

Republics of the Silk Road

September 12-25, 2027

KAZAKHSTAN – KYRGYZSTAN – UZBEKISTAN – TAJIKISTAN

Journeying aboard the *Golden Eagle*, we will travel through the magnificent ‘Stans’ of Central Asia – a fascinating patchwork of countries, stitched together by a shared history of Sovietisation, yet fiercely independent in identity. From the magnificent mosques and bustling bazaars of Uzbekistan to the breath-taking verdant expanse and ethereally tranquil landscapes of Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, this incredible 14-day adventure is your invitation to one of the world’s greatest train journeys.

Tour Itinerary

Almaty – Lake Issyk-Kul – Bishkek – Tashkent – Kokand– Rishtan– Margilan– Bukhara –Nukus – Khiva - Dushanbe – Shahrissabz - Samarkand

Revised Itinerary

- Day 1 Almaty arrivals
- Day 2 Almaty (join the *Golden Eagle*)
- Day 3 Lake Issyk-Kul
- Day 4 Bishkek
- Day 5 Tashkent
- Day 6 Kokand, Rishtan, Margilan
- Day 7 Bukhara
- Day 8 Nukus
- Day 9 Khiva
- Day 10 Dushanbe
- Day 11 Shahrissabz, arrive in Samarkand
- Day 12 Samarkand
- Day 13 Samarkand
- Day 14 Samarkand departures

Tour Accommodation

1 hotel night in Almaty · 9 nights onboard Golden Eagle · 3 hotel nights in Samarkand

Day 1 Almaty

Arrive at Almaty International Airport, where you are met and transferred to your stylish, centrally located hotel, perfectly positioned for an introduction to Kazakhstan’s former capital. Take time to relax after your journey or enjoy your first impressions of this elegant, leafy city, framed by the dramatic Tian Shan mountains.

On your first evening in Almaty, you are invited to a champagne drinks reception, offering the opportunity to meet your fellow travellers and tour management team. This is followed by our

exclusive Welcome Dinner, where specially selected international wines are served, as with all meals throughout the tour.

Day 2

Almaty, Kazakhstan

Almaty is Kazakhstan's largest city, renowned for its wide, tree-lined boulevards and relaxed, cosmopolitan character, set against the dramatic backdrop of the majestic Tien Shan Mountains. The city takes its name from the word alma, meaning 'apple', a legacy reflected in the flourishing orchards found just beyond the city limits.

This morning, enjoy a guided city tour introducing Almaty's rich history and cultural heritage. Highlights include a stroll through Panfilov Park, home to an impressive Second World War memorial, and a visit to the remarkable Zenkov Cathedral — a unique architectural masterpiece constructed entirely of wood, without the use of nails.

This afternoon, we board our private train, the Golden Eagle, where you can settle into your well-appointed, en-suite cabin and begin your luxury rail journey in earnest. This evening, gather on board for a Welcome Dinner, marking the start of an unforgettable adventure.

Day 3

Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

Today, we enjoy an extended visit to the magnificent Lake Issyk-Kul, a remarkable natural wonder set within the dramatic landscapes of Kyrgyzstan. Stretching over 180 kilometres in length and up to 60 kilometres in width, it is widely recognised as the second-largest alpine lake in the world. Its name, meaning "warm lake", reflects its remarkable resistance to freezing — a result of its great depth, moderate salinity, and geothermal activity beneath the surface. Framed by towering, snow-capped peaks, Issyk-Kul offers a scene of exceptional serenity and natural beauty.

This morning, you are invited to immerse yourself in the rich nomadic heritage of Kyrgyzstan with a privately arranged cultural event along the shores of the lake. Enjoy a captivating programme of traditional sports and games passed down through generations. While archery may be familiar, few will have encountered the spectacle of horseback wrestling, hunting with majestic Golden Eagles, or ordo — a traditional strategy game played with animal bones.

The experience is a vibrant celebration of steppe culture, encompassing music and dance, intricate traditional costumes, and demonstrations of time-honoured crafts. It offers a rare and authentic insight into a way of life that continues to thrive in the highlands of Central Asia, leaving lasting impressions long after the journey concludes.

Following the festival, there is an optional visit to the open-air Museum of Petroglyphs, showcasing ancient rock carvings that provide further insight into the region's deep cultural history, before returning to the Golden Eagle for dinner.

Day 4

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Originally a caravan rest stop serving travellers along the historic Silk Road routes, Bishkek is the capital of Kyrgyzstan and the focus of our afternoon sightseeing.

