# The Grand Silk Road by Luxury Train

https://www.irtsociety.com/journey/the-grand-silk-road/



## Overview

### The Highlights

- Six nights on board the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express;*

- Twelve nights on board the *Golden Eagle;*

- Accommodation at five-star Four Seasons Beijing (or similar) for two nights;

- Accommodation at at five-star Ritz-Carlton Almaty (or similar) for one night;

- Full day tour of Beijing, including visits to the Forbidden City & Tiananmen Square or Olympic Village & CCTV Tower;

- Visit to the Terracotta Warriors statues;

- Visits to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as the Mogao Caves, Bukhara, and Ak-Saray Palace;

- Special lecture at the Hilton Qinghai-Golmund;

- Visit to unique sites showcasing traditional practices, such as silk making, Golden Eagle hunting, and pottery;

- City tours highlighting the rich history of the Great Silk Road;

- Fully inclusive meals, drinks, gratuities, touring, & transfers;

- On board doctor and medical facilities.

## The Tour

Embark on an incredible 22-day adventure along the legendary Silk Road. This journey seamlessly combines luxury and exploration, starting in Beijing and crossing the breathtaking landscapes of Central Asia. With six nights on board the new *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express* and twelve nights on board the iconic *Golden Eagle*, visit captivating destinations like Xi'an, Dunhuang, Kashgar, and Samarkand.

Discover UNESCO-listed sites, ancient cities, and rich local cultures by luxury train. From the sweeping dunes of the Gobi Desert to the stunning waters of Lake Issyk-Kul, every moment along the tour offers a unique blend of authenticity and comfort.

With world-class dining, luxurious accommodations, and expert guides, The Grand Silk Road is a unforgettable experience.

# Itinerary

## Day 1: Beijing, China

Upon arrival at Beijing airport, you'll be greeted and transferred to the five-star Four Seasons Hotel for a two-night stay.

In the evening, join a welcome reception dinner, offering the perfect opportunity to meet your fellow travelers and prepare for the exciting journey ahead.

## Day 2: Beijing, China

Walk along the restored Badaling section of the Great Wall, a significant structure in history. Marvel at the stunning views of the surrounding countryside. Return to Beijing for a leisurely afternoon.

In the evening, indulge in a traditional Peking Duck dinner at a local restaurant before your last night in your hotel.

## Day 3: Beijing, China

Enjoy a full day tour of Beijing, including visits to the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, and the Summer Palace.

Alternatively, explore Beijing's modern architecture, including the Olympic Village, CCTV Tower, and National Museum.

This evening, board the luxurious *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express* and settle into your cabin before a special welcome dinner on board.

Overnight on board.

## Day 4: Xi'an, China

After breakfast on board, visit Xi'an's ancient city walls and the Great Mosque, one of the oldest and largest in China. Following, visit to the Terracotta Warriors — 6,000 life-size figures standing guard over the tomb of China's first emperor. These statues are considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the 20th century.

Enjoy an evening of Tang Dynasty cuisine, music, and dance.

Overnight on board.

## Day 5: On board

Day at leisure on board the train as it travels to Dunhuang.

Enjoy the picturesque views from the Observation Car, or unwind in the Bar Lounge Car with a fine selection of wines and cocktails.

Dinner is served in one of the two dining cars. Overnight on board.

## Day 6: Dunhuang, China

Following breakfast, disembark to explore The Mogao Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, often referred to as the "Cave of a Thousand Buddhas." Enjoy performances by local folk artists as you explore the caves.

After lunch, trek along the Silk Road by camelback before concluding at Crescent Lake, a stunning natural oasis.

Rejoin the train for drinks, dinner, and overnight on board.

## Day 7: Golmud, China

This morning, delve into the rich history of the Silk Road with a special lecture at the Hilton Qinghai-Golmund, followed by a lunch in the hotel.

In the afternoon, you may choose to visit the Chaerhan Salt Lake or join a guided city tour.

Dinner and overnight on board.

## Day 8: Hotan, China

Enjoy a relaxing morning on board as the train arrives in Hotan, your next destination.

Visit an exclusive Atlas Silk and Carpet workshop and witness artisans crafting intricate textiles using traditional techniques.

In the evening, join your fellow guests in the dining car for a festive farewell dinner and overnight on the train.

## Day 9: Kashgar, China & Almaty, Kazakhstan

Today, say goodbye to the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express* as it arrives in Kashgar.

Visit the Apark Khoja Tomb and the charming old town to see unique Gaotai folk houses and cultural tapestry of the region.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, board a private flight to the vibrant city of Almaty, where you will check-in for a one-night stay at the five-star Ritz-Carlton Almaty (or similar).

## Day 10: Almaty, Kazakhstan

Begin the day with a city tour that includes a visit to Panfilov Park and the Zenkhov Cathedral, which was built entirely out of wood.

In the evening, board the *Golden Eagle* for a special welcome dinner to begin the next part of your adventure.

