

*In the Footsteps of the Snow
Leopard – Wildlife Expedition to
remote Tien-Shan Mountains*



18.th November – 29.th November 2022



"During all my years in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, I never have experienced such wild nature and fantastic wildlife as this area along the Chinese border

We have made this expedition since 2009 and with increasingly success. The chance seeing Snow Leopard is currently 75%; however never guaranteed. This area is by no means for the comfortable relaxed type of travelers. This is tough expedition to a rough world. There are no dangerous aspects or unsafe things awaiting the traveler. We just must emphasize that this tour truly is a wildlife expedition where the environments such as cold climate and harsh roads really demands patience and understanding of the concept by you - the traveler! We simply cannot predict the weather, circumstances, and we cannot tell exactly when we arrive or how long we will be on the road. However, what we CAN predict, and promise is a visit to a truly magnificent area, and an adventure in the northern Himalayas very few people have experienced. In addition, can we promise the most experienced staff, enough and tasty food, and... fantastic nature and wildlife!

This expedition will try to reveal some of the unique mammals seen in Northern Himalaya. Unique mammals are on our target list: Argali, Siberian Ibex, Wolf and of course – great birds. We also hope of watching one of the most mythic animals on globe – the Snow Leopard, but we don't deal with pure Snow Leopard Expeditions as its simply too difficult to make agreements with the Snow Leopard, however Miksture possess one of the world's highest success rates when it comes to finding a wild Snow Leopard. All details are fixed and ready. We have negotiated with the people that are able to give Miksture access to one of the unique areas in Kyrgyzstan. On this expedition, we travel deep into the heart of the Snow Leopards kingdom, and with the expertise of our team, our chances for an encounter are raised from virtually impossible to reasonable.

Tour start: In Bishkek 18.th November 2022

Friendly greetings!

Michael Westerbjerg Andersen, Bishkek 8.th April 2022





This area has been closed for access in many years as it is situated in the border zone between Kyrgyzstan and China. This is a very positive thing, as the wildlife in many years have been protected and been able to develop strong populations. Nowhere else in Northern Himalayas is it possible to observe such abundance of wildlife. I used to hear tales about these areas from old hunters – now we go there. Still very few people have access to the area – but we manage...The area possess a huge population of Siberian Ibex *Capra ibex siberica* and a healthy population of Argali *Ovis ammon karelini* (the Argali is rare in Kyrgyzstan except in this area). In addition, other mammals are present in good numbers e.g., Wolf. Nevertheless, above everything is the Snow Leopard and this is our prime target, and a good deal of our effort is to watch this mythological cat. We estimate in the areas we plan to visit to be home range for minimum eight Snow Leopards; at one spot, we observed the tracks of four different Snow Leopards.



Of course, there are great photo opportunities in the area!

Kyrgyzstan supports one of the last strongholds for the mythical Snow Leopard. Few humans have been fortunate enough to watch this magnificent feline in the wild. In more than ten years, my local team and I have roamed the Kyrgyz Mountains in our effort to understand and watch Snow Leopards.

This is an expedition where everything is very basic – this cannot be underlined enough! DO NOT expect luxury and soft beds! However, compared to my winter expeditions in the mountains we will accommodate indoor... However, in order getting close to the Snow Leopards we MAYBE must place tent camps at some of the best areas. Of course, it will be cold – but not unbearable. Before departure, Miksture inform you about every single detail about cloth, and what to bring. My team prepares all meals for us - good and tasty! There will be no hazards of climbing or such things. The area is one big plateau and more accessible than our usual mountain locations. We will make daily tours on foot in the best valleys – of course without heavy baggage. If we find good places, we might sit and observe for days. Anyway – it is an active form of travelling, and for sure, we will have rich opportunities for splendid walking tours in the area.

Situated in the northern Himalayas with over 80% of the country straddling the fabled Tien Shan and Pamir Mountains, Kyrgyzstan's intact and undisturbed alpine nature makes it among the world's most unique mountainous places. Kyrgyzstan is one of the Central Asian ex-Soviet states achieving



independence in 1991 and since then continues to develop and flower making it to the most peaceful and beautiful of the Central Asian countries. It is wedged between Kazakhstan in North, Uzbekistan in west, Tadjikistan in South, and the huge China in east. Without any ocean (however the worlds next-biggest mountain lake Issyk Kul) and palm-coral beaches Kyrgyzstan is luckily still visited by few tourists and those coming here does it to marvel the magnificent nature. The Kyrgyz Mountains is excellent experience with numerous mighty peaks, glaciers, and meadows all forming a stunning backdrop. The birdlife is prolific and these mountainous areas we will visit are also host to a variety of seldom encountered resident and wintering birds and specials we will seek out include the Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Wallcreeper, accentors, redstarts, and the elusive White-browed Tit-warbler. Further and more specific information about the birds can be obtained by contacting Michael/Miksture.

