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**SILK**  
**ROAD**  
**MOUNTAIN**  
**RACE**

**#SRMR2020**

**RACE MANUAL**

Issue 0 : Preliminary information for 2020 riders

## INTRODUCTION

The Silk Road Mountain Race is a serious undertaking that should not be underestimated. It takes place in an environment that can be as tough as it is beautiful. It requires not only the ability to ride big days back to back, but also knowledge and experience of self-reliance in a high-altitude, mountainous environment. Although it is definitely a race, your primary concern should always be your own safety. Riders will experience the natural beauty of Kyrgyzstan, and the warmth and generosity of its people. It is an experience that will stay with you a lifetime.

There have been some more substantial changes to the race route this year. We have a new start, out in Talas, the wild northwest of the country, and finish, on the shore of Issyk-kul, near the fishing town of Balykchy. The overall direction of the route has also been inverted. We'll also finally be visiting Tash Rabat, a 15th century stone caravanserai on the ancient Silk Road, with a tough hike in that will avoid the 'Chinese Highway'. To keep the logistics of the race straight forward, we're going to condense registration on the Friday and have an evening start to the race for the first time, throwing up some interesting tactical choices for riders. Overall, SRMR 2020 will be a small step up in terms of overall difficulty. The route is around 100km longer, with an additional 3500m of climbing, somewhat offset by the slightly earlier start.

This race was primarily born out of my experiences racing the Transcontinental Race: an incredible adventure and now Mike Hall's legacy. This is a project that he was personally involved in prior to his tragic death during the Indian Pacific Wheel Race. He should have been a part of it. I hope that making it happen is a worthwhile contribution to the unsupported racing scene that he was instrumental in helping to create. He is sorely missed. I'd like to thank Mike and the TCR team for their help and support for the first edition and trust that this third edition furthers the spirit of the sport.

Nelson Trees - Race Director

## The Race Manual

Welcome to issue 0 of the race manual for SRMR 2020. This edition of the Race Manual contains preliminary information for 2020 racers. It should allow you to decide whether or not this is a challenge you would like to sign up for. It details the course, the environment and climate of the race. This document is your primary source of information about the Silk Road Mountain Race.

The manual is the result of months of research, multiple scouting trips on the ground in Kyrgyzstan and our experience organising the first two editions of the race. We have put a lot of time and energy into making sure that everything you find here is accurate and up to date. We have ridden every single kilometre of the route. Please take note, however, that things do change and it is possible that there are minor discrepancies compared with the situation on the ground.

All information is provided in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of writing. Whilst the general lines of the manual are unlikely to change, preparations for the race are ongoing and subject to modification until close to the start of the race. Please check that you have the latest version of the manual before taking any actions based on information given. Any major updates to the manual will be notified to participants via email. Please make sure that you are able to receive our newsletters and that our emails do not end up in your spam inbox. Please refer to the “Resources” page on our website for additional information. Each updated version of the manual has a quick reference guide giving major changes, compared to previous versions.

The Race Manual has not changed dramatically since the first edition of the race, but there have been a few notable updates. More information is provided on the toughest section of the race route and there are a number of additions to help riders stay safe and ensure that they head into this challenge well prepared. Following the incident last year, where locals attempted to rob a participant, preventing them from continuing, more information on these kinds of risks has been added to the manual.

If in any doubt, do not hesitate to direct your specific questions to the race organisers via email only, at **race@silkroadmountainrace.cc**. Messages to the personal email or social media accounts of members of the SRMR team concerning the race will not be systematically dealt with and may remain unanswered. The SRMR Facebook discussion group is also a great resource to share information and preparations with other riders, but is not a means of communication with the race organisation.

## Why Kyrgyzstan?

If you are reading this manual, you most likely have some ideas about Kyrgyzstan and why it would make a good place for an unsupported bikepacking race. If not, let us tell you a little more about the destination before you embark on your adventure.

Kyrgyzstan is a rugged Central Asian country of incredible natural beauty and proud nomadic traditions. Landlocked and mountainous, it borders Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest and China to the southeast. It is situated along the Silk Road, the ancient trade route between China and the Mediterranean. The Tian Shan mountains, which surround the old caravan route and dominate the country, are home to a great diversity of animal life. Annexed by Russia in 1876, Kyrgyzstan achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

The primary reason to hold a bikepacking race in Kyrgyzstan is the incredible natural setting. The sheer scale of the mountains here, the vast grasslands of the high alpine valleys and how untouched it all is by human civilisation, sets the stage for an epic adventure. Many of the places you'll ride through are not inhabited year round, with only yurts present in the summer months as locals bring their herds up to the summer pastures, known locally as jailoo.

The Kyrgyz people have a strong and proud nomadic heritage with a deep culture of hospitality. You will have an unforgettable experience coming to this country, that is only starting to get a reputation as a great place for off the beaten path, adventurous travel. Kyrgyzstan is also one of the most accessible countries in Central Asia. There are no visa requirements for the majority of passport holders; you can stay up to 60 days without making any special arrangements. Flights from Europe are also very reasonable, with return flights costing 350 to 500 euros at pretty much any time of year.

In terms of safety, Kyrgyzstan is quite a safe destination. The political situation is stable and the government has made efforts to make the country more attractive for tourism. There are some concerns that will be outlined further down in this manual, but generally speaking tourists here are safe and enjoy a great experience. Please keep in mind, however, that the local tourism industry is still in its infancy. There is some tourism infrastructure, but generally speaking things are quite basic, but that's also part of the charm.

## Race Route

The race route is available on Komoot, the world's leading route planning and navigation app, boasting a community of over 6 Million users. The Komoot mobile phone app is available for iOS, Android and web and Komoot has integrations with Wahoo and a range of Garmin devices. Komoot's map, route planner and navigation is available globally. As the official route partner of the 2020 Silk Road Mountain Race, Komoot is offering each participant a complete package voucher for komoot.

You can download the GPX directly from Komoot in the 18 sections it has already been split into. We will also send out the final GPX as one piece and in shorter GPS friendly sections closer to the start of the race. The resupply and other route will be included in the official GPX as POIs (Points Of Interest).

You can find the route at this address:

<https://www.komoot.com/collection/896205/-silk-road-mountain-race-2020>

The 2020 Silk Road Mountain Race will start from the city of Talas in the northwest of the country and will end near Balykchy on the north shore of lake Issyk-Kul. It will cover around 1804 kilometers for approximately 30,500 meters of climbing. Below, you will find a brief outline of the route for the third edition of the race. We have ridden the entire route and have taken great pains for the GPS track to be correct, but there may still be some slight deviations required due to changes on the ground from one season to the next. In the unlikely case that you come across a section where you feel the track is incorrect but see an obvious alternative, please make a note and tell us about the deviation you took and why. It will help us to make a fair decision should any action need to be taken at the end of the race. Another thing that we'd like to mention is that the quality of the road surface can vary a lot over time, even in the time since scouting. If the track follows a bad section of washboard but there is a smooth trail that runs parallel a few meters away, you may ride there. The race is tough enough without imposing endless washboard on participants when there are other options readily available. This does not, however, give riders license to follow any track they please. We will be checking everyone's GPS data at the end of the race to make sure that no shortcuts were taken.

We have also checked out potential resupply points and have included those that we are reasonably certain to be in operation at the time of the race. There will likely be more available in reality. Nothing is 100% guaranteed, so whilst you should be able to rely on this information for your resupply strategy, always take extra precautions and give yourself some margin as you make your plans. We encourage riders to do their own research on resupply and Kyrgyzstan more generally.

## Route Outline

The race will begin from the town of Talas, out in the north west of the country. Riders will head out from the centre of town on the evening of Friday the 14th of August. They'll quickly be on quiet roads that will soon turn to gravel. Within 50 kilometres they'll have reached the summit of Terek Pass : 3376m. It may not be quite as tall as Kegeti but it is still a substantial mountain pass that comes even earlier in the race. The road is quite good, passable by cars and almost entirely ride-able.

After Terek pass, riders will head down towards Toktogul reservoir through a series of valleys with

mountain villages. The route along the shore of the reservoir is not yet final but it will definitely entirely avoid the main road which is one of the most dangerous in the country. We will update the track well ahead of the start of the race.

Riders will then leave behind Toktogul reservoir and head up into a system of remote valleys. This is possibly one of the toughest sections of the race, with a huge amount of climbing per kilometre. As it takes place at a relatively low altitude, heat may also add to the difficulty. Veterans of the first edition will recognise the last pass and stretch down into Kyzl-Oi. It'll be tough but scenic.

It's at Kyzl-oi that riders will head off in the opposite direction compared with previous editions. Riders will ride up the Karakol valley, going east past the southern face of Kegeti pass, which they will need to tackle much later on in the race. The Karakol valley and pass will, as ever, be one of the highlights of the race. The section after Kegeti is also new, and one of our favourites. The descent down this valley is quite something. At the end of this track, riders will reach Kochkor, which will host the first Checkpoint of the race.

Riders will head out of Kochkor down the familiar, but unloved, washboard that takes them past the smoked fish at Intersection Café. They'll then rejoin last year's route up to Arabel pass and across the plateau to the top of the Kumtor mining road. It's tough but beautiful up there, with Arabel itself a steep push for most riders.