## Day 11: Lake Issyk-Kul

Enjoy an extended visit to Lake Issyk-Kul, one of the world's largest alpine lakes, set against dramatic, snow-capped peaks. Known as the "warm lake" for its resistance to freezing, it offers striking natural beauty.

This morning, experience Kyrgyzstan's nomadic heritage through a private cultural event featuring traditional sports like horseback wrestling, eagle hunting, and "ordo," along with music, dance, and crafts.

Afterward, you may visit the open-air Petroglyph Museum before returning to the *Golden Eagle* for dinner.

## Day 12: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Once a Silk Road caravan stop, Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, is explored this afternoon. Highlights include Ala-Too Square and a tour of Soviet-era parks featuring monuments to Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and the Red Guards.

## Day 13: 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 an optional visit to the Railway Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts.

## Day 14: 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 15: 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. Here, a pristine and untouched landscape unfolds before your eyes, adorned with endless stretches of sandy vistas, enchanting dunes, and towering peaks that beckon adventure.

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. Aptly 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. Prepare to be mesmerised by the artistic treasures that await, promising a unique experience that will leave a lasting impression.

## Day 16: 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 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'.

## Day 17: 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 our touring program 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 Mekhrgon Bazaar for a taster of local life in Dushanbe.

Tonight, enjoy an evening of relaxation onboard the *Golden Eagle*, enjoying the melodies of our resident pianist as we venture across the border into Uzbekistan.

## Day 18: Shahrisabz, 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 colourful, 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 19: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Today, visit some of the most significant sites of Samarkand, including Registan Square, the Bibi Khanum Mosque and the Ulag Beg observatory.

In the evening, venture to the illuminated Registan Square, where you'll be treated to a spectacular light show from the front row that showcases the rich history of Samarkand.

Overnight on the train.

## Day 20: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

This morning, visit the famous necropolis Shakh I Zindah, a stunning collection of mausoleums. Following, travel to the ancient settlement of Afrasiab for a museum tour.

Return to the train for lunch while your journey continues on through Uzbekistan to the Fergana Valley.

Enjoy drinks, dinner, and an overnight on board.

## Day 21: Margilan, Rishtan and Kokand, Uzbekistan

This morning, visit the ancient city of Margilan, famous for its production of silk. Witness the process of silk making at the Margilan Factory, which is considered the best of its kind in Uzbekistan.

From Margilan, continue onto Rishtan, home to Uzbekistan's world-famous ceramic industry, for a pottery demonstration by local artisan Rustam Usmanov.

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

This evening, enjoy a Farewell Dinner on board the *Golden Eagle* as you return to Tashkent.

### Day 22: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

After breakfast onboard, you will disembark the train for your transfer to your departing flight.

## Reverse itinerary

### Day 1: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Arrive at Tashkent Airport, where you are met and transferred to a centrally-located, five-star hotel.

On your first evening in Tashkent, you will be invited to a champagne drinks' reception before our exclusive Welcome Dinner where you can meet your fellow travellers ahead of this highly anticipated journey.

### 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 we are granted the privilege of viewing one of Islam's most sacred relics – the world's oldest Koran.

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 our private train, 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, Rishtan & Margilan, Uzbekistan

This morning, visit Kokand, an ancient Silk Road city, to see the Palace of Khudayar Khan and Jami Mosque.

Continue to Rishtan to witness traditional ceramic craftsmanship, then on to Margilan in the

Fergana Valley, renowned for its silk. Here, visit a local family to see the full silk-making process, from silkworms to handwoven ikat.

## Day 4: Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Bukhara, beautifully restored by UNESCO, is a true highlight. Visit the Emir's "Palace of the Moon and Stars" before exploring the historic center, including The Ark and the iconic Kalyan Mosque at Poi-Kalyan Square.

Stroll through the bustling Trading Domes and Lyabi-Hauz Square, then, weather permitting, enjoy a barbecue on the platform before departure.

## Day 5: Nukus, Uzbekistan

In north-west Uzbekistan, Nukus sits amid the Kara Kum, Kyzyl Kum, and Ustyurt deserts, offering a striking, untouched landscape.

Here, visit the Igor Savitsky Museum—known as the "Louvre in the Sands"—home to one of Central Asia's largest art collections, with over 100,000 avant-garde works and regional crafts.

## 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.

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In the evening, venture to the illuminated Registan Square, where you'll be treated to a spectacular light show from the front row that showcases the rich history of Samarkand.

Overnight on the train.

## Day 10: 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 and Kazakhstan to our next destination: Kyrgyzstan.

## Day 11: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Originally a caravan rest stop serving the travellers 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 statutes of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and the Memorial for the Red Guards.

## Day 12: Lake Issyk-Kul

Enjoy an extended visit to Lake Issyk-Kul, one of the world's largest alpine lakes, set against dramatic, snow-capped peaks. Known as the "warm lake" for its resistance to freezing, it offers striking natural beauty.

This morning, experience Kyrgyzstan's nomadic heritage through a private cultural event featuring traditional sports like horseback wrestling, eagle hunting, and "ordo," along with music, dance, and crafts.