Miksture and the Snow Leopards

On several expeditions, we have searched and narrowed the search to few locations. Every winter and spring, we have made expeditions to remote valleys and for weeks marveled the incredible winter landscapes, and of course seen Snow Leopards. It would never be possible to issue a guarantee for seeing these animals, but with a success rate of more than 75%. During our expeditions, we are always in the heels of the Snow Leopards and know thoroughly the Leopards habits and movements. On the other hand, we never disturb this shy and vulnerable species, and priority is always made to benefit the best for the Snow Leopard. However, it is possible to watch Snow Leopards in the wild without disturbing them. It should be stated too, that the Snow leopard's nature and acceptance of human beings is unique. It has never been documented that Snow Leopards have tracked and killed human beings (opposite its African cousin...). It simply considers a completely different nature of mind, and Kyrgyz hunters have had numerous encounters with Snow Leopards on their tours. Luckily, there is a respect among hunters and Snow Leopards. They share same prey so to say – the Siberian Ibex. The hunter's focus is on other words not on hunting Snow Leopards. There is a century-old respect for the Snow Leopards in Kyrgyzstan, however increasing requests from obscure Asian medicine markets in recent ten years have increased the illegal poaching of Snow Leopards everywhere in their range – in Kyrgyzstan too. Luckily, it is still rare that Snow Leopards are target for these awful hunts, and with increasing awareness and ecotourism of foreign visitors, it can help to save the Kyrgyz Snow Leopards in future. This is one of Mikstures aims and reasons for making these expeditions. It will never be mainstream tourism product searching the Snow Leopards. This is simply too difficult and with negative cost-benefit for the tourist companies... Searching the Snow Leopards in these pristine mountains demands ultimate knowledge and experience. Extremely few possess such knowledge... The preferred habitat comprises undisturbed and intact nature. They live in rough high-altitude terrain of canyons and alpine meadows where they predate their favorite prey the Ibex. On this expedition, you will witness wherever we track the Snow Leopards footprints of Ibex and Snow leopards never will be far away from each other! During the summer months, the Ibex along with their "shepherds" migrate up the slopes to 4.000 – 5000 meter above sea level where they are almost impossible to find. In the winter months, however the heartless cold mountains force the animals to the valleys where tree and bushes gives shelter and food in the harsh winter conditions. Here we will look for the Snow Leopard! Never guaranteed, the Snow Leopard - this superbly camouflaged top carnivore of these bleak uplands, is one to dream about. Mind you, dreams come true occasionally: we know they are there... and we have seen Snow Leopards!



Day-to-day program

Day 1: 18.th November, Departure USA/Europe

Day 2 & 3 : 19.th – 20.th November, Arrival Bishkek, and transfer to Tamga, Issyk Kul Lake

After arrival in Manas airport outside Bishkek, transfer to Lake Issyk-Kul in eastern Kyrgyzstan. The lake is the second largest mountain lake of the world, and it never gets completely ice covered due thermal water flows. This creates kind of microclimate, and the winter conditions are less harsh along the shore attracting tens of thousands of ducks, coots, and other waterfowl. These birds survive the harsh Kyrgyz winter on this lake, sometimes in such numbers that they turn the water's surface black. Raptors and other species follow this great natural phenomenon, providing a great opportunity and experience for birders. We will witness a wonderful day in the pure Kyrgyzstan air with interesting sightings Besides this natural wonder, it is exciting to know that the portion of road we are riding today is part of the ancient Silk Road - giving us the opportunity to learn and experience about this important historic heritage of Central Asia. As we pass through the villages, there is opportunity to visit the bazaars and meet the friendly Kyrgyz people. In the afternoon we arrive to our accommodation for the night, a comfortable guesthouse on the southern shore of Issyk Kul. Here it is possible to explore the Russian Banja, and warm and comfortable beds wait for us. BLD