We'll again be sending riders down the Kumtor mining road. Last year, what was supposed to be a high speed downhill reward, turned into a muddy, messy morass. We'll see what the weather has in store for us this year, but at least it's unlikely to be worse! Be sure to keep an eye out for the statue of Yuri Gagarin in Barskoon gorge lower down.

After reaching the relative warmth and good weather of the south shore of lake Issyk-Kul, riders will need to head back up into the mountains on their way towards Naryn. Standing in the way is Tosor pass : 3893m. This is the second appearance of this big mountain pass. It replaces Ton pass, which was the cause of some stressful moments last year due to icy conditions on a narrow stretch towards the top. As Tosor is just about passable by cars, there shouldn't be anything like this in 2020.

From Tosor to Naryn is another beautiful section that has been in the race every year. This time around it'll be a slow descent into Naryn, aka 'Scratch City' rather than a climb out of the ci. We'll see if including the city a little earlier on in the race will finally see it losing the dubious honour of being the place where the highest number of riders have decided to call it quits in the previous two editions of the race.

After leaving Naryn, riders will head down familiar roads on their way to Checkpoint 2 which will again be hosted by a yurt camp in the village of Kok-Kiya near Kel Suu lake. The entrance to the valley is truly spectacular and a definite highlight in previous editions. Due to the change in direction there is another short loop here, to allow riders to enter the same way as last year and leave via the Old Soviet Road.

After the relative comfort and warmth of the yurt camp at Kel Suu, riders will have to tackle the seriously steep Old Soviet Road on their way out of the valley. It may only be a couple kilometres but it will take time and effort to make it up and out of the valley. Most, if not all riders, agree the view is generally worth the suffering! The single track down to the Ak-Say valley is also some of the best in the race.

Riders will then head along the familiarly eerie and foreboding border zone with China. This year though, they'll turn off before they reach the smooth tarmac of the Chinese Highway and head towards Chatyr Kul and an alternate route to Tash Rabat. This may or may not be a welcome change depending on their riding preferences.

The route to reach Tash Rabat, a 15th Century Silk Road Caravanserai, will include some hike a bike up to the pass but also some really nice single track for at least part of the descent. Time-wise it should be similar to following the tarmac around, but it will definitely be more scenic, and it avoids doubling back up and down Tash Rabat valley. Tash Rabat passes itself reaches up to 3964m.

Riders will head out of Tash Rabat valley and join up with familiar roads, on their way to Mels Pass and the stunning views down onto the canyons before Baetov. For those that haven't been here before its probably the most spectacular direction to visit this stretch of road, with the canyons after the pass revealed in a single flourish. For returning veterans, having the vista out in front of them will likely still cast a fresh light on one of the most beautiful views in the country. In Baetov, riders will be able to refresh, resupply and even spend the night in the hotel that is quickly becoming a major stopping point for a lot of riders in the race.

Riders will climb up to Son-Kul and Checkpoint Three by what has been an iconic descent in previous editions: Moldo Pass. Its much less steep than Tuz Pass and should allow riders to stay on the bike for almost the entire climb. We'll again pass by Jangy Talap and possibly the best/only proper coffee in the entire area!

The Silk Road yurt camp at Son-Kul will again host an SRMR Checkpoint, albeit the third rather than first in the race. It will provide the opportunity for some much needed rest and hot food. This year, riders will tackle the short sharp hills along the northern shore after leaving this island of warmth, rather than on their final push towards it. The descent down Tuz Ashuu will also likely be more enjoyable than the push up in previous races.

After descending Tuz Pass, riders will head back towards the Karakol valley and up the south face of Kegeti pass. We may have removed the pass from the start of the race, but we preferred it over Shamsi at this stage of the race. The south face is much shorter, but also more difficult than the longer northern side of the pass, with extensive damage to the road towards the top. The descent down to the town of Kegeti will likely leave an ear to ear grin on most riders' faces. It's definitely one of the best in the country.

This year, we again head towards the Chong Kemin valley in the home stretch of the race. However, with the additional kilometres and meters of climbing early on in the race, we've cut the bonus climbs. We doubt that they will be sorely missed. We did keep the lower portion of the valley down to the main road though, keeping riders off the highway as much as possible. We've also reduced the tarmac section in Chong Kemin valley, with riders crossing the river earlier on, and coming to the village of Kaindy from the other side.

From Kaindy, there is one final challenge before reaching the finish line on the north shore of Issyk-Kul, near the fishing town of Balyckhy. We have found a new final pass, it's a little lower than last year's

Kok-Ayrik, reaching around 3350m. It also includes its fair share of hike a bike but the good news is that the descent is entirely ride-able, a welcome change from the land-slide strewn ex-road that was the final stretch in 2019! the exact location of the finish line is not yet set but it will be at one of the resorts along the shore of the lake.

### Breakdown of the distance between checkpoints

Talas to Kochkor : 513km / 11,900m

Kochkor to Kel Suu : 644km / 9,700m

Kel Suu to Son Kul : 314km / 4,300m

Son Kul to Balykchy : 331km / 8,200m

### Brief outline of resupply points

Distance (km)				
Origin	Destination	Total	Leg	Notes (refers to destination)
Talas	Terek Suu	112		Resupply point
Terek Suu	Toktogul	140		Resupply point
Toktogul	Torkent	158		Resupply point
Torkent	Kyzl-Oi	315		Resupply point
Kyzl-Oi	Kojomkul	339		Resupply point
Kojomkul	Djong-Alysh	467		Resupply point
Djong-Alysh	Kochkor	516		Resupply point
Kochkor	Intersection Café	553		Resupply point
Intersersection Café	Tamga	801		Resupply point
Tamga	Tosor	811		Resupply point
Tosor	Naryn	1017		Resupply point
Naryn	Kel Suu / CP2	1159		Resupply point
Kel Suu / CP2	Tash Rabat	1291		Resupply point
Tash Rabat	Baetov	1378		Resupply point
Baetov	Jangy-Talap	1420		Resupply point
Jangy Talap	Son Kul / CP3	1472		Resupply point
Son Kul / CP3	Djong Alysh	1556		Resupply point
Djong-Alysh	Kegeti	1632		Resupply point
Kegeti	Secret oasis	1707		Resupply point
Secret oasis	Shabdan (off route)	1739		Resupply point
Shabdan	Finish	1804		Beer point

## **Resupply Details**

### **Terek Suu**

There is a shop in the village.

### **Toktogul**

There are several shops and restaurants in town.

### **Torkent**

There are a couple shops on the highway near town.

### **Kyzl-Oi**

There are two small shops and several guesthouses.

### **Kojomkul**

There are several small shops in the village.

### **Djong-Alysh**

There are one or two shops in the village.

### **Kochkor**

There are many shops and restaurants. The checkpoint will serve hot food 24/7.

### **Intersersection Café**

There is a large shop and restaurant at the intersection.

### **Tamga**

There are several small shops in town.

### **Tosor**

There are a couple shops on the main road along the shore of Issyk-Kul

### **Naryn**

There are many shops and a few restaurants and guesthouses in Naryn.

### **Kel Suu / CP2**

There will be hot food 24/7 and snacks available to purchase.

### **Tash Rabat**

There are several yurt camps that offer hot meals and accommodation.

### **Baetov**

There are several shops in town, a couple restaurants and a hotel.

### **Jangy Talap**

There is a shop that serves proper coffee!

### **Son Kul / CP3**

There will be hot food served 24/7 and a few snacks and drinks available to purchase.

### **Djong-Alysh**

There are one or two shops in the village.

### **Kegeti**

There are one or two shops in the village. There are one or two more in the following villages.

### **Secret oasis**

Riders discovered this bonus resupply point this year. There are a couple shops and restaurants beside the road.

### **Shabdan**

There is a shop in the village. This resupply point is off route across the river. There are smaller shops in the other villages but this is the biggest. There are several CBT guesthouses in nearby Kaindy.

## **Toughest sections & notable difficulties**

### **Terek Pass**

It's not quite as tall as Kegeti, but this is a solid climb. Be very wary of going too hard, especially if you're not well acclimatised. With an evening start, conditions can get tough in the dark up high.

### **Torkent to Kyzi-Oi**

There is a massive amount of climbing between these two resupply points. The altitude isn't very great but that may not be a good thing. The heat is likely to hit riders hard here.

### **Arabel pass and plateau**

Climbing up this long valley will take a long time and the pass itself may be short but it's steep. The plateau above is high and exposed. Get down quickly via the Kumtor mining road.

### **Tosor Pass**

This big pass makes it's return in 2020. It is a big, long climb that will take you to almost 4000m. It's passable by car so it won't be quite as intimidating as Ton was last year but it should definitely not be underestimated.

### **Old Soviet road out of CP2**

It may be quite short, but the climb out of CP2 is extremely steep and essentially impossible to ride. The road has an average gradient of 14% over the whole 1.4 kilometers but reaches 18% at times. The barbed wire that you'll find here and there doesn't make it any easier. You will, however, be rewarded with some pretty amazing single track down the other side.

