

Republics of the Silk Road: Almaty-Tashkent

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Overview

The Highlights

- Grand trek across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan
- The most stylish, comfortable way to see sights rarely seen by Western travelers
- Samarkand's Registan Square, with its stunning three madrasas
- Khudayar-Khan Fortress, built by the last Khan of Kokand, Uzbekistan
- Shahrizabz, birthplace of Tamarlane the conqueror
- 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
- Visit Zenkhov Cathedral & Chimbulak Resort in Almaty, Kazakhstan
- 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

Day 1: Arrive Almaty, Kazakhstan

Arrive at the Almaty Airport, where you are met and transferred to the stylish five-star Intercontinental Hotel.

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

Day 2: 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 derives its name from 'alma' meaning 'apple'. Just a short distance from the city, apple orchards thrive in abundance. The morning city tour includes a visit to Panfilov Park where we visit the Zenkhov Cathedral which was built entirely of wood.

In the afternoon, join the magnificent *Golden Eagle* train. Get settled in your private cabin and enjoy the attentive staff and top-level amenities.

Day 3: Bishkek & Lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

This morning, we learn about the traditional Kyrgyz nomadic lifestyle, how nomads used to live in the yurts, what crafts they mastered and how they breed and train their horses. Following this,

we are treated to breathtaking flight demonstration of Golden Eagle hunting, a 4,000-year-old art. You will learn the story of hunting with birds of prey, the particular characteristics of the *Golden Eagle* and the fascinating details of this time-honoured Kyrgyz nomadic tradition.

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

Day 4: 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 5: Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Bukhara is quite simply outstanding. Like Khiva, UNESCO sponsored the renovation of much of the city for its 2,500th anniversary in 1999. 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.

Our touring program will also transport us to the grandeur of Poi-Kalyan Square, home to the iconic Kalyan Mosque, a living relic of traditional Islamic design. Stroll through the mosque's large maksura rooms, 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, a vibrant social hub cocooned by a pool and embraced by the soothing shade of mulberry trees and local tea rooms. We then travel out of the city to experience the Emir's enchantingly named 'Palace of the Moon and Stars'.

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

Day 6: Merv, Turkmenistan

From Mary we transfer to 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. 1794 saw the demise of Merv, after the Emir of Bukhara destroyed the dam which the population depended on for its water.

Day 7: Ashgabat & Darvaza, 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 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-metre 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 8: Khiva, Uzbekistan

Today, we travel to the ancient city of Khiva, founded 2,500 years ago.

As one of the Silk Road's most important trading posts and now a 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 9: Shahrizabz, Uzbekistan

Believed to be the birthplace of Amir Timur, the military prodigy who modelled himself on Genghis Khan and used similar violent methods to conquer and control his Empire, we visit the UNESCO-honoured statue of Amir Timur and his Ak-Saray Palace.

This majestic palace in Shahrizabz took over a quarter of a century to build, and was originally decorated with colorful, highly detailed mosaic but also included 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 10: Dushanbe, Tajikistan

This morning, we visit the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, situated on the Varzob River and its opulent Kohi Navruz Palace.

Enjoy a guided tour with a local expert guide, who will tell the fascinating story of the teahouse-turned palace. You will explore each beautiful hall decorated with breathtaking chandeliers, while learning about each of the artists and designers that 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 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.

Day 12: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Spend the morning continuing to explore Samarkand, with a visit the famous necropolis Shakh I Zindah, a stunning collection of mausoleums dating back to the 9th century. From here we travel to ancient settlement of Afrasiab to visit a museum which houses ancient artefacts collected during the excavation of the city, including the famous frescoes from the Palace of Varkhuman, which date back to the 7th century.

We return to the train for lunch and continue our journey through Uzbekistan towards the Fergana Valley.

Day 13: Margilan, Rishtan and Kokand, Uzbekistan

This morning, we visit 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 Margilan Factory which is considered the best of its kind in Uzbekistan. Producing 6,000 metres of silk per month, the factory has preserved a manual and traditional 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 colourful ikat fabric on traditional looms.

From Margilan we continue onto Rishtan which is home to Uzbekistan's world-famous ceramic industry. Here we will discover the secrets of the techniques of the ancient craft from prominent local artisan Rustam Usmanov. Witness the magic of pottery in action during a close up demonstration by a master professional at work and get a behind-the-scenes look at the meticulous craftsmanship that goes into decorating these exquisite ceramics.

Kokand is one of the most ancient cities of Uzbekistan and served as a critical trading post on the Silk Road. Highlights of our touring include the majestic Palace of Khudayar Khan (the Pearl of Kokand), and the Jami Mosque, Kokand's most impressive Mosque.

This evening we enjoy our Farewell Dinner on board the *Golden Eagle* as we return to Tashkent.

Day 14: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

After breakfast on board, you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight.

Dates & Prices

2024 Dates

October 5 - October 18

ACCOMMODATION	DOUBLE	SINGLE	DEPOSIT
Silver Class	\$24,695	\$36,995	\$1,750
Gold Class	\$30,895	\$50,895	\$3,000
Imperial Suite	\$52,495	\$103,895	\$6,000

All prices are per person.

2025 Dates

April 20 - May 3

September 27 - October 10

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Silver Class	\$25,695	\$38,495	\$1,750
Gold Class	\$33,195	\$54,695	\$3,000
Imperial Suite	\$60,395	\$119,495	\$6,000

All prices are per person.

2026 Dates

April 14 - April 27

September 27 - October 10

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Silver Class	\$25,695	\$38,495	\$1,750
Gold Class	\$33,195	\$54,695	\$3,000
Imperial Suite	\$60,395	\$119,495	\$6,000

All prices are per person.
2026 dates and prices are preliminary and are subject to change.

More

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*.