Our guided city tour introduces Bishkek's distinctive Soviet-era character, with visits to Ala-Too Square — constructed in 1984 to mark the 60th anniversary of the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic — and a selection of the city's leafy parks. These public spaces offer a fascinating insight into the country's 20th-century history and include monuments and statues dedicated to figures such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as well as the Memorial to the Red Guards.

Following our tour, we rejoin the Golden Eagle and continue our journey, crossing into Uzbekistan as we travel onwards to our first destination in this historic Central Asian nation.

Day 5

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Today we arrive in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Much of the city was extensively rebuilt following the devastating 1966 earthquake, resulting in its distinctive blend of broad avenues, monumental architecture, and Soviet-era design, which we explore during our guided tour.

Our sightseeing begins in the Old Town with a visit to the Khast-Imam Complex, an important centre of Islamic scholarship, where we are privileged to view one of Islam's most revered relics — the Uthman Qur'an, widely regarded as the world's oldest surviving manuscript of the Qur'an.

The tour continues with a visit to the Museum of Applied Arts, housed in the richly decorated former residence of Imperial Russian diplomat Alexander Polovtsev, followed by time in Independence Square, a symbol of modern Uzbekistan. We also visit the Railway Museum, offering insight into the pivotal role rail travel has played in the region's development.

Day 6

Fergana Valley (Kokand – Rishtan – Margilan)

Kokand is one of Uzbekistan's most ancient cities and historically a key trading post along the Silk Road. Highlights of our visit include the majestic Palace of Khudayar Khan, often called the Pearl of Kokand, and the Jami Mosque, the city's most impressive religious monument.

Our journey through the Fergana Valley continues to Rishtan, renowned for its exceptional ceramics. Here, you will witness a live pottery demonstration and gain a behind-the-scenes look at the intricate craftsmanship that goes into creating these vibrant, hand-decorated works of art.

Next, we travel to Margilan, a city steeped in history as a vital Silk Road crossroads. Immerse yourself in the time-honoured art of silk weaving during a visit to a local family workshop. Generations of artisans will guide you through the entire process — from feeding silkworms on mulberry leaves, to dyeing and weaving ikat silk on traditional looms — offering a rare insight into this ancient craft.

This day is rich with experiential moments, providing a deep and engaging exploration of Uzbekistan's artistic heritage and the enduring traditions of the Fergana Valley.

Day 7

Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Bukhara is simply outstanding. Like Khiva, much of the city was carefully restored with UNESCO support in time for its 2,500th anniversary in 1999, preserving its remarkable historical and architectural heritage.

The highlight of our tour is a visit to The Ark, the imposing fortress that served as the residence of Bukhara's Emirs — powerful rulers whose authority persisted until the Soviet era. We will also explore the grandeur of Poi-Kalyan Square, home to the iconic Kalyan Mosque, a masterpiece of traditional Islamic architecture. Wander through its vast pillar-domed galleries and deeply recessed niches, and you are transported back to a bygone era of Central Asian majesty.

Immerse yourself in the lively heart of the city at the Trading Domes, where merchants' stalls and crafts offer a sensory journey through Bukhara's vibrant markets. We then pause at Lyabi-Hauz Square, a serene social hub centred around a reflective pool and shaded by mulberry trees, where local tea houses invite moments of rest and observation.

Our touring continues with a visit outside the city to the Emir's enchanting 'Palace of the Moon and Stars', a testament to the opulence of Bukhara's historic rulers.

This evening, weather permitting, we will enjoy a barbecue on the station platform, an atmospheric way to conclude the day before the Golden Eagle departs, carrying us onwards on our journey.

Day 8

Nukus, Uzbekistan

Nestled in the remote north-west of Uzbekistan, the city of Nukus is set against a striking backdrop, surrounded by three vast deserts: the Kara Kum, Kyzyl Kum, and Ustyurt. This pristine landscape unfolds with endless sandy vistas, undulating dunes, and rugged peaks, offering a sense of isolation and adventure unlike anywhere else in Central Asia.

Our exploration of Nukus centres on the Igor Savitsky State Museum of the Arts, an extraordinary institution often described as the "Louvre in the Sands." Hidden in this remote oasis, it houses Central Asia's most extensive collection of 20th-century avant-garde art, alongside traditional crafts from the Karakalpak region, with more than 100,000 works preserved within its walls. Prepare to be captivated by the museum's remarkable treasures — a truly singular cultural experience that promises lasting memories.

Day 9

Khiva, Uzbekistan

Today we journey to the ancient city of Khiva, founded over 2,500 years ago. Once one of the Silk Road's most vital trading posts, it occupies a strategic crossroads linking Mongolia, Russia, China, and Persia. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Khiva rises dramatically from the desert, revealing an extraordinary ensemble of historic architecture.

