



Proposed Program Information

Discovering The Silk Road by Luxury Rail: Moscow to The Five Stans Aboard the *Golden Eagle* March 26 – April 12, 2022



Golden Eagle Train (left) and Golden Eagle lounge (right)

On an exclusive railway tour aboard the lavish *Golden Eagle*, explore a fascinating stretch of the legendary Silk Road in five beautiful countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. A cultural crossroads between East and West, this region holds ancient treasures once revered by Genghis Khan and Alexander the Great, later concealed behind the Iron Curtain. In the 19th century, these fabled realms also served as backdrop for "The Great Game," a dramatic struggle for continental dominance between Tsarist Russia, who sought to realize their own version of "Manifest Destiny" in Eurasia, and Victorian England, who aimed to protect India, their "jewel in the crown," from Russia's grasp.

Watch all this history unfold on a whirlwind journey. Begin in Moscow for a behind-the-scenes appreciation of its Tsarist splendors. Then, board the *Golden Eagle*, with its elegant, private cabins, for two exquisite weeks, stepping off to wander ancient Silk Road trade centers, including the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, and Khiva. Behold heralded art collections in renowned museums, kaleidoscopic mosques, centuries-old madrasahs, opulent monuments, and Central Asia's native tulips, which will be in glorious bloom in spring. Conclude in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where you will take in spectacular views of the surrounding mountains on a scenic cable car ride.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Begin with a night at the Four Seasons Hotel in Moscow, where you will enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at the Kremlin's sparkling treasures, including a private viewing of the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber
- Travel by train on the exclusive and intimate *Golden Eagle*, enjoying luxurious private cabins with en-suite bathrooms; and sumptuous gourmet meals with wines carefully selected by the train's owner
- Follow in the footsteps of Marco Polo and ancient traders along the legendary Silk Road, discovering art and architectural treasures in timeless Central Asian towns, including UNESCO-listed Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, and Khiva
- Explore "Space Race" history on an exclusive tour of the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, where the first artificial Earth satellite *Sputnik 1* took flight and Yuri Gagarin made his historic launch as the first human in space
- Behold breathtaking architectural masterpieces with special access, including the vast Jami Madrasah in Andijan; the imposing Ark of Bukhara, dating to the 5th century; and the towering ruins of Amir Timur's 14th-century summer palace Ak-Saray in Shahrissabz
- Discover Tashkent's Hast Imam Library, home to the world's oldest Quran, dating from the 7th century
- View petroglyphs dating from as far back as the Bronze Age at Kyrgyzstan's Lake Issyk-Kul, and attend a thrilling private display of eagle hunting—an ancient Kyrgyz nomadic tradition
- Behold the colorful Ascension Cathedral, claimed to be the second-tallest wooden structure in the world, in Almaty, Kazakhstan, followed by a spectacