



## Overview

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### The Highlights

- Grand trek across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Russia
- The most stylish, comfortable way to see sights rarely seen by Western travelers
- Samarkand's Registan Square, with its stunning three madrasas
- Baikonur, home of the USSR Cosmonaut Program and launch point for both Sputnik 1 and Yuri Gagarin, first human in space
- Khudayar-Khan Fortress, built by the last Khan of Kokand, Uzbekistan

- Andizhan, Uzbekistan, birthplace of Zahiruddin Babur, founder & first Emperor of the Mughal Dynasty
- Shahrizabz, birthplace of Tamarlane the conqueror
- Eagle Hunting demonstration in Kyrgyzstan
- Ancient city of Margilan, world-famous for its silk production
- Open-air Museum of Petroglyphs at Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan, a sacred site used by Saka priests for sacrifices and other rites to the sun god
- Kohi Navruz Palace in Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan
- Moscow's Kremlin, Red Square, and St. Basil's Cathedral
- Visit Zenkhov Cathedral & Chimbulak Resort in Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Tours of Osh, Khujand, Samarkand, Shahrizabz, Dushanbe, Bukhara, Merv, Ashgabat, Khiva, Tashkent, & Bishkek
- All meals, wine and beer with lunch & dinner, off-train tours, and gratuities included

## The Tour

The Republics of the Silk Road is a fascinating rail journey through the Five Stans: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Travel in comfort aboard the [Golden Eagle](#) luxury train while exploring these Southern Republics of the former Soviet Union.

Watch [Lonely Planet's short video](#) explaining why they have named the Central Asian Silk Road the top region to visit in 2020.

## Itinerary

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### Day 1: Arrive Moscow

Arrive at the Moscow Airport, where you are met and transferred to the stylish five-star Four Seasons Hotel Moscow. Located in the historic building of Moskva Hotel and occupying one of the most enviable addresses in the heart of Moscow, the hotel is a short walk from the Kremlin, Red Square, and the Bolshoi Theatre.

On your first evening in Moscow, you will be invited to a Champagne reception before our exclusive Welcome Dinner. Specially selected international wines are included with dinner, as with all meals during the tour.

## Day 2: Moscow, Russia

Our touring program of Russia's capital takes us to the grandeur of the Kremlin – the spiritual, historical, and political heart of Moscow – and to see the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber where we will enjoy an exclusive private viewing.

Our exploration of the city continues with a visit to Red Square, the iconic symbol of Russia's former military and political might, with its eclectic mix of fascinating architecture. Here we visit the magnificent onion-domed spires of the ornate St. Basil's Cathedral and marvel at the beautiful façade of the world-famous GUM department store, which was constructed in Tsarist times.

Lunch is served in Café Pushkin, a legendary Moscow restaurant that serves traditional Russian cuisine, and has a décor that revives the atmosphere of an early 19th-century mansion.

Next, we visit the Moscow metro, to see the opulent and unique subway stations – showpieces of Socialist art furnished with statues, frescoes, and mosaics, unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

Note: if you have been to Moscow before, take advantage of alternate Freedom of Choice touring options, and visit such places as the famous State Tretyakov Gallery (National Museum of Fine Art), or the Space Museum.

Late afternoon transfer to Moscow Kazansky Station, where you will be greeted in the ornately decorated Imperial Waiting Room with a cold glass of Russian Champagne and canapés and are welcomed by the train staff. The excitement in the waiting room audibly mounts and, 30 minutes before departure, your car attendants will escort you to Platform 1 where the *Golden Eagle* awaits.

## Day 3: On Board

Unwind and settle into life on board. Chat to your fellow passengers, perhaps learn a few words of Russian, or simply enjoy the ever-changing landscape outside your window as it unfolds. All meals served on board.

## Day 4: Baikonur, Southern Kazakhstan

Baikonur, formerly known as Leninsk, is situated on the right bank of the Syr Darya River, and was constructed to service the Baikonur Cosmodrome, which itself was originally constructed by the Soviet Union in the late 1950s as the base of operations for its space program. This is a place filled with so much history, from the launch of Sputnik 1 in 1957 and the launch of the first human, Yuri Gagarin, into space in 1961, to the current day missions to re-supply the International Space Station. On our visit to Baikonur, we will visit the launch station of Yuri Gagarin's mission into space.

