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# Turkmenistan: Adventures On The Silk Road



## Synopsis

Turkmenistan is a remarkable country with beautiful and rarely visited ancient ruins from the Silk Road. Highlights include the ancient city of Merv, once the largest city on earth, the striking ruins of Gurganj, the marble and gold of modern Ashgabat, and the unique experience of the ever-burning desert gas field, the "Gate of Hell". The rulers behave eccentrically; building gold statues of themselves, renaming bread after a President's mother, banning beards, gold teeth, facebook and lip-synching. Far Flung Places Guides provide an insight into the key places to visit, with historical context, travel tips and humor. Simon Proudman is a recognised travel writer and blogger, author of the popular travel site [www.farflungplaces.net](http://www.farflungplaces.net) He is an historian with a travel addiction, who loves to explore exotic and offbeat locations, discover local food and drink beer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Caravanistan (The Silk Road Travel Guide) Book Review  
Positive: Surprisingly comprehensive  
Most updated guide to Turkmenistan  
Low price  
Compelling writing  
Negative: Not as comprehensive as the Bradt guide to Turkmenistan  
Simon Proudman did a wonderful job compiling a full, worthy-of-the-name guidebook based on 1 long trip to Turkmenistan. All the places you are likely to visit are there, and the updated inside information he brings is invaluable. At this low price, it comes thoroughly recommended both for the tourist on a transit visa or those on a guided tour.

Well worth the read if you will be visiting.

An interesting book on an obscure country; the Australian author describes his experiences on a

visit to Turkmenistan, and while details on hotels, transport and money changing are aimed at the actual traveller, he manages to create an entertaining work for the armchair traveller like myself too. A fairly short book, one can get an overview of history and recent events without getting bogged down in detail. I was fascinated by information on its being one of the last two Stalinist states left (along with N Korea) and - like N Korea - having leaders who go in for personality cults big-time, with vast marble statues everywhere (unbelievably this country is the world's biggest importer of Italian marble.) There are some hilarious sections on the outrageous and megalomaniac schemes of the president and his predecessor (including the 'Ruhnama', a 'Little Red Book' written by the latter, knowledge of which was part of driving tests and job interviews!) Also interesting to learn that the vast gas reserves mean free power for all, with the poorest farmers supplying heating to their animals in winter. The author visits the main places of interest including the ruins of Merv, once the largest city in the world, and the vast fiery crater at Derweze where 'gas was expected to burn out within days, yet 43 years later it is still burning brightly.' Accompanied by a few photos (though in b/w on a Kindle, and small in size, you'd probably be better off checking out these places on computer.) Not the most brilliant writing it has to be said: the book seems to come to a sudden halt. The author also provides a link to a piece by Paul Theroux on his own visit here, which is a very different calibre of writing. But there's not too many works on Turkmenistan available and I have to say I learned a lot and was entertained at the same time.

I have not been to Turkmenistan, but I have recently wrapped up 2 years of international travel. Because of that travel experience, I can say with full confidence that this is a fantastic guide full of lots of need-to-know information. Simon starts off the guide with the quick and dirty Top 10 things to do in Turkmenistan, followed by itineraries, which give a nice overview of how to best spend your time depending on how long you'd like to be there. This kind of info is exactly what I love to read when researching a new destination. And in addition to many fascinating cultural facts, such as electricity and water being free to everyone, Simon has key tactical information. For example, he's given a big heads up by describing the visa process and explaining the policy that tourists must employ a guide service. He's also listed out holidays, best and worst times to visit, and advice on not getting scammed during currency exchanges. As a person with no previous context for this country, I really appreciate the research and personal insight Simon has to offer. This is goooooo stuff and a must-read if Turkmenistan is in your travel plans.

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