Afterward, you may visit the open-air Petroglyph Museum before returning to the Golden Eagle

for dinner.

## Day 13: Almaty, Kazakhstan & Kashgar, China

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.

This afternoon, we take a private flight to Kashgar (Kashi), where we will spend a night in a centrally-located, five-star hotel.

## Day 14: Kashgar, China

Today, we delve into Kashgar (Kashi), a city that has long been a melting pot of cultures, religions, and architecture. Begin with a visit to the Apak Khoja Tomb, a stunningly adorned mausoleum considered the holiest Muslim site in Xinjiang. Wander through the Old Town, where narrow alleys and traditional homes provide a glimpse into local life, and explore the Gaotai folk houses, an area steeped in history and tradition.

This afternoon, board the opulent *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express* and settle in for a special welcome dinner as your adventure begins in style.

## Day 15: Hotan, China

Spend a relaxed morning on the train before arriving in Hotan, a city steeped in Silk Road history.

Visit an exclusive Atlas Silk and Carpet workshop, where you will witness artisans crafting intricate textiles using traditional techniques. Each piece is entirely handmade, dyed with natural plant dyes, and woven with unparalleled skill. In the evening, explore the ancient city of Yotkan by night—a captivating look into the history of this former Buddhist kingdom.

## Day 16: Golmud, China

This morning, delve into the rich history of the Silk Road with a special lecture at the Hilton Qinghai-Golmud, followed by lunch in the hotel's elegant surroundings. The afternoon offers the choice of visiting the surreal Chaerhan Salt Lake or joining a guided tour through the city, where modern life meets ancient traditions.

## Day 17: Dunhuang, China

The UNESCO-listed Mogao Caves, known as the "Cave of a Thousand Buddhas," feature over 500 grottoes filled with ancient Buddhist art dating back to the 4th century.

After exploring, enjoy a folk performance and lunch, followed by a camel trek along the Silk Road. The day ends at Crescent Lake, a stunning oasis set among the Gobi Desert dunes.

## Day 18: On board

Today is yours to relax and enjoy the luxurious amenities of the *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express.*

Take in panoramic views from the Observation Car, which features the largest train window in China, or unwind in the lounge with a selection of fine wines and cocktails. Revel in the experience of luxury rail travel, with every detail carefully designed for your comfort and enjoyment.

## Day 19: Xi'an, China

Step back in time as you visit Xi'an's ancient city walls and the Great Mosque, one of the oldest and largest in China. A highlight of your day will be the awe-inspiring Terracotta Warriors—6,000 life-sized figures standing guard over the tomb of China's first emperor, unearthed only 40 years ago.

These intricate statues are considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the 20th century. Enjoy an evening of Tang Dynasty cuisine, music, and dance, immersing you in the vibrant cultural traditions of Xi'an.

## Day 20: Beijing, China

Upon arrival in China's capital city, we enjoy a comprehensive tour of Beijing's historic heart which reveals the grandeur of China's ancient dynasties. Explore the Forbidden City, the sprawling imperial palace where emperors ruled for nearly 500 years. Stroll through Tiananmen Square, a place of great historical significance, before discovering the Summer Palace, a serene retreat adorned with beautiful gardens, temples, and lakes.

Alternatively, delve into Beijing's modern allure with a tour of contemporary landmarks: marvel at the architectural feats of the Olympic Village and the iconic "Bird's Nest" Stadium, glimpse the striking design of the CCTV Tower, and explore the National Museum for a modern-day perspective on China's cultural evolution.

After touring guests will be transferred in luxury to the prestigious Four Seasons Hotel Beijing, where a two-night stay awaits in the epitome of five-star comfort.

## Day 21: Beijing, China

Our adventure begins with a morning visit to the Great Wall at Badaling, one of the most iconic symbols of ancient China. Here, guests can walk along a beautifully restored section, soaking in the breath-taking views and imagining the historical figures who once guarded this marvel. In the afternoon, enjoy leisure time to explore Beijing's lively mix of ancient traditions and modern vibrancy.

That evening, we gather for a sophisticated dining experience at a celebrated Peking Duck restaurant. This Beijing speciality, cherished for centuries, is expertly prepared and carved at your table, offering a delectable insight into Chinese culinary mastery.

### Day 22: Beijing, China

On your final morning, transfer to Beijing's international airport for your onward journey.

## Dates & Prices

### 2027 Dates

September 1 - September 22

| Golden Eagle Silk Road | Golden Eagle Acc | Double | Single | Deposit |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Superior Cabin Twin/Double | Gold Class | $53,200 | $88,400 | 25% |
| Superior Cabin Double | Imperial Suite | $74,300 | $124,200 | 25% |
| Han Dynasty Suite | Imperial Suite | $108,800 | $217,600 | 25% |

Accommodations are priced for 6 nights on the Golden Eagle Silk Road Express and 12 nights on the Golden Eagle.
All prices are per person.
2027 dates are preliminary and are subject to change.