### **CP2 to Baetov**

Depending on conditions this section can be very dry. In the first edition there wasn't a drop of water. Last year, there were river crossings... Difficult to tell how it will be this year. You will at least be able to refill your bottle at Tash Rabat this year.

### **Tash Rabat pass**

This one will be a solid hike and the scree on the descent is loose at the top. It will take longer than expected. The descent has some pretty nice single track though!

### **Kegeti Pass**

Not quite as intimidating a climb from the south, but still a serious pass at altitude. The road is also much more damaged on this side. It will definitely be a push for the last few kilometres. You will be able to descent pretty quickly though as the road is much better on the other side. Definitely one of the highlights on the way down!

### **Main road crossing**

Before heading into the Chong Kemin valley, you will briefly cross the main road. Traffic is generally very fast and drivers are not particularly aware of, nor careful with cyclists. Please be cautious.

### **The final pass**

New for 2020, the final pass in the race stands a little lower than Kok-Ayrik last year but it will be a solid final challenge. The approach to the pass itself includes plenty of hike a bike, as does the pass itself. The big bonus compared with last year though is the stunning little lake that you'll pass and the fact that the entire descent is rideable. Enjoy!

## Race Categories

The Silk Road Mountain Race is primarily designed as a solo challenge, but to make it more accessible to less experienced riders or those that want to share the experience, we have also included a pairs category. We will not be accepting teams or groups of more than two riders to enter the race.

The Silk Road Mountain Race may be raced as a **SOLO** rider or as part of a **PAIR**. These will be the two finishing categories. The final race rankings will reflect these two categories with finishing times and positions in these categories only. For more information on how this will work, head to the rules section further down in this race manual.

Solo riders are expected to be entirely self-sufficient. They must not receive any outside assistance, be that private resupply, navigation information, information on where they are in the race rankings, drafting other riders, etc. The same rules apply for pairs riders but to the pair as a whole. They are allowed to assist and support each other within the pair, but the pair as a whole cannot receive any assistance from outside of the pair. If you have any doubts as to what constitutes outside assistance and private resupply, we are happy to answer any of your questions.

Following our experience from the first edition, we would like to add a little extra information regarding what is acceptable in terms of solo participants riding together. We don't want to discourage people riding together intermittently and sharing the experience because of a fear of being declassified or disqualified. At the same time, this is a race, and the rules need to be fair to riders that truly ride the entire route solo. We're not going to quantify precisely how much time can be spent with another rider before it constitutes riding as a pair. Essentially, if you ride with someone, it should be because you happen to be riding at the same pace at that time. What you should not be doing is the following: planning to sleep in the same place, waiting for each other, etc. for days on end. The vast majority of riders understood this. The only exceptions then went on to spend so much time together and support each other to such an extent that there really wasn't any option, but to exclude them from the general classification. It was a very clear cut case though with no other riders coming even close to spending as much time riding together.

There are, however, specific circumstances where riding with another solo rider or pair is perfectly acceptable. We will never discourage a rider from waiting for someone else to help them cross a river if they feel unsafe. These are, however, always short sections of the overall route and solo riding should resume afterwards.

\*Please note that you are only allowed to finish in the general classification in the same category as you started in. For instance solo riders cannot finish as a pair if they decide to team up in the middle of the race. The same applies if a Pairs rider finishes without their partner. In both cases, riders will be given a finishing time, but will be removed from the general classification.

## Race Coverage and Rider Updates

In contrast with most bikepacking races, many stretches of the SRMR are extremely remote, with no phone service whatsoever. This will impact the way the race is followed. Because of the limitations of the satellite phones that our control cars will be using for communication, we will focus on getting images and audio out from the race as often as possible. Our plans regarding video coverage are not finalised yet, but it is likely that there will also be a video presence.

There will be three main channels for spectators to follow the race. First and foremost will be the Race Map and rider 'dots'; the go to resource for your family, friends and followers to check on your progress. We expect many an hour will be spent by dot watchers poring over the largely blank spaces on the map to see how the dots are progressing.

The second main channel is the podcast that we will be producing during the race. Our podcast host will be in Kyrgyzstan to talk to riders on the road. They may also be supported in this task by other control car staff members. The podcast will be available to stream on the SRMR website, details will be announced after we publish the first episode.

We will also be posting daily images on our social media channels. Look out for one of our three control cars as they make their way along the race route on the lookout for riders. One of the control cars will also be producing video content. We may also be placing photographers in some pretty remote and hard to reach spots, so keep an eye out, you never know when they might come across you.

In addition to this, we will be keeping an eye on your social media. Although you may not have regular internet access, when you reach a village you will be able to get online and let people know how the race is going for you. We recommend that riders get a local sim card on arrival and add some credit, it's very affordable and easy to do. You should be good to go with around 10\$ of credit if you pick an internet only plan. The moment you step out of the airport arrivals, there will be representatives of the major Kyrgyz telecom companies offering free sim cards for your use. We recommend O! As the carrier of choice, but they are all quite similar. You can ask at the guesthouse or hotel you are staying at for help setting up your local sim.

While a lot of the coverage will go to those at the sharp end of the race, our control cars will be spread throughout the field and we will do our best to post updates on as many riders as possible, regardless of where they are in the race standings. It's not all about winning.

The official hashtag for this edition of the race is **#SRMR2020**

In addition to this, each rider will also be encouraged to use a personal hashtag unique to them in this edition of the race. This will be comprised of the official hashtag above and the cap number given in 3 digits, for example: **#SRMR2020cap001**

This will allow us and your followers to easily see a feed of all your updates across various platforms as well as those who are posting about you.

Cap numbers will be allocated shortly before the start of the race. If you are a returning veteran you will be able to request the same number as last year or your finishing position in the general classification.

While the race is in progress, the ways to get in touch with us will be printed on your Brevet Card and these will include:

Email: [race@silkroadmountainrace.cc](mailto:race@silkroadmountainrace.cc)

SMS / Helpline: **TBD**

Trackers: SOS/Assistance: ***The use of the tracker buttons has precise instructions that must be strictly adhered to, see details lower down in this manual***

Silk Road Mountain Race will be making updates via the following channels:

Instagram: [@silkroadmountainrace](https://www.instagram.com/silkroadmountainrace)

Facebook page: [facebook.com/silkroadmountainrace](https://www.facebook.com/silkroadmountainrace)

On the blog section of our website: [silkroadmountainrace.cc](https://silkroadmountainrace.cc)

Our YouTube Channel: <http://yt.vu/+srmr>

Twitter: [@silkroadmountainrace](https://twitter.com/silkroadmountainrace)

### **Next of kin following the race**

Due to the limited or often non-existent mobile phone network coverage, the SPOT trackers carried by each rider will be an even more important source of data than for other endurance races. Dot watchers should not, however, fall into the trap of considering the information provided by the system as infallible. As with other events where the system is used, there may be periods where tracking is incomplete or less than 100% reliable. During the first edition of the race, we had a number of tracker failures and issues with tracker reliability. The race organisation has a number of designated "Dotwatchers", but welcomes information from those who are also watching their loved ones. It is natural for people, especially friends and family, to worry about riders when their tracker stops moving for any length of time. Please do not panic as there are any number of reasons why this could be the case. If you are particularly concerned, you can send an email to [race@silkroadmountainrace.cc](mailto:race@silkroadmountainrace.cc), with a rider cap number and **TRACKING** in the title. The person on duty at HQ, can then act accordingly and compare with other data from the control cars and latest dotwatching logs. We will do our best to get back to you in a timely manner and check on riders as necessary, but please understand that we are very busy during this time.

Finally, for followers' peace of mind, don't forget that whilst the SRMR is held in a very wild and remote location, the fact that all riders follow the same route, will ensure that if a rider does encounter a problem, another rider will soon pass the same way. The control cars will be spread out amongst the field of riders and traveling along the same route also. Finally, remember that there are usually locals about, even in the most seemingly remote parts of the country.

## Scratching from the Race

If you end up in the situation where for one reason or another you cannot continue with your race, and wish to drop out or 'scratch' from the race please get in touch with us as soon as possible by sending an email to [race@silkroadmountainrace.cc](mailto:race@silkroadmountainrace.cc). If you are unable to do so, please use one of the contact methods above. Include in your email as much information as possible regarding the circumstances of your withdrawal from the race, including your full name and race number.

Note that all riders are welcome to celebrate with us at the finish regardless of how they get there. If you scratch from the race you are responsible for your onward travel to the destination you choose.

***“Never scratch at night” is good advice from accomplished endurance racers. That is to say always wait until morning to make any big decisions, things have a habit of looking a lot better after a night’s sleep. That advice has saved many a successful race campaign, including my own.***  
**- MIKE HALL**

## Contact with SRMR during the race

SRMR will be operating a Race Headquarters (HQ), located in Kyrgyzstan, that will function 24/7 during the race period and will be best equipped to respond to any urgent enquiries. The official race email, **race@silkroadmountainrace.cc** is the best way to get in touch with staff at race HQ. SRMR staff will then be able to quickly get in touch with the teams out in the field and pass on information as required to best respond to any situations that arise. Details of how to get in touch with the HQ will also be printed on the Brevet cards that will be given to riders at registration the day before the start of the race.

