Golden Eagle: A Caspian Odyssey Along the Ancient Silk Road

https://www.irtsociety.com/journey/caspian-odyssey-along-ancient-silk-road/



Overview

The Highlights

- Explore six central Asian countries by a combination of road, private jet and private train - the luxurious, fully en-suite *Golden Eagle* luxury train;

- 6 nights in private en-suite cabin on *Golden Eagle;*

- Accommodations at a five star hotel in Yerevan (2 nights), Tbilisi (3 nights), Baku (3 nights), & Almaty (1 night);

- Climb Yerevan's Cascade, a giant stairway providing incredible views of the city and Mount

Ararat in the distance;

- Discover Tblisi’s colorful old town, with winding streets and alleyways;

- Take in the 2,500 year-old city of Khiva, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site;

- View Samarkand’s Registan Square, beautifully lit at night;

- Visit Gori, birthplace of Stalin, including a museum of the infamous Soviet dictator;

- Cave city of Uplistsikhe, dating from the 6th century BC.

The Tour

From Armenia to Kazakhstan, the captivating Caspian Odyssey journey heads east through a magnificent menagerie of medieval cities, breathtaking archaeological architecture and palatial Islamic masterpieces.

Begin your trip in Yerevan and explore the fascinating South Caucasus region before flying over the Caspian Sea to board the luxurious *Golden Eagle* train. Travel by luxury train the ancient Silk Road trading route through Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Itinerary

Day 1: Yerevan, Armenia

Upon arrival at Yerevan International Airport you will be met and transferred to the five-star Alexander Hotel (or similar), where we stay for two nights.

For early arrivals to Yerevan, do not miss the opportunity to take advantage this afternoon of a Freedom of Choice option.

The first option allows you to discover Armenia’s spiritual heritage with visits to Etchmiadzin Cathedral, home to some of Christianity’s most revered relics, and the impressive ruins of the 7th-century Zvartnots Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Alternatively, you may opt to enjoy a guided walking tour of central Yerevan, exploring its lively streets, elegant architecture and landmarks while discovering the city’s blend of ancient history and modern culture.

Tonight we enjoy a Welcome Dinner at our hotel whilst you meet your fellow travelers and look forward to the journey ahead.

Day 2: Yerevan & Lake Sevan, Armenia

This morning we will explore one of Yerevan's most distinctive landmarks, The Cascade — a monumental limestone stairway adorned with sculptures, fountains, and terraces.

From here, visit the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial. Set on a hill overlooking the city, the memorial provides a powerful and reflective space of remembrance.

Departing Yerevan, our journey continues to Lake Sevan, one of the largest high-altitude freshwater lakes in the world. Stop here for lunch, enjoying stunning views across the shimmering waters.

After lunch, return to Yerevan for an optional visit to the renowned Yerevan Ararat Brandy Factory, where Armenia's iconic brandy has been produced for generations.

This evening, enjoy a dine-around dinner at a selection of carefully chosen local restaurants located near our hotel, offering the opportunity to savor a variety of Armenian flavors at leisure.

Day 3: Yerevan, Armenia

Today's touring takes you just outside Yerevan to the remarkable Geghard Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This extraordinary complex of medieval churches and tombs is partially carved directly into the surrounding rock, creating a striking harmony between architecture and nature.

We also visit the pagan Temple of Garni, dating from the 1st century AD and dedicated to the Sun God Mithra. Here, we explore the remains of an ancient fortress, royal palace, and bath complex before enjoying lunch in this spectacular setting.

Alternatively, guests may choose a gentle walk through Garni Gorge, following the right bank of the Azat River to admire the extraordinary natural formation known as the "Symphony of Stones" or Basalt Organ.

After an authentic Armenian lunch, we continue to the airport for our private charter flight to Tbilisi. This evening we arrive in the Georgian capital, where we stay for the next three nights at the Paragraph Freedom Square, a Luxury Collection Hotel (or similar).

Tonight, enjoy dinner in the hotel accompanied by a traditional folk performance — a lively and atmospheric introduction to Georgia.