## Day 5: Kokand, Uzbekistan

Kokand is the main transportation junction in the Fergana Valley and is located at the crossroads

of the two main ancient trade routes. It is known that each of the Khanates of Turan had their own impressive palace. One of these architectural monuments is the citadel of the last Kokand Khan, Khudayar Khan.

Today, we will visit the Khudayar-Khan Fortress and its remaining buildings and courtyards — the best way to understand not only the history of the buildings, but also the lives and times of Khudayar Khan, his wives, and his family. We will also have an opportunity to visit the museum displaying jewelry, clothing, and metal-ware.

## Day 6: Osh, Kyrgystan, & Andizhan & Margilan, Uzbekistan

This morning we arrive in Osh, a popular destination for Muslim pilgrimages. It is home to the sacred Sulayman Mountain, visible from all areas of the city and named in honor of the Qur'anic Prophet Solomon.

Our Freedom of Choice touring options include a walking tour of the city, taking in spectacular Soviet mosaics, murals, and public art, plus a visit to some of the major architectural sites and monuments honouring WWII soldiers and Chernobyl victims. Alternatively, you can enjoy a traditional bread making class. Bread is an important part of the local diet and across Kyrgyzstan it not only varies by its shape, but also by its taste, and the unique way in which it is baked.

Later, after crossing the Karasu-Uzbekskiy border into Uzbekistan, we stop in the town of Andizhan, dating back to the 9th century. The city is renowned as the birthplace of Zahiruddin Babur in 1483. He was a descendant of Amir Timur, who was once the ruler of this area. During our short visit, we explore the Jami Madrasah and mosque, one of the biggest religious complexes in the region, decorated with beautiful geometric patterns of pandjara and Islamic inscriptions.

Our final stop today is the ancient city of Margilan, famous for its production of silk, considered by many as the best in Central Asia. Here we will visit the Yodgorlik Margilan Factory, which is considered the best and only one of its kind in Uzbekistan. Producing more than 6,500 yards (6,000 meters) of silk per month, the factory has preserved a traditional manual method of silk production. We will explore the whole process of making silk — from the mulberry trees used to feed the silkworms, to the hardworking staff hand-weaving the colorful ikat fabric on traditional looms.

## Day 7: 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.

## Day 8: Shahrizabz, Uzbekistan

Shahrizabz is believed to be the birthplace of Amir Timur, the military prodigy who modeled himself on Genghis Khan and used similarly violent methods to conquer and control his Empire. During our tour, we will visit the UNESCO-honored statue of Amir Timur and his Ak-Saray Palace. This majestic palace took over a quarter of a century to build, and was originally decorated with colorful, intricate mosaics, and delicate, calligraphic inscriptions from the Qur'an. Amid the decorative facing, there is an inscription showing the date 798 (1395 – 1396 AD), which was when the building was completed.

## Day 9: Dushanbe, Tajikistan

This morning, we visit Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, situated on the Varzob River. Enjoy a guided tour of Kohi Navruz Palace with a local expert guide, who will tell the fascinating story of the tea house-turned-palace. You will explore each beautiful hall decorated with breathtaking chandeliers, while learning about each of the artists and designers who worked incredibly hard to build and decorate this majestic palace. After the tour, we will enjoy tea and local delicacies in the palace before returning to the *Golden Eagle* to continue our journey.

## Day 10: Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Bukhara is quite simply outstanding. In 1999, UNESCO sponsored the renovation of much of the city for its 2,500th anniversary. The highlight of this wonderful tour is a visit to The Ark, a fortified residence of the Emirs of Bukhara – the despotic and ruthless leaders who ruled until Soviet times. We then travel out of the city to experience the Emir's enchantingly named 'Palace of the Moon and Stars'. This evening, weather and time permitting, we will enjoy a barbecue on the station platform before our train departs.

## Day 11: Merv, Turkmenistan

Today we visit the ancient and mainly unrestored remains of Merv. Once an important stopping point on the Silk Road, it claims to have briefly been the largest city in the world during the 12th century. The year 1794 saw the demise of Merv — after the Emir of Bukhara destroyed the dam that served as the main water source for its people.