For the duration of the race, the main assets that SRMR will have in the field are the three control cars and two medic cars that will be traveling along the race route. These will likely be the most expedient means of checking on a rider and responding to any situations that arise. They will all be carrying satellite communication devices, and so will always be contactable but will have limited internet access when they are traveling through any sections of the route where there is no mobile phone network.

Prior to the race we will be getting in touch with the emergency contact that riders provided during the application procedure with more information on how best to get in touch with SRMR. We will also provide a brief guide on what is to be expected as a first time dot watcher and avoid any unnecessary worries caused by such issues as intermittent tracking.

It is crucial for riders and their next of kin to understand before entering the race that informing your next of kin of any relevant information may well be the only action that SRMR are able to perform in the event of an accident. Riders need to understand that they are fully self-reliant and responsible for themselves and it simply may not be possible for SRMR to provide any assistance, which therefore carries no obligation. Riders will need to sign the Rider Agreement prior to their participation in the race being accepted. It will be provided to them online before the start of the race.

## Registration and Race Start

### Registration

Friday 14th August 8 am - 1 pm

Location : DSK Sports Centre (TBC)



**ADDRESS : ДСК Спортивный комплекс, 7-й микрорайон, 12/1**

**Coordinates : 42.8300039, 74.618075**

Please make sure you bring all the documents with you that are outlined below in this manual or any more recent communications from SRMR. Copies of insurance documents are acceptable and you can leave the copies with the registration team. We recommend that you carry a copy of your insurance documents with you during the race.

Tracker deposit payment will be made available online in July through paypal, allowing for quicker registration. Your deposit payment will also be reimbursed using paypal when you return your tracker. This will be possible at the finish line until it closes at midnight on Saturday the 29th of August (the evening of the party). If, for any reason you are unable to make it to the finish line, you will be able to drop off the tracker in Bishkek at the **Blue Camel Guest House (39 Shukurova Street, Bishkek 720000, Kyrgyzstan)** during normal business hours until the 30th of August. If you choose to do so, please send us an email confirming that you have dropped off your tracker.

To avoid tedious queuing there will be a reception and seating area. Give your name at the desk and take a seat. We will check your records and call you up to take care of any parts of the process we need you to complete. You can then take your tracker and various goodies.

If you have your own tracker, please turn it on and test it after registration. We will have checked all trackers to ensure they have registered a pre-race position and they are working properly but please also do so yourself. If you fail to test the tracker we may not get a chance to check for errors before you leave and you may experience tracking problems. Last year we had to chase down riders on the road and ask them to reboot their trackers as they had not properly activated. The SRMR podcast host will also be present at registration and will be looking for riders to talk to for the official race podcast.

### **Transport back to Bishkek after the race**

Transport for you and your bike back to Bishkek will be organised for the day after the party, on the 30th of August. This is not included in the entry fee and will cost 10\$. This can be paid in dollars or som at registration. Should you need to return to Bishkek on another date, that will be quite easy to organise yourself at the finish line and a member of SRMR staff will be happy to help. We are currently working on using the old Soviet train for transport back to Bishkek. The plan is to ride together to the train from the finish line, load up the bikes and take a trip back in time on our way to Bishkek. If we are unable to organise this, there will be coaches for riders and a truck for the bikes.

### **Bag Transfer**

SRMR will be providing a free bag transfer service for riders. You will be able to leave one small bag with us at registration which we'll then transport to the finish line for you. The idea is for you to have a change of clothes and a few extra belongings that you wouldn't want to carry during the race itself. Although the bags will be kept in a secure place, please do not leave any valuables to avoid any risk of lost items. The bags will be transferred from Bishkek to the finish line on the **14th of August, after registration is finished**. If you scratch from the race, you will need to make your way to the finish line to pick up your belongings.

### **Rider Briefings**

The rider briefings will take place at the **DSK Sports Centre in Bishkek (42.8300039, 74.618075) (to be confirmed!)** at **2pm on the 14th of August**. This briefing is **mandatory for all riders** and will either confirm or update you on the information provided in this manual. Brevet cards are your official record of race times and may only be issued at the rider briefings, so make sure you attend. Without a Brevet Card, you may not appear in the race results. **You MUST attend or you will not be allowed to race**. We may also hand out border zone permits at the briefing. You won't get to CP2 without one.

### **SRMR Control and Media Crew on the Road**

Silk Road Mountain Race will be out in the field for the duration of the race in our three official control cars with photographers and a videographer. We will also be catching up with riders to talk with them for the race podcast that will be published every two days throughout the race. Our media teams will have been briefed to capture the race but not get in your way. Do please feel free to chat with us of course. Remember that if you want to be left alone and get on with things though, you are under no obligation to stop and pose for the camera!

### **SRMR Volunteers at Control Points**

Please be mindful that most of the people you will meet at the start, finish and control points will be volunteers who are giving their time to make this all possible. Please be kind and courteous to all volunteers, no matter how tired you are, without these people there would be no race.

## Race Start



**Start:** Talas City (Exact location TBC)

**Coordinates:** TBC

**Race Starts:** Friday 14th August 22:00 (UTC+6)

For the third edition of the race, we will start in Talas, the capital of the region of the same name. We will transport all riders to the start line by bus immediately after the rider briefing is over, around 3pm. You'll still be able to fly in and out of Bishkek.

The official start of the race will likely be at the monument in the centre of town but preparations are ongoing. Precise details will be released at a later date. We are planning a neutralised start until we're on to the gravel road up in the mountains where traffic is minimal.

Please be at the start-line, all packed and ready to go at least 30 minutes before the official start. Head to the GPS coordinates written above (TBC) and look out for signage and volunteers waiting to welcome you for the start of the race.

## **The Checkpoints**

There will be three mandatory checkpoints in Silk Road Mountain Race 2020. They will begin operation at the arrival of the first rider and they will close as indicated below. Checkpoints are used as a means of confirming the passage of race participants along the route both as proof of full participation and as a safety check for the organisers to confirm the physical location of participants compared to the satellite tracking data.

Passage through each checkpoint is confirmed by a stamp by the duty SRMR representative in your brevet card. Each checkpoint is located at a place where there are certain resources or services. In accordance with the principles of unsupported racing, any services are limited to those generally commercially available. This being said, due to the extreme isolation of certain checkpoints, the organisers have arranged for some services to be provided, for the mutual benefit of participants and the local people. The race organisers and volunteers may provide you with information at their discretion. In such a wild and remote country as Kyrgyzstan, the checkpoints are the best place for friends, families and supporters to cheer on riders should they decide to do so. We recommend that anyone coming out to support riders get in touch with SRMR before hand.

### **Checkpoint Cut-offs**

Again in the third edition of the race, the cut-off times for the checkpoints will be final. This means that you will not be able to continue your race if you miss the cut-off. The main reason for this rule is for rider safety. By being out of the race time-frame, riders will be too far from support should they need to use the SOS function on their tracker. SRMR would also need to divert its limited resources to respond to such a call, reducing the resources available in case of an emergency in the main field of riders.

### **Operating Hours (Local Times)**

The checkpoints will be open 24 hours, but please do take care to consider others when arriving outside normal daytime hours.

**CP1:** Kochkor, Naryn region.



**Control:** TBC

**Coordinates:** TBC

**Closes:** Wednesday 19th August 16:00 (UTC+6)

**Distance from start:** 513 Kilometres

Kochkor is a small town in Naryn region, and one of the main starting points for a whole range of outdoor activities in the region. It's a good base to head out into the mountains and explore Kyrgyzstan. For SRMR, it has always been the chance for a resupply, possibly a warm bed and a hot meal. In 2020, it returns as a checkpoint.

### **Food & Water**

There are plenty of shops and a few restaurants in town. As with our other checkpoints, we'll work with our local host to ensure that there is plentiful hot food, whatever the time of a rider's arrival at the checkpoint.

**CP2:** Kel Suu Lake, Naryn region.



**Control:** Kel Suu Yurt Camp

**Coordinates:** 40.74611, 76.402196

**Closes:** Monday 24th August 12:00 (Noon or Midday) (UTC+6)

**Distance from start:** 1157 Kilometres

This little gem of a lake, with its sky-blue waters and steep surrounding cliffs, lost deep in Kok-Kiya valley is truly one of the little known treasures of Kyrgyzstan. It is very far from civilisation and requires an extra border zone permit to be able to come and visit as it sits near the border with China. By the time you get here, you will really feel that you are heading to the end of the world. Hopefully there will be water at the lake next season. You will reach the lake valley via the more recent route but you will continue on your way along the old soviet road. It's steep and wild and remote. Be careful of the remnants of barbed wire fence, a reminder of a time when this was a much more closely controlled border zone. The checkpoint itself will be located at a yurt camp near the lake. There will be a banner or sign to let you know where you need to go. After visiting the checkpoint, you will not be required to visit the actual lake.

### **Food**

Our hosts at the yurt camp will be offering food at any time of day or night and will offer the possibility of purchasing packed lunches. Please get in touch if you have any specific dietary requirements and we will see what we can do.