Day 4: Tbilisi, Georgia

Heading into Georgia, we visit Tbilisi. Hemmed in by the Surami Range, the city extends for 17 miles (27 km) along the banks of the River Kura.

Historical sites we visit include the 13th century Metekhi church, a cross-cupola church which forms part of the Royal Residential complex, the 5th century Sioni Cathedral and the main church of Tbilisi before exploring the Old Town. We then depart to Chateau Mukhrani wine estate for a

delicious lunch and spend the afternoon tasting local wines.

After lunch, you may choose to continue exploring the Old Town on foot, visiting highlights such as Gabriadze's Clock Tower, Baratashvili Street, and the historic Anchiskhati Basilica (approximately a one-hour walking tour), or return to the hotel to relax at leisure.

In the evening, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant accompanied by a traditional Georgian dance performance.

Day 5: Gori, Uplistsikhe Cave City and Mtskheta, Georgia

This morning you may choose between two fascinating touring experiences.

One option takes us to Gori, one of Georgia's oldest cities, founded in the 7th century AD and best known as the birthplace of Joseph Stalin, born here in 1879. During our visit, we see the modest house where Stalin spent his early childhood, the Stalin Museum, and Stalin's private railway carriage. During this visit, guests may also choose to visit a local Ceramics Museum, showcasing the traditional works of renowned Georgian ceramicist George Tatulashvili.

The second option leads to the remarkable ancient cave city of Uplistsikhe. Strategically positioned above the Mtkvari River and protected by sheer rock faces and strong fortifications, Uplistsikhe once played a vital role in controlling the surrounding region.

Lunch today is served at a rustic local restaurant, accompanied by a private performance of traditional Georgian polyphonic singing.

Later this afternoon, our explorations continue to Mtskheta, Georgia's ancient capital and spiritual heart. Renowned for its historical importance and wealth of early Christian monuments, the city was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994.

This evening, enjoy a dine-around experience at local restaurants, dining at your leisure and sampling Georgia's rich culinary traditions.

Day 6: Tbilisi, Georgia to Baku, Azerbaijan

This morning, take a visit to the Janashia State Museum of Georgia, which houses an extraordinary collection of gold filigree work dating back to 6th Century BC.

After lunch in the city, we transfer to the airport where we board our private jet for the short flight to Baku.

Upon arrival we check-in for three nights at the five-star Four Seasons, Baku (or similar).

Day 7: Baku, Azerbaijan

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, occupies a striking position on the western shore of the Caspian Sea, along the southern edge of the Absheron Peninsula, curving gracefully around the wide sweep of Baku Bay.

At the heart of the modern city lies Icherisheher (the Inner City), Baku's atmospheric walled Old Town and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We tour its historic landmarks, such as Maiden Tower and the Palace of the Shirvanshahs, by coach before continuing on foot through the evocative streets of the Old Town.

After lunch at a local restaurant, the afternoon is at leisure to explore Baku independently. Guests may wish to visit the striking Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum, delve deeper into history at one of the city's national museums, or simply relax along the Caspian waterfront and absorb the city's distinctive blend of ancient heritage and contemporary ambition.

This evening, we enjoy a truly special experience at the magnificent Villa Petrolea. Here, we are privileged to enjoy a guided private visit, followed by champagne, canapés, and an elegant dinner within its historic interiors — a fittingly refined conclusion to a day immersed in Baku's past and present.

Day 8: Baku, Azerbaijan

This morning, we tour the UNESCO-honored Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape. Located 40 miles (64 km) from Baku on the west bank of the Caspian Sea, Gobustan is an outstanding archaeological site of more than 6,000 pre-historic rock engravings. The area also features the remains of inhabited caves, settlements and burials. This is followed by lunch overlooking the Caspian Sea.

Returning to the city in the afternoon, you can choose to enjoy free time in the city or visit the Ateshgah Fire Temple, a local Zoroastrian temple, before dinner at the hotel.

