

# Republics of the Silk Road: Almaty-Tashkent

<https://www.irtsociety.com/journey/republics-of-the-silk-road/>



## Overview

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### The Highlights

- Grand trek across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan
- 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 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 Almaty, Kazakhstan

Arrive at the Almaty Airport, where you are met and transferred to the stylish five-star Ritz-Carlton hotel (or similar).

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 before joining your fellow travelers in the dining car for a Welcome Dinner.

### Day 3: 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 kilometres in length and up to 70 kilometres wide, it is recognised 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, and hunting with majestic Golden Eagles.

Following, there will be the option to visit the outdoor Museum of the Petroglyphs before returning to the *Golden Eagle* for dinner.

## Day 4: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

This afternoon we arrive in Bishkek. 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 5: 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 of the city includes the Old Town, where traditional homes and religious buildings line the narrow streets. In a small library here we will be privileged to see 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 6: Khiva, Uzbekistan

Today, we travel to the ancient city of Khiva.

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 7: Nukus, Uzbekistan

Nestled in the enchanting north-west of Uzbekistan, the city of Nukus boasts a captivating setting, surrounded by three magnificent deserts: the Kara Kum, Kyzyl Kum, and Ustyurt.

Our voyage through Nukus leads us to the extraordinary Igor Savitsky State Museum of the Fine Arts, a true hidden gem in this remote oasis. Nicknamed the 'Louvre in the Sands,' this

extraordinary museum houses Central Asia's most extensive art collection, featuring a staggering 100,000 avant-garde masterpieces and crafts from the Karakalpak region.

## Day 8: 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. We then travel out of the city to experience the Emir's enchantingly named 'Palace of the Moon and Stars'.

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

## Day 9: Dushanbe, Tajikistan

This afternoon we visit Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, situated on the Varzob River. First, explore the Museum of National Antiquities, housing exhibits of history and regional art, before the main highlight of the city: the 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.

We continue with more historic sites of Tajikistan's largest city. We visit the Ismail Samani monument, recognizing the first King of Tajiks, before going onwards to the Independence Square and Mekhrigon Bazaar for a taster of local life in Dushanbe.

In the evening, we enjoy a special dinner in Navrus Palace.

Relax onboard the *Golden Eagle* after dinner while enjoying the melodies of the train's pianist as we venture across the border into Uzbekistan.

## Day 10: 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-honored 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 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 a light show that weaves the rich tapestry of Samarkand's history and significance.

## Day 12: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Spend the morning continuing to explore Samarkand, with a visit to the famous necropolis Shakh-i-Zindah, a stunning collection of mausoleums dating back to the 9th century. From here we travel to the 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 where you stay for a one-night at the five-star JW Marriott hotel (or similar).

## Day 14: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

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

## Reverse itinerary

### Day 1: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Arrive at Tashkent Airport, where you are met and transferred to the five-star JW Marriott hotel (or similar).

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

### Day 2: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Today we explore Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, a city that blends modern Soviet-style architecture with deep-rooted tradition, having been largely rebuilt after the devastating earthquake of 1966. Our tour begins in the atmospheric Old Town, where narrow streets are lined with traditional homes and centuries-old religious buildings.

The day continues with visits to the Railway Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts, offering further insight into the city's diverse cultural heritage.

Later this afternoon, we board the *Golden Eagle* and settle into our elegant en-suite cabins. This evening, we gather for a Welcome Dinner onboard, the perfect start to our journey.

### Day 3: Kokand, Margilan, and Rishtan, Uzbekistan

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.

We continue by coach 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.

Our final stop in the Fergana Valley is a visit to the ancient city of Margilan, famous for its production of silk, considered by many as the best in Central Asia. Here we will visit a local family who have been producing silk for generations using traditional methods. We will explore the whole process of making silk from the mulberry trees used to feed the silkworms to hand weaving the colorful ikat fabric on traditional looms.

## Day 4: Bukhara, Uzbekistan

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## Day 6: 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.

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We continue our touring programme with more historic sites of Tajikistan's largest city. We visit the Ismail Samani monument, recognising the first King of Tajiks, before going onwards to the Independence Square and Mekhrigon Bazaar for a taster of local life in Dushanbe.

Tonight we will enjoy a special dinner in Navrus Palace.

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## Day 12: 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 kilometres in length and up to 70 kilometres wide, it is recognised as the second-largest alpine lake in the world. Its name, meaning “warm lake”, reflects its remarkable resistance to freezing – the result of a unique combination of depth, mineral richness, and geothermal activity beneath its surface. Framed by towering, snow-capped peaks, the lake offers a serene beauty.

This morning, we invite you to immerse yourself in the rich nomadic heritage of Kyrgyzstan with a privately arranged cultural event along the lake’s shores. A captivating display of traditional sports and games that have been passed down through generations. While archery may be familiar, few have encountered the spectacle of horseback wrestling, hunting with majestic Golden Eagles, or “ordo” – a strategic game played with cow kneecaps.

This experience is a celebration of steppe culture in all its vibrant detail – from music and dance to intricate costumes and demonstrations of time-honored crafts. It is a rare and enthralling glimpse into a way of life that continues to flourish in the highlands of Central Asia. This day promises a unique and authentic insight into the cultural heart of the region, offering memories that will linger long after your journey ends.

After the festival there will be the option to visit the outdoor Museum of the Petroglyphs before returning to the *Golden Eagle* for dinner.

## Day 13: Almaty, Kazakhstan

Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, is distinguished by its wide, tree-lined boulevards and stunning backdrop of the snow-capped Tian Shan Mountains. The city’s name derives from alma, meaning “apple,” a fitting tribute to the orchards that flourish just beyond its borders.

This morning’s city tour features Panfilov Park, home to the remarkable Zenkhov Cathedral, an architectural masterpiece built entirely of wood without the use of nails, as well as a visit to Independence Square, the city’s central gathering place.

Later this evening, we come together for a Farewell Dinner at our hotel, a memorable finale to our journey.

## Day 14: Almaty, Kazakhstan

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

## Dates & Prices

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### 2026 Dates

September 29 - October 12

October 12 - October 25

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Silver Class	\$26,900	\$40,400	25%
Gold Class	\$34,900	\$57,400	25%
Imperial Suite	\$63,400	\$125,500	25%

All prices are per person.

## 2027 Dates

April 29 - May 12

August 30 - September 12

September 12 - September 25

September 23 - October 6

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Silver Class	\$28,300	\$42,400	25%
Gold Class	\$36,600	\$61,200	25%
Imperial Suite	\$69,700	\$138,000	25%

All prices are per person.

2027 dates are preliminary and are 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*.