**CP3:** Son Kul, Naryn region.



**Control:** Silk Road Yurt Camp

**Coordinates:** TBC

**Closes:** Thursday 27th August 12:00 (Noon or Midday) (UTC+6)

**Distance from start:** 1471 Kilometres

Song Kul is an alpine lake in the Tian Shan mountains of Kyrgyzstan. It is surrounded by high mountain pastures called jaiлоos, where Kyrgyz herdsmen graze their livestock during the summer months (June to September), living a nomadic life in yurts. The checkpoint itself will be located at a yurt camp near the lake. There will be a banner or sign to let you know where you need to go. The exact location of the checkpoint itself has not yet been finalised. The yurt camp's exact location changes from one season to the next. It will be close to where it was last year, south west of the lake.

**Food**

Our hosts are well aware of the demands of the event and will do their utmost to ensure that riders will have plentiful food regardless of their time of arrival. One of the main options at the yurt camp itself will be a continuous supply of vegetarian Plov, the hearty Central Asian dish that consists of rice, carrots, and spices (without the usual mutton). Please get in touch if you have any specific dietary requirements so that we can inform you of what will be available and whether you will need to make any special preparations. Simple packed lunches will also be available for you to take with you. This will likely be a portion of a dish such as Plov as well as a chocolate bar and a fruit. Last year, the yurt camp did a stellar job of getting hot food to riders as they arrived and we expect them to do so again this year.

**Finish:** Balykchy, Issyk-Kul Region



**Finish Line:** TBC

**Coordinates:** TBC

**Closes:** Saturday 29th August 24:00 (UTC+6) (for the avoidance of doubt, that is midnight on Saturday, the evening of the party!)

**Distance from start:** 1804 km

A resort near Balykchy will be the finish for the third edition of the race. The town itself is a centre for fishing on the north shore of lake Issyk-Kul. We'll be choosing a resort a little east of the town that will make for a relaxing place to finish the race.

#### **Accommodation at the finish line**

We are still working to finalise plans for the exact location of the finish line. We will do our utmost to ensure that there is accommodation for all riders but at this point it is still a work in progress.

## **Finisher's Party**

There will be drinks, back-slapping and some speeches and small prizes on Saturday 29th of August from 8pm until late. It'll be the opportunity to chill out, exchange stories from the road and generally recover from the ride.

## **Transport back to Bishkek**

Transport will be organised for all riders back to Bishkek on the day after the finisher's party (30/08). This will also include transport of your bike but is not included in the entry fee, you will be able to sign up and pay for a spot at registration. The cost of the transfer back to Bishkek will be 10\$. Should you need to return to Bishkek early, please get in touch before the race or do so at the finish line directly. We are hoping to use the old Soviet train from Balykchy to Bishkek. It should make for a last unforgettable experience before leaving Kyrgyzstan after the race. If we're able to organise this, we'll likely ride together from the finish line to the train station, get the bikes loaded up, everyone onboard and step back in time on our way back to Bishkek.

## Safety throughout the Race

Entering this race should not be taken lightly, it is a serious undertaking that will require a high level of fitness, extensive preparation and carefully selected equipment. As the organisers, safety is our primary concern. The vast majority of the route is on 4x4 tracks or gravel roads with very little traffic. Nonetheless, there are sections where you will not be alone on the road and as we have seen from the recent tragedies in our community, sharing the road with cars can be dangerous.

The entire route has been ridden, checked and a full risk assessment conducted. It shall also be taken as a clear indication to riders that the SRMR is an ultra endurance bike packing race that pushes the boundaries of races of this type and each and every participant must pay particular attention to his/her race preparations. Your bike should be appropriate for the terrain and in perfect working condition. Lights and brakes shall be in full working order. Use your lights in all conditions of darkness or reduced visibility. **We will be conducting a brief bike check at registration to ensure that brakes and lights are fully functional.** Almost the entire race takes place at altitude, where the weather can be highly unpredictable and unseasonal. Each rider should therefore plan for all conditions and eventualities. **Starting this year, we will also check your equipment to ensure that you have everything on the mandatory equipment list.** There are long stretches of the route where there is no shelter, no habitation, and no services of any kind available to compensate for poor preparation or inadequate equipment. Riders are advised to be particularly vigilant with regard to the additional consequences of exhaustion, sleep deprivation and extremes of temperature, where they may be completely alone for substantial periods during the race.

It is compulsory to wear a helmet compliant with EN1078 at all times when riding during the event. Finally, take care to keep your insurance, identification and next of kin contact documents with you in a safe, dry place at all times.

### SRMR teams on the road

Last year, we had two medic cars, with a doctor and assistant each, in case of emergencies, that were ready to intervene in support of local emergency services. Because of the setting of the race, this proved invaluable in a few rare cases. We kept their presence discrete out of a concern that it should not change the riders' experience of the race as an unsupported event. This year we will again have these vehicles on the course, close to riders as an emergency backup. Like last year, although the medic cars was tracked by SRMR, we will keep them off the race map to avoid alarming loved ones and followers of the race. Please do not count on this safety net nor expect them to help in any way unless there is an emergency. They are there for your safety but should not affect the way you ride this race.

## **Warnings about riding the Silk Road Mountain Race**

As we have previously stated, entering into this race is a serious undertaking. It takes place in a developing country where services and infrastructure are very limited. This is part of the attraction of the race, but you must also understand the risks that this entails. We will go over some of the major risks that are inherent with taking part in this adventure below.

### **Terrain**

It is an understatement to say that Kyrgyzstan is mountainous. Over 40% of the country is above 3000m. The race route essentially never leaves the mountains. After departing Bishkek, it never drops below 1300m and when it does reach this altitude, it is only for very short stretches. There are 5 passes above 3500m. There are only a few paved sections, with most of the route following gravel roads of varying smoothness and quality (a lot of it is extremely rough). There will be some difficult stretches up to around 10 kilometers in length where you will be required to push your bike as riding is impossible. There will be numerous shallow rivers to cross, with water up to thigh height. Please also note that at any of the high passes, and indeed at several other points on the route, there is a lot of loose rock above the road and rockfall is a serious possibility. Very little has been done to stabilise the terrain in these areas and rockfall can occur at any time. Please be particularly cautious during these sections. We strongly recommend not listening to music while riding as you pass through these sections so that you at least have the possibility of hearing falling rocks and reacting. Please also consider the risk of rockfall when setting up your bivy or tent for the night.

### **Climate and Weather Conditions**

The best way to describe the overall climate of Kyrgyzstan is continental. Summers are hot, winters are cold. However, this should be taken with a pinch of salt. At lower elevations, summers can get pretty steamy, but at higher elevations, summer heat isn't as big of a problem. Down in the valley you are likely to get very hot but not so much at altitude. It's hot during the day but the temperature often drops below freezing at night. Be prepared for rapidly changing and extreme weather conditions. You will likely spend most of your time wearing only bibs and jersey but you should be well prepared for much colder conditions. During the first edition of the race riders encountered temperatures ranging from +40°C down to -12°C. They were hit with rain, hail, wind & a generous helping of snow. Please plan accordingly and react swiftly to changing weather conditions. Being cold and wet at altitude can quickly become dangerous.. Don't let yourself get cold before reacting to weather conditions. Hypothermia can impair your ability to think clearly and it will most likely already be too late to make good decisions if you let things get this far. Riders will experience and should plan for four seasons.

### **Emergency and medical services**

Kyrgyzstan is a developing country with extremely difficult terrain. Medical services are very limited outside major urban centres. High quality medical facilities only really exist in the capital, Bishkek. On the route there are more limited facilities in Naryn (100km from Bishkek) and to a lesser extent Kochkor. There are also extremely limited emergency response teams. There is no helicopter on standby to come to the assistance of people in remote areas like there is in Europe or North America. It may take hours or even days for emergency services to reach you, even with the SPOT trackers that all riders are required to carry.

## **Resupply**

Due to the wild and remote nature of some sections of the route, resupply will be one of the major challenges that you will face to remain safe and ride efficiently. Information on resupply points that we consider are reasonably certain to be in operation at the time of the race is provided in this manual. Please be warned, that this information is for guidance only. There are also no doubt more potential resupply points, so do your own research. It is a good policy to keep some reserves in case you are unable to get resupply. Keep in mind that re-supply options are also far more limited in Kyrgyzstan. Most small village shops will not have a great selection of snacks and high energy food that is convenient to bring with you on the road. The average distance between resupply points is around 100 kilometers, sometimes it is a lot less and a few times quite a lot more. There are multiple stretches of the route with several hundred kilometres where there is little to no chance of any re-supply whatsoever. You will need to think carefully about the calorie intake required to pass these sections.

## **Food**

Rider illness was a major issue in the first edition of the race. More often than not, the food and sanitary conditions will be vastly different from those in your home country and your stomach might not cope well with the change. Arriving just a few days in advance doesn't leave you much time to acclimatize to the local diet, so please remember to take with you medication approved by a medical professional to relieve traveller's stomach. The best plan is prevention, so please use your judgement and take the necessary precautions to mitigate the risk of illness. Be diligent about your water purification process and what you eat.