Day 4: 21.th November, Transfer to Snow Leopard Base Camp in remote Tien Shan

Starting early, we will devote the transfer to the mountains. It will be a long tough drive and we might not be able to reach the area in one day – hence we might find accommodation along the road or even set up our tents somewhere. Nevertheless, we will try to reach the area in one day. The drive is an adventure itself. Spectacular wild mountainous areas and mountain passes. Ahead waits the best wildlife area in Kyrgyzstan. Here we will be accommodated in a primitive hut and the only available accommodation except for tents for our entire stay – a group of old kind-of-houses. However, we will try to make it as comfortable as possible. Magnificent views to the snowcapped mountains (and grazing Argali and Ibex) where we the coming days will search the wildlife, in addition there is a fine set of birds. BLD

Day 5-9: 22.th November – 26.th November, “In the Footsteps of the Snow Leopard”

Today and the following nine days we set off on foot or horseback to explore and area searching for signs and tracks of the Snow Leopard in this area that supports one of the highest densities of Snow Leopards in the world. Until the mid-70's, a handful of famous Snow Leopard hunters trapped live Snow Leopards in Kyrgyzstan to satisfy the great demand of the world's zoos. Following our breakfast, and we start walking at around 8 in the morning. We will be out all day and already after few hours we would be likely to find tracks and signs of Snow Leopard. On the way we will admire beautiful mountainous landscapes and do birding and wildlife sightings... We are now in the kingdom of the

Snow Leopard, and few places in the world offers sceneries that are more spectacular. Although, the hike does not require mountain climbing skills, it is still a long distance in temperatures between zero and minus ten degree Celsius, and we will have to carry backpacks with our cameras and personal belongings. There is a great likelihood that we and will still walk in fresh snow, which is never the easiest surface to conquer. We will also pass through some narrow gorges, but the incredible scenery will make every step worth it, and we will return late afternoon to our hut, feeling absolutely privileged to be here. BLD

Day 10: 27.th November, Back to Tamga Guesthouse

After some final wildlife watching near our camp, we will turn downwards after breakfast to Tamga where milder conditions await in the comfortable guesthouse. Once we reach Tamga village, we check in at our comfortable guesthouse, and run straight into the Banja, to warm up our bones that still carry the wind chill and sharp cold of our Snow Leopard experience in the mountains. BLD

Day 11: 28.th November, Tamga – Bishkek

After early breakfast, we return to Bishkek. On the way, we stop at interesting points until we eventually arrive to Bishkek in high spirits... We expect to get back to Bishkek in time to seek out a good restaurant and sample some of the famous Kyrgyz food, and as we think back on some outstanding nature watching during a very special trip knock back a shot or two of the local firewater. BLD

DAY 12: 29.th November, the tour concludes

With post-breakfast transfer from the hotel to the nearby Manas international airport for departure.



Transport: 4WD truck - uncomfortable vehicles but the most safe and best vehicle available. We also must hike and maybe use horses during our stay in the mountains.

Accommodation: In Bishkek and Tamga comfortable guesthouses. In the mountains: very basic accommodation in huts and maybe tents.

Food: All meals and tea/coffee are provided, during the day generally from local cafes/restaurants or in the mountains from our own kitchen team. We will make a point of eating well whenever possible – most people come away feeling that “it’s not for nothing that Central Asian cuisine is so famous” - but expect some meals to be on the simple side, however both tasty and nourishing.



Weather: Cold but usually, clear in the mountains. Nights cold but days, with blue skies alternating. Expect temperatures in the -10 to zero Celsius range in the mountains (night) and warmer during daytime. Very strong sun! A severe wind-chill factor must be considered at high altitude.

Photography: VERY GOOD! We will spend our time trying to see animals, but the keen photographer will find plenty of opportunity to make use of the often-excellent light.

Health: as much time will be spent above 3.000 m. Problems aggravated by altitude is non-existing. We take very good care of our

clients, and we are careful to reduce risks and uncomfortable. Check e g http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/travel/diseases/altitude_sickness.htm for more information about health at altitude. Further, note that only the most basic medical facilities exist away from Bishkek: all participants must accept the full implications of this, but we are of course capable handling most incidences and our team is well educated and experts in moving in mountainous conditions. However, anyone in general good health and reasonably fit should find that acclimatization is achieved within a few days of arrival, ensuring full enjoyment of this exciting journey.

Essential equipment: Warm expedition down jacket! Rain- and windproof jacket & ditto over trousers; long-johns; hiking boots; woolen hat; gloves; sun glasses; sunscreen lotion & ditto lip balm (protection factor 15-30 is necessary at high altitude); warm socks (dry socks are important when hiking, and there will be few opportunities to do any washing); plenty of snacks, chocolate & other favorite snacks/energy food; lozenges; torch; hiking sticks; towel; winter sleeping bag. However prior departure we will provide informative and plentiful information about these matters. Dress code: please note that outer layers must be in muted colors to decrease the risk of spooking e g those shy animals.