Step back in time as we explore the city's imposing walls, intricately designed mosques, madrassas, bustling bazaars, and soaring minarets, each offering a glimpse into the rich cultural and commercial heritage that once defined this remarkable Silk Road hub.

Day 10

Dushanbe, Tajikistan

This afternoon, we arrive in Dushanbe, the vibrant capital of Tajikistan, beautifully situated on the Varzob River. Our exploration begins at the Museum of National Antiquities, where exhibits showcase the region's rich history and artistic heritage.

The highlight of the city awaits at the opulent Kohi Navruz Palace. Enjoy a guided tour with a local expert, who will reveal the fascinating story of this palace — originally a teahouse — and introduce you to the artisans and designers whose extraordinary work brought its halls to life. Marvel at the breathtaking chandeliers, intricately decorated rooms, and the exquisite attention to detail throughout this majestic residence.

Our touring continues with visits to Dushanbe's historic landmarks, including the Ismoil Somoni Monument, dedicated to the first King of the Tajiks, Independence Square, and Mekhrgon Bazaar, where the sights, sounds, and flavours offer a vivid taste of local life.

This evening, relax onboard the Golden Eagle, as the gentle melodies of our resident pianist accompany us on the scenic journey across the border into Uzbekistan, setting the tone for the next chapter of our Silk Road adventure.

Day 11

Shahrisabz, Uzbekistan

Believed to be the birthplace of Amir Timur, the formidable military strategist who modelled his empire on the methods of Genghis Khan, we visit the UNESCO-listed Ak-Saray Palace and the nearby statue of Timur. This majestic palace in Shahrisabz took over a quarter of a century to complete. Once adorned with vibrant mosaics and delicate Qur'anic calligraphy, the palace still bears the inscription 798 (1395–1396 AD), marking the date of its completion.

In the late afternoon, we arrive in Samarkand, where we say farewell to the Golden Eagle train. Upon arrival, we visit the Gur-e Amir Mausoleum, with its iconic azure dome, housing the tomb of Timur and serving as a testament to the grandeur of Timurid architecture.

We then check in to a five-star hotel in Samarkand, setting the stage for an extended exploration of this legendary Silk Road city over the next two days. Tonight, enjoy a dine-around experience at the hotel, sampling a selection of gourmet dishes to conclude the day in style.

Day 12

Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Just the mention of Samarkand evokes the romance and mystique of the Silk Road more than any other city. Founded in the 6th century BC, its stunning architecture reflects its former prominence as one of Asia's most important cities. Particularly notable are the magnificent architectural remains from the 14th to 17th centuries, when Samarkand flourished as the fabled capital of Timur's Mongol empire and the seat of his successors.

Today, we explore the city's most iconic sites, beginning with Registan Square, the jewel of Samarkand, and the Bibi Khanum Mosque, whose perfectly proportioned elegance continues to inspire awe. We will also visit Siab Bazaar, Samarkand's largest and most vibrant market, where a kaleidoscope of spices, fresh breads, produce, meats, and traditional treats offers a truly immersive sensory experience.

Our journey into Samarkand's cultural heritage continues at the Meros Paper Mill, where you will witness — and participate in — the centuries-old craft of traditional paper-making. For a taste of authentic Uzbek cuisine, enjoy Plov, prepared by a local chef, a dish that embodies the heart of Uzbek culinary tradition and social gatherings.

As evening falls, prepare for a truly unforgettable spectacle. We return to Registan Square, beautifully illuminated at night, where a dazzling light show brings Samarkand's rich history and cultural significance to life from your prime front-row vantage point. This extraordinary experience promises lasting memories and a magical conclusion to your day in one of the Silk Road's most legendary cities.

Day 13

Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Spend the morning continuing your exploration of Samarkand, beginning with the Shah-i-Zinda necropolis, a remarkable ensemble of mausoleums dating back to the 9th century, renowned for its intricate tilework and vibrant colors. We then visit the Ulugh Beg Observatory, one of the earliest Islamic astronomical observatories, constructed in 1428 by the famed astronomer and Timurid ruler.

From here, we travel to the ancient settlement of Afrasiab, where a museum houses artefacts uncovered during excavations of this historic city. Highlights include the famous frescoes from the Palace of Varkhuman, dating to the 7th century, offering a fascinating glimpse into the region's rich cultural and artistic heritage.

This evening, join us for a Gala Farewell Dinner, celebrating the culmination of our Silk Road journey with fine cuisine, carefully selected wines, and the shared memories of an extraordinary adventure.

Day 14

Samarkand, Uzbekistan

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight, concluding your unforgettable journey along the Silk Road.