## **Animals**

During the summer months there should not be any major danger posed by wild animals. Although there is a very healthy wolf population in Kyrgyzstan and locals regularly asked me whether I was worried about them, the chance of an encounter is very low in August as food is abundant for them. That being said, the race takes place in a wild environment with a number of potentially dangerous predators and it is best to be cautious. A couple riders did report seeing a wolf on the trail last year. Snow leopards also live in these mountains but are extremely rare

## **Locals**

Generally speaking, the locals are one of the big highlights of Kyrgyzstan as a cycling destination. You will encounter many friendly, curious and helpful locals along the way and most likely be offered some form of their legendary nomadic hospitality. However, there are a few things to be careful of and to keep in mind. Alcohol is a serious problem in the region and you may come across people who have had a few too many at any time of day. It is best to be courteous but firm and remove yourself from their company. Kyrgyzstan is also quite a conservative country, and although female riders will generally be safe it is good to be careful about any unwanted advances.

Following the incident that we had last year, with the attempted robbery of one of our riders, we do recommend that you read through the UK [travel advice](#) regarding Kyrgyzstan thoroughly. You may also find similar information from the consular services of your own country helpful. Essentially, you must be aware that, although relatively rare, these kinds of incidents can happen. The vast majority of people are friendly and helpful but, as it is back home, there are also people who don't have your best interests at mind.

## **Police**

The local police can sometimes be an issue for tourists in Kyrgyzstan, although it is quite rare. You are required to keep your passport on you at all times and police may sometimes ask to see it. It is best in this case to either show them a copy if possible, or at worst show them your passport but keep a hold of it as you do. Always be patient and courteous. They may be looking for some kind of bribe but if you make it clear that you are not going to be an easy target they will generally move on.

## **Border zone checkpoints**

On the way to checkpoint 2 and from there on to checkpoint 3 you will be required to show your Border Zone Permit, also known as a Propusk to the border guards. This document is included with your entry fee for the race. This will happen on the main highway towards China. This should normally be a simple formality. Again, be patient and courteous, the soldiers are usually more curious and bored than anything else, and welcome the distraction of a cyclist coming through their checkpoint. We will provide more detailed information about crossing these military checkpoints at a later date.

## **Altitude**

With the race route quickly reaching relatively high altitudes, it is important for riders to understand the risks involved due to altitude, particularly with the effort of cycling. You should do your own research on the disorders that can occur at altitude and their symptoms, including acute mountain sickness (AMS), pulmonary edema and cerebral edema. It is very important not to ignore any of the symptoms associated with these disorders. The primary response is to immediately return to a lower altitude. You may also consult with your doctor regarding medication that may help alleviate symptoms or be used in case of emergency. Beyond the serious health implications that can occur at altitude, if you want to successfully complete the race, please consider starting slowly and listening to your body. If you start too hard too early, you may well bring a premature end to your race.

This article for medical professionals contains information which you, in consultation with your doctor, may find useful. <https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/303571-overview> (you will need to create a free account to view the article)

We have received expert information suggesting that, in regard to pre-race acclimatization, you might want to consider either:

A) Spending a week at 2500-3000m on August 3-9 in your home country or elsewhere

or

B) Arriving in Bishkek four to five days before the race start and then spending two nights (10 hours or so each) at 2500-3000m during that 4 to 5 day period.

## **Flights and lost luggage**

In the first edition, there were many bicycles and checked bags that did not make connections. In the end, they did eventually arrive, but some only after the start of the race. Though impossible to plan for, when booking flights, try not to choose connections with very short layovers. Arriving a few days ahead of the start, if possible, will give your luggage some time to arrive in case it does go missing.

## **Mandatory equipment list**

There will be a mandatory equipment list for all participants in the race. We will keep this as short as possible. It is essentially a checklist to make sure that you do not head out into remote areas with inadequate equipment.

- Front and Rear lights
- Helmet
- Basic first aid kit - this includes bandages, antiseptic/sterile wipes, medication
- Suitable sleeping system. We won't be enforcing a specific temperature rating for each piece of equipment, but rather, you should have with you equipment to be comfortable sleeping at -10°C degrees.
- Down jacket or synthetic equivalent. Something warm if you get stuck in cold/wet weather.
- Individual shelter. We strongly recommend that you bring a tent but a good bivy is also acceptable if you are confident and experienced in its use.
- Survival blanket : they're super light and could prove invaluable in an emergency.
- Water purification tablets / water filter / steripen / equivalent - very important - please use them at all times even if the river looks clean and you can't see any animals around!
- Gloves : to our surprise we had a rider who didn't bring gloves in the first edition. You will need to have two pairs of gloves. One warm and one waterproof. These are to protect you from the weather rather than cycling specific.

## **Bike recommendations**

There are a number of bike options that would all be solid choices for this race. There are few extremely technical sections, but you will benefit from wider tyres, flat bars and mountain bike geometry on the rougher sections and on descents. When it gets very tough, you probably won't be able to ride, regardless of the bike you choose.

When I first scouted the route, I used a hardtail 29er with 2.2" tyres. On the second scouting trip I was on a cyclocross bike with 35C tyres, while another member of the team was on a rigid adventure/gravel bike with 650b x 2.0" tyres. I would not recommend the CX with skinny tyres but it is possible to ride most of the route with it, at your own peril... I think the ideal bike is something fast and light with at least 2.0" tyres. When it comes down to it, it will depend on you: your bike handling skills, how much comfort you need for long days in the saddle, and the bike that you have available. What I would recommend though is low gearing, with, at the very least, a 1 to 1 ratio for your lowest gear. There are some steep, steep sections. You may well also want to go with front suspension, but it is not required.

## Emergency Situations

Regardless of how competitive you are or where you stand in the race rankings, safety should always be your primary concern. Please think carefully about your personal safety at all times and avoid unnecessary risks. Many sections of the race route are remote and difficult to access. Help will most likely take hours to arrive at the best of times. One of the key factors that we saw in terms of rider safety during the first edition was correct decision making. Whether to push on or stay put when confronted with extreme weather. There is a big difference between tackling Tosor in the sun, with a blue sky, or in a blizzard with high winds... Tackling any of the tougher sections of the route in the dark is also a completely different undertaking. There are a few passages that we would recommend all but the most experienced of riders avoid crossing at night, and even then, they are likely to find it very tough going.

In the event that you do find yourself in a life threatening situation, check your spot tracker and activate the SOS function. If you are within cellular reception, please call us immediately. Contact information will be given during the rider briefings and will be printed on your brevet card. If none of these options are available to you, due to tracker malfunction, etc. you will need to find your own assistance.

We do not want to discourage people from using the SOS function on their tracker, but please know that we take distress signals very seriously and getting help to the location of the incident often requires massive coordination by the organisation. Please think carefully before using this function and **use the SOS only in a life threatening situation**. We will not be able to establish the reason for the SOS call until someone is physically on location.

We will have a team of Dot Watchers who will be monitoring your track very carefully for the duration of the race and if we spot something unusual, we will likely make sure things are okay. We will put systems in place to ensure that in the event that something happens to a rider, but that they are unable to notify SRMR, there will still be a response. An analysis will be made of the conditions before the period of inactivity: terrain, speed, location, etc. to judge the probability that there is an issue and react accordingly.

## **Next of Kin**

All riders are required to give details of their next of kin, so that they can be contacted if SRMR become aware of any incidents or accidents involving riders. Next of kin will be contacted before the race and notified that they have been nominated as a racer's point of contact. They will also be advised of some of the more important details of the rider agreement which riders have signed, the responsibilities of the riders, and the limited obligations of SRMR. This will also be given information on how to follow the race and what to expect.

SRMR advise that riders discuss their entry into the race with their next of kin well in advance of the event. Their next of kin should understand that the rider is taking full responsibility for their ride and is fully aware that they won't be getting any assistance. This discussion is key to the avoidance of any misunderstanding by participants or their next of kin.

Due to the nature of the event and the distribution of riders along the course, SRMR cannot provide emergency rescue to riders. Our commitment is to help coordinate the best response possible to any incident and notify next of kin as soon as we can, once we are aware of an incident and provide them with as much information as possible.

In the event of an incident, SRMR will not make any public statements without first contacting next of kin, verifying information and obtaining their permission.

## Registration Documents / Checklist

For registration you will need the following:

**Photo ID** - For example passport / driver's licence / ID card to prove it is you and so no imposter can steal your place on the starting line.

**Doctor's Note** - We must ask you to provide a medical note signed by your doctor to certify that you are in good physical health to undertake the demands of the event. The note must bear the name and marks of a traceable doctor's practice, confirm that there are no known health reasons that you should not participate and mention the Silk Road Mountain Race by name.

We will be providing a document that we recommend you bring with you when visit your doctor for the purpose of obtaining a doctor's note. It will provide a brief outline of the challenges of the event and a checklist of topics that it could be useful to discuss with your doctor. This document can be found at the end of this manual but will also be sent to all riders separately.

All riders must have valid insurance which covers emergency extraction and repatriation. Please bring your policy number and the name of your insurer, or a copy of your cover certificate.