## Day 12: Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, is known as the 'Las Vegas of the Kara Kum.' Situated between the Kara Kum desert and the Kopet Dag mountain range, Ashgabat is a relatively modern city built upon the ruins of the Silk Road city of Konjikala. The Soviet city was largely rebuilt after the devastating earthquake of 1948.

The city's extravagant fountains, golden domes, and towering modern buildings appear strangely incongruous in this desert setting. Highlights on our visit include a visit to the National Museum



and Kipchak Mosque.

The *Golden Eagle* makes a brief scheduled stop at Ichoguz, where we have the option to leave the train and make a short journey to Darvaza's famous burning gas crater, a spectacular sight best seen at night. Located in the middle of the Kara Kum desert where the area is rich in natural gas, the 70-meter (230-foot) wide crater is known by the locals as the 'Door to Hell' and has been burning for over 40 years. A unique experience that is not to be missed.

## Day 13: Khiva, Uzbekistan

Today we travel to the ancient city of Khiva, which was founded 2,500 years ago. As one of the Silk Road's most important trading posts and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it lies at the crossroads of the routes between Mongolia, Russia, China, and Persia. 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 Khiva's ancient walls.

## Day 14: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

This afternoon we arrive in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan. We will spend time touring this modern Soviet-style city, which was rebuilt following the devastating earthquake of 1966. Our tour of the city includes the Old Town, where traditional homes and religious buildings line the narrow streets. During the tour, we will visit a small library, where we will have the privilege of seeing one of Islam's most sacred relics - the world's oldest Koran. This is followed by a visit to the Railway Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts.

## Day 15: Bishkek & Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

Originally serving as a caravan rest stop for travelers that came through the area along the Great Silk Road, Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek, is the location of our morning sightseeing. Here we will visit the Ala-Too Square, built in 1984 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic in Kyrgyzstan. We will also have a city tour of local parks, rich in Soviet history and featuring statues of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and the Memorial for the Red Guards.

This afternoon, we will enjoy a guided tour of the open-air Museum of Petroglyphs at Lake Issyk-Kul, a sacred site used by the Saka priests for sacrifices and other rites to the sun god. Some of the petroglyphs date from the Bronze Age, with later engravings dating from the 10th century. Later, we are treated to a breathtaking demonstration of eagle hunting, a 4,000-year-old art. You will learn the story of eagle hunting, the characteristics of the Golden Eagle, and the fascinating details of this Kyrgyz nomadic tradition.

## Day 16: Almaty, Kazakhstan

Almaty is the largest city in Kazakhstan and is notable for its wide, tree-lined boulevards. Surrounded by the majesty of the Tien Shan Mountains, this beautiful city's name is derived from "alma" meaning "apple." Just a short distance from the city, apple orchards thrive in abundance.

Our city tour includes a visit to Panfilov Park, where we visit the Zenkhov Cathedral, which was built entirely out of wood. We will also go out of the city to the Chimbulak resort, where a cable car ride will give you spectacular views of Almaty and the mountains.

This evening, we will enjoy a Farewell Dinner at the Intercontinental Hotel (or similar), toasting the success of our journey. We will stay overnight here to conclude the tour.

## Day 17: Almaty, Kazakhstan

After breakfast in your hotel, you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight.

## Dates & Prices

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### 2023 Dates

October 6 - October 19

ACCOMMODATION	DOUBLE	SINGLE	DEPOSIT
Silver Class	\$28,495	\$42,695	\$1,750
Gold Class	\$35,595	\$58,695	\$3,000
Imperial Suite	\$60,495	\$117,995	\$6,000

All prices are per person.

### 2024 Dates

October 5 - October 18

ACCOMMODATION	DOUBLE	SINGLE	DEPOSIT
Silver Class	\$28,495	\$42,695	\$1,750
Gold Class	\$35,595	\$58,695	\$3,000
Imperial Suite	\$60,495	\$117,995	\$6,000

All prices are per person.

2024 dates and prices are tentative and subject to change.

## More

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Four visas are required for this journey (for U.S. citizens); please allow six weeks for this process. Visa requirements vary depending on citizenship. Please inquire.

**Latest News:** Click [here](#) for owner Owen Hardy's blog on improvements on the *Golden Eagle*.