental car agency and your national embassy.
  - » Collect contact information from other driver(s) and any witnesses.
  - » Take photographs of scene if possible.



### ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR SAFE INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRAVEL (ASIRT)

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey.

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