Visa: Since July 2012 the visa regulations has been relaxed. It means that most nationalities do not need visa-entering Kyrgyzstan! Miksture will inform You about visa, when You book the tour.

General note: Though all possible efforts will be made to stick to the itinerary this may not always be possible due to circumstances beyond our control: a degree of flexibility is thus required, and participants must be adventurous and willing to put up with the rigors and discomforts inherent in travel in remote & culturally alien areas.

Trekking is restricted to day hikes: emphasis will be on seeing the animals, not on covering as many kilometers as possible on foot - however, the terrain is steep in places, and this, in combination with altitude, means that a degree of determination will on some occasions be required to reach the habitat we aim for. Maybe there will possibility of horseback riding!



To book a seat on this tour a non-refundable deposit per person should be paid (if Miksture cancel 100% this deposit will be returned, of course) – You are not reserved a seat before the deposit is paid. The remaining amount per person should be paid latest 1.th August 2022. If less participants than 6 pax, Miksture will come with a price suggestion to make the expedition.

Price include Guiding by Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen and his team • Porters • Local (English-speaking) interpreters • Transportation according to program • All accommodation in Kyrgyzstan – guesthouses, huts, and tents • All food in Kyrgyzstan • Necessary permits for Restricted Area sites and other paperwork • Services of tour leader, porters, and driver • Administration from Miksture • Local entrees and fees according to day-to-day program

Price does NOT include Alcoholic beverages at meals in restaurants and cafes • International flights • Personal expenses for eventual extra arrangements not mentioned in the program • Tips to drivers and interpreter • Travelinsurrance – mandatory! • Eventual extra arrangements not mentioned in the program • Money for own expenses – actually very little needed • and anything strictly personal (e g laundry, phone calls, any excess luggage charges, snacks).

Single room: Pls contact Miksture prior departure. Please note single room accommodation may not be available. You will NOT be charged if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Please note singles may not be available in the mountains. Some participants who wish to share a room may not wish to share a tent. There is no single tent supplement, but we cannot guarantee single-tent accommodation.

It is possible to rent sleeping bags and karimats. Pls contact Miksture: info@miksture.com

International flights - the earlier it has booked – the cheaper. Miksture of course assist and we book gladly for you

One month before departure Miksture mail an updated program

Prices quoted are based on group participation and no refunds will be made for any part of the program you choose not to participate. It is understood that refunds cannot be made to passengers who do not complete the tour for any reason whatsoever. No refunds will be issued for failure of passenger to obtain proper documentation for entering countries visited, lost travel time or substitution of facilities, for itineraries amended after departure, for circumstances arising beyond the company's control, necessitating alternative arrangements being made to ensure the safety and/or further participation and enjoyment of the program, passenger not appearing for any accommodation, service, sightseeing or trip segment without notifying the company, or passenger leaving program after it has begun, or missing any scheduled sightseeing, activities, meals or accommodations. If Miksture fails to run the trip due to its own mistakes or circumstances (management problems, financial problems, bankruptcy), or decides to cancel it for reasons within its own reach and reasons, all deposits and payments will be refunded. Personal Travel Insurance is MANDATORY for Each participant in Kyrgyzstan, and before departure copies of each participants insurance should be received by Miksture, no later than ten days before tour start.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to Miksture by its vendors and suppliers.

RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENT: Remaining balances are due no later than 90 days prior to date of program commencement. Any reservation made within 90 days of commencement of a program may be accepted provided space is available and payment in full is received. Miksture does not accept responsibility for bank wire fees or rush mail delivery.



CANCELLATION POLICY: Full payment of the tour fee is due no later than 1.th August 2018 - prior to date of program commencement (except deposit, as we pay border permits immediately, we receive your participation). If the balance has not been received latest 1.th August, Miksture might treat your reservation as cancelled, and the deposit shall be forfeited. All requests for cancellations must be received in writing. If you cancel: Fewer than 40 days before departure date - No refund available.

THE BOOKING IS OPEN!!! WE ONLY HAVE 10 SEATS ON THIS MAGNIFICENT EXPEDITON! WELCOME...

Contact information: Pls always feel welcome to contact me if you have questions.

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Brgds Michael Westerbjerg Andersen, Expedition Leader & owner of Miksture





