**For travelers who have booked the Jewels of the Silk Road journey, your adventure begins today.*

Day 9: Khiva, Uzbekistan

Following breakfast, we take a morning flight onboard our private plane to Urgench, gateway to the extraordinary desert city of Khiva. Founded 2,500 years ago, Khiva became one of the Silk Road's most important trading posts as it lies at the crossroads of the routes between Mongolia, Russia, China and Persia and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

A truly magnificent sight to behold, it rises out of the desert to reveal a wealth of impressive architecture. Stepping back in time, we discover its impressive mosques, madrassas, bazaars and minarets within the city's ancient walls.

Day 10: Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Today, we arrive in Bukhara and begin with a visit to The Ark, a fortified residence of the Emirs of Bukhara. Following, we visit Poi-Kalyan Square. Stroll through the mosque's large pillar-domed galleries and deeply recessed niches, and you will be transported to a bygone era.

Immerse yourself in the lively pulse of the city as we explore the bustling Trading Domes of Bukhara and gather at Lyabi-Hauz Square.

This evening, weather permitting, we will enjoy a barbecue on the station platform before our train departs.

Day 11: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Just the mention of Samarkand instantly conjures up images of the Silk Road, more so than any other town. Founded in the 6th century BC, Samarkand's stunning architecture hints at its former status as one of the most important cities in Asia, and is particularly noted for its architectural remains from the 14th to the 17th century, when it flourished as the fabled capital of the Mongol empire of Timur and his successors.

Today we will visit some of its most significant sites, including Registan Square, the refined elegance of the beautifully proportioned Bibi Khanum Mosque, and the Ulag Beg observatory, one of the earliest Islamic astronomical observatories built in 1428.

Before dinner, we will return to the now illuminated and awe-inspiring Registan Square for an incredible light show that weaves the rich tapestry of Samarkand's history and significance.

Day 12: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Today we arrive in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan. We spend time touring this modern Soviet-style city, which was rebuilt following the devastating earthquake of 1966.

Our tour begins in the Old Town with a visit to the Khast-Imam Complex, 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, followed by time in Independence Square, a symbol of modern Uzbekistan.

Day 13: Onboard & Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Enjoy a more leisurely day of scenic rail travel, as we traverse the wide-open landscapes of Uzbekistan before crossing the border into Kyrgyzstan.

In the late afternoon, we arrive in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, where we disembark for a short introductory tour of the city.

Our guided sightseeing reveals Bishkek's distinctive Soviet-era character. We visit Ala-Too Square and stroll through several of the city's leafy parks.

Day 14: Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

Today, we enjoy an extended visit to the magnificent Lake Issyk-Kul, a true natural wonder nestled in the heart of the Kyrgyz mountains. Stretching over 170 kilometers in length and up to 70 kilometers wide, it is recognized as the second-largest alpine lake in the world.

Immerse yourself in the rich nomadic heritage of Kyrgyzstan with a privately arranged cultural

event along the lake's shores. Enjoy a captivating display of traditional sports and games such as archery, horseback wrestling, hunting with majestic Golden Eagles, and "Ordo", a strategic game played with cow kneecaps.

After the festival, there will be the option to visit the outdoor Museum of the Petroglyphs before returning to the train.

This evening we enjoy our Farewell Dinner onboard the *Golden Eagle* as we head overnight to our final destination of Almaty.

Day 15: Almaty, Kazakhstan

This morning we arrive into Almaty, our final destination. We bid farewell to the *Golden Eagle* as we disembark at the station.

Today we will take a tour of the city, including a visit to Panfilov Park, located in the heart of the city, and home to the Zenkov Cathedral, a 19th-century Russian Orthodox Church made entirely of wood.

Following our tour, we transfer to the Ritz-Carlton Almaty hotel (or similar) for a one-night stay.

Day 16: Almaty, Kazakhstan

Following breakfast you will be transferred to Almaty Airport for your onward flight. Your journey's end.

Dates & Prices

2027 Dates

September 30 - October 15

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Silver Class	$32,300	$48,300	25%
Gold Class	$41,700	$69,600	25%
Imperial Suite	$76,700	$153,100	25%

All prices are per person.

More

Travel visas may be required for Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, depending on your nationality.