Policies are also available which will insure you for your race fee should you have an accident before the race which means you cannot participate.

It is the rider's responsibility to contact the insurer and confirm that the level of cover they require is provided and in particular for SRMR, which is a competitive event. Please note that there are no cash or high value prizes in the SRMR as this can affect premiums and cover.

### Visas

The visa policy of Kyrgyzstan is one of the most open in Central Asia, however, depending on where you are from, you may still be required to obtain a visa. Please find below up to date visa information as of the publishing of this race manual.

Holders of passports issued by the following 61 nations are not required to obtain a visa for Kyrgyzstan up to the length of stay mentioned below:

**Indefinite stay**

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Cuba<sup>1</sup>
- Georgia
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Moldova
- North Korea<sup>1</sup>
- Russia
- Tajikistan
- Vietnam<sup>1</sup>

1 – provided being permanent residents of country of nationality.

**90 days**

- Mongolia
- Ukraine

**60 days**

- European Union / EFTA citizens except Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania
- Australia
- Bahrain
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Brunei
- Canada
- Kuwait
- Monaco
- New Zealand
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Singapore
- South Korea
- United Arab Emirates
- United States
- Uzbekistan
- Vatican City

**30 days**

- Malaysia
- Turkey

Holders of passports issued by the following nations are eligible to obtain a visa on arrival valid for a maximum stay of 30 days at Manas International Airport:

- Albania
- Andorra
- Argentina
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Chile
- Cyprus
- Indonesia
- Israel
- Macedonia
- Mexico
- Montenegro
- Oman
- Philippines
- Romania
- San Marino
- Serbia
- South Africa
- Thailand
- Venezuela

From 1 September 2017 citizens of all countries (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) may apply for tourism, business and group tourist types of visa for 30 or 90 days online through the eVisa system. Evisa holders must arrive via Manas International Airport, Osh Airport and Ak-jol checkpoint on the Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border.

Please note that this information is for reference only, visa policy can change, please check this information yourself well in advance of booking your flights.

## Satellite Tracking

Satellite tracking is included within the entry fee. SPOT personal satellite trackers will be available for collection all day on Friday and their use demonstrated.

### Private SPOT trackers

Private trackers are welcome and encouraged, there is a £60 discount for riders with their own device.

If you wish to use your own tracker we will require your share page URL and ESN number - there will be a form available to submit this on or before race day.

(note that a Garmin style GPS device is not the same as a SPOT tracker and does not perform the same function. For your SPOT you will also need an active service plan).

Prior to the start of the race you will also need to change the emergency contacts on your findmespot page to those specified by SRMR, this will ensure that emergency services are coordinated as quickly as possible in case of emergency. Details on how to do this and the contacts to use will be sent to riders separately by email.

All racers who do not have their own tracker will be supplied one by SRMR. It is the rider's responsibility to keep this active and replace batteries as necessary. In the event that your tracker is not active for any period of time then riders may be asked to present other evidence to confirm their ride in order to get a valid time and place on the leaderboard. All finishers in the top 10 will need their ride verified by a tracker.

### SRMR rental devices: SPOT Generation III



*This is what the SPOT GEN III Units look like*

### Tracker Deposit

A refundable deposit of £180 against loss or damage will be required for each tracker online via Paypal. Your deposit will be returned to you via Paypal once you have returned the tracker.

## Tracker Instructions

**Mounting device.** Ensure the tracker has the SPOT logo facing up with a clear view of the sky, this ensures the best satellite coverage. The ideal spot is up higher and/or away from you, it can be placed at the top of a bag (the right way up) and transmit through the fabric but it shouldn't be under other equipment.

**Turn on.** Press and hold the Power button at the top left to turn on; lights will illuminate. THEN Start tracking. Please leave your tracker on for the duration of the race. It will switch into power saving mode when you are not moving so there is no need to ever switch it off. This will prevent the risk of accidentally forgetting to turn it back on, causing concern from SRMR and loved ones alike.

**Start tracking.** Press and hold the Track (footprint) button until the light illuminates green. The device can be left on continuously, it is motion activated so will use very little battery when stopped.

**Turn off.** Press and hold the Power button until the Power light blinks rapidly.

**OK button.** For SRMR 2020 you will be able to use the OK button in two situations: at the end of the day to let us know that you have stopped for the night; and when you are stopped or plan to stop for more than 6 hours. This will let us and our dotwatching team know that there is nothing for us to worry about during a prolonged break. To ensure the message gets through, leave on under a clear sky for 20 minutes.

**Help button.** If you press the help button you are letting us know that you can no longer continue but are not in a life threatening situation and need to be picked up. Nomad's Land travel agency will organise a driver and car to come and pick you up for a fee. The pricing and drop off location depends on where you call for the pick-up. These will be listed at the end of the race manual. Driver's will be sent from 08:00 am to 20:00 pm and may take several hours to arrive depending on distance and availability. Any use of the help button will mean an irreversible end to your race. Please think very carefully before using this button. The button must be held down for 3 seconds to function, making any accidental use extremely unlikely.

**Custom Message Button.** (text message icon) We will not be using the Custom Message button for SRMR 2020

**SOS button.** SPOT's S.O.S. function should only be used for critical, life-threatening situations. Pressing the S.O.S. button sends an alert directly to Race HQ and local authorities, who will work together to coordinate an emergency rescue as soon as possible. As stated elsewhere in this manual, please be aware that the response time may be significant, with help possibly many hours away.

**Replacing batteries.** Loosen the screws to open the back cover. Install 4 AAA Lithium batteries. Replace cover and tighten screws. Turn on and start tracking again. **PLEASE BRING A SET OF SPARE BATTERIES TO KYRGYZSTAN FOR REPLACEMENT AT CP2**

**Waterproof.** The device is waterproof to a depth of 1 metre for 30 minutes. For more detailed information, visit [www.findmespot.com](http://www.findmespot.com) and view their "SPOT Gen3 user guide"

# The rules

## Introduction to the Rules

When it came to deciding the rules of the SRMR for inclusion in the first edition of the race manual, I first had a look at how other unsupported races do things, and the slight differences that exist in the letter of the law for each of them. They all share the same general principles but there is some variation both in the rules that are spelled out and how strictly they are applied. In the end, I based the rules on the system that Mike Hall developed for the last edition of the Transcontinental that he was involved in before his tragic death. He was at the forefront of developing our sport and worked tirelessly to improve and update things every year, learning from the experience of putting on one of the leading unsupported races. From personal experience, I can say that the rules that he developed worked very well in the context of the Transcontinental. The addition of the distinction between a completion and category finish added another level of sophistication to distinguish between true solo finishes and riders who completed the challenge but who could not truly say that they finished the race entirely unsupported. I think that there is real value in retaining this system. It allowed for two categories of finishers, one a little more lenient that made the race more accessible, and the other that ensured that those going for the win would need to really do things entirely by themselves.

However, there are also some notable differences between the Transcontinental and the Silk Road Mountain Race. The discussion on the SRMR Facebook group has served to highlight some of the issues that riders will encounter and the difficulties that they may have in navigating the grey areas between private and commercially available resupply. What is acceptable 'trail magic' and what is outside resupply that will give one rider an advantage over another? Where does the line fall between positive interaction with locals and relying on them to complete your ride? When the nearest bike shop is back at the start of the route, over a thousand kilometers away, and a rider's pump is broken through no fault of their own, should that mean the end of their ride or of anyone who stops to help? How do we distinguish between these different scenarios in a way that holds riders to a high standard of self-sufficiency and ensures an even playing field while still being realistic? Following the rules is largely self-policed and riders need to feel that they can discuss any issues that they had during their ride.

From the very first edition of the SRMR we need a set of rules that best reflects the reality on the ground while respecting the spirit and heritage of our sport. No doubt we will build on these rules and adapt them as we learn more about the realities of the race in future editions.

## The Rules for Silk Road Mountain Race 2020

The Silk Road Mountain Race is a race from point A to point B, via a predefined and shared route on a bicycle for solo riders without any dedicated assistance. It's pretty simple really but some people do whatever they can to get one over on the rest of us, so we need some rules.

Put simply, there will be two types of finishes for SRMR 2020.

If all **RULES** given below are observed then riders are awarded a **COMPLETION** and are included in the register of **arrivals** which will be listed in time order. Where any reasonable doubt may exist and there is no evidence of a rule breach, then benefit of such doubt is given to the rider.

If, as above, all **RULES** are observed **AND** the conditions for **QUALIFICATION** below are met then riders will be awarded a **CATEGORY FINISH** and be given a finishing position in the **general classification** for solo or pairs as well as being listed in the register of **arrivals**. Where any reasonable doubt may exist and there is no evidence of qualification then the rider will need to prove it.

To summarise: in the presence of doubt Rules compliance is generally assumed, but qualification *must be proved*.

If a category finish is desired it is in the rider's interests to actively avoid doubt.

### RULES FOR COMPLIANCE

Here are the rules that **all** riders must meet in order to be awarded a completion and finishing time for the Silk Road Mountain Race.

1. Ride from the designated start line to the designated finish via the route provided and the 3 manned checkpoints listed in this manual and specified on the Brevet Card.
2. No 3rd party support, private lodgings or resupply. All food, drink and equipment must be carried with you or acquired at commercially available services
3. Riders must not solicit any form of private resupply from locals on the race route, any such interaction must be freely offered and unplanned
4. No drafting (other than pairs with their partners)
5. All forward travel overland must be human powered
6. All riders must maintain evidence of their ride
7. Travel insurance, cycle helmets, lights and equipment in the required equipment list are mandatory, we may be checking
8. Riders must know and observe all local traffic laws
9. Ride in the spirit of self-reliance and equal opportunity

## **CONDITIONS FOR QUALIFICATION**

Riders will qualify for Solo or Pairs general classification if:

- They begin and finish their race under the same classification
- They remain self-sufficient for the entire duration of their ride
- They validate at controls within the time of operation

## **NOTES**

In order to provide a simple framework for the race this is a simplified set of rules and is therefore open to interpretation. Interpretation for the purposes of race reporting will be made by the race director. The race director's decision is final.

This is a largely self-certified race and it is taken on trust that the ride presented has been ridden in good faith. However, if that trust is found to be broken, for example if the rider is pictured drafting another, dismissal of the offending riders will be swift and definite. You are strongly encouraged to report foul play in your fellow riders. This should not be viewed as malicious against the rider(s) in question, but a favour and duty to the racing community and in the interest of preserving an honest self-policing racing culture.

Riders should act within the spirit of the rules as well as within the letter of them. This is largely what Rule no.8 means. In the event that a competitor is found to have broken, bent or attempted to circumvent the rules in order to gain an advantage, violations will be taken on a case by case basis. Just because there isn't a rule to cover the specific flavour of deviousness chosen, it doesn't mean a rider will get away with it.

### **Clarification of rule #3**

In a country with a proud tradition of nomadic hospitality, it would be a real shame not to allow riders to accept offers of this kind. However, allowing riders to accept offers of food, drink and even shelter, does create a lot of possibilities for contentious situations.

The principle that riders follow is this: they may accept legitimate unplanned offers of drink, food or shelter but must not go looking for it. Any help received must not be solicited in any way. It's the difference between stopping for a shepherd who waves you over and going off route and asking for something. I absolutely do not want to hear of riders knocking on doors or going out of their way to get help from locals. Riders should not be counting on the support of locals to get them through a remote section. They should be fully self-sufficient and any offer from locals should be an opportunity for interaction and positive experiences rather than a means of carrying less supplies or gaining any kind of advantage. If they do get themselves into a situation where they came to depend on a local to get them through it, then they should tell us about it and explain the circumstances.

For riders who are pursuing a category finish (a requirement for contesting the overall win), the same distinction when it comes to the burden of proof as in other situations will be observed. Unlike with a simple completion, where we will assume that anything offered by locals was indeed in good faith, riders

seeking a spot in the general classification will need to prove that it was the case if any doubts arise. It will not necessarily be easy to do so, meaning that there is a certain risk involved. We recommend you document any of these situations to ensure that there is no doubt. Take some pictures, make a video, whatever you feel can help. If you want to be absolutely certain that no questions arise, it may be best to avoid the more substantial offers of hospitality such as shelter or a full meal. In any case, given the slower pace of life in Kyrgyzstan, you'll most likely end up spending more time than planned if you do decide to stop...

Riders who do not validate at controls within their designated times of operation, by definition exclude themselves from the validation procedure provided by the event. Starting in the second edition of the race, SRMR will operate a hard 'cut-off' for these riders, they will no longer be included in the event listings and the organisers will no longer be able to provide even the basic contact and coordination in the case of an emergency. **Riders must understand that if they are not within the time-frame of the checkpoints' operation, they are essentially entirely on their own. It is extremely important to understand this.** We strongly urge all riders that are outside of the time-frame of the checkpoints to either end their ride or use shortcuts to get back into the main field of riders and continue at their own pace outside of the official race. There is nothing wrong with spending your remaining time in Kyrgyzstan to tour part of the rest of the route. However, if you keep your tracker on, please stay on the race route and avoid exploring other parts of Kyrgyzstan. This will only cause worry and concern from dotwatchers.

Another major topic that requires some discussion is assistance between riders. There was quite a lot of debate on the Facebook group about what constitutes outside assistance between riders, particularly for mechanical problems. This was especially true for minor infractions such as lending someone a pump. The view that we adopted for the first edition of the SRMR is that any assistance received from another rider means that you will not be disqualified but you will be eligible for a completion only. The assisted rider will not be able to receive a spot in the general classification. We will also slightly relax the rule regarding the rider doing the assisting also being penalised. Helping another rider will not affect their standing in the race.

Finally, I would also like to clarify what to do if you suffer a mechanical that you are unable to fix yourself or any other issue that requires a hasty retreat towards civilisation not under your own power. Essentially, the only good bike shops are back in Bishkek. You may be able to come up with a creative fix using some basic parts in the bazaar in Kochkor, Naryn, or off route in Karakol, but it won't be easy. Basically, if you want to continue your race you'll need to find a way to get back to Bishkek, fix your bike and then head back to the spot where the mechanical occurred. We will allow you to hitch or pay for a lift out, but also back, as the distances involved are such that riding back to the spot where you had the issue would essentially mean the end of your race. However you get back to where you were, it won't be easy and it will cost you a lot of time. If you do end up needing to do this, we expect you to document the exact location where you were picked up and make sure that you return precisely to the same spot. The best solution, of course, is to be certain of the gear you bring to Kyrgyzstan, carry plenty of spares and ride conservatively to avoid breaking anything in the first place.

Riders should talk to us. If there's ambiguity on the rules or riders don't know what to do; then they should ask. If you think you did something cheeky but you didn't mean it - tell us, explain why and surely everything will be OK. If you need to make a judgement call, think about the spirit of fair play and doing the right thing, think of the rider behind you and the rider in front, how you would feel if you were them.

Tell us what you see. Collect evidence, make a video of your predicament, that kind of thing. The more up front you are, the better.

### **Pairs riders**

In the pairs category riders in the pair act as a unit and may share food, equipment, information and resources between themselves and help each other including riding in each other's slipstream. No support is to come from outside the pair and resources cannot be shared outside the pair. To all intents and purposes, the pair shall interact with others outside the pair as if they were a solo rider.

### **Solo and assisted finishes**

A solo finish is regarded as a finish 'with honours' and qualifies riders to contest the overall General Classification. [I.e. a rider cannot win the Silk Road Mountain Race if they do not qualify for a solo finish].

Should any rider receive outside assistance from another rider in the race then this is classed as an assisted finish and is not eligible for either Solo or Pairs classification since riders must start and finish under the rules of their classification in order to qualify. The exception for this is that riders can help another rider in an emergency situation on the understanding that the rider who needs help gives up their Brevet Card to the helping rider and scratches from the race. This allows the helping rider to help/rescue a rider in distress and also achieve a Solo Finish. If a rider gets themselves into a situation where they required rescue, but then carry on to the finish, whatever the merits of the ride, they cannot reasonably be said to have completed the Silk Road Mountain Race.

## Doctor's Note Checklist

The Silk Road Mountain Race is a serious undertaking that will require a high level of fitness and preparation from participants. It presents a number of specific medical challenges that should not be underestimated. More information on some of the topics that we recommend riders discuss with their doctor can be found below. Please do not wait until the last minute to take care of this. For example, rabies immunization is given over a 21 to 28 day period. Furthermore, a pre-race acclimatization program might impact your travel plans.

The doctor's note should clearly show the name of your doctor and medical practice as well as a statement that there are no contrary medical reasons for your participation in the Silk Road Mountain Race. The full name of the event must be present on the note.

- **Altitude**

The Silk Road Mountain Race takes place at altitudes between 800m and 3900m, with an average altitude of over 2400m. Please discuss the risks involved with physical exertion at these high altitudes, possible preventive measures and any medication that may be appropriate. Take particular note of the symptoms that you may encounter and what to do in these situations. **We also strongly encourage you to discuss a pre-race acclimatization program with your doctor or consult an otherwise qualified travel medicine / high altitude expert.** We have received expert information suggesting that, in regard to pre-race acclimatization, you might want to consider either:

- A. Spending a week at 2500-3000m on August 3-9 in your home country or elsewhere or
- B. Arriving in Bishkek 4 to 5 days before the race start and then spending two nights (10 hours or so each) at 2500-3000m during that 4 to 5 day period.

- **Travel in a developing country**

Kyrgyzstan is a developing country and there are a number of illnesses associated with travel there. Ask your doctor about the kind of medication that could be useful to counter the effects of traveler's diarrhea and other possible afflictions.

- **Rabies**

There is the possibility of rabies from animal bites. Please ask your doctor about rabies prevention including immunization.

- **Other Immunizations**

Please check on the appropriate immunizations for travel to the region and ensure that you are up to date on immunizations for tetanus, etc.

- **Basic First Aid/ Medications**

It may be useful to ask your doctor for recommendations on what to include in the basic first aid kit that you are required to bring with you to participate in the race. In addition to your usual personal medications, please discuss whether you should carry other medications such as antibiotics - considering the remote nature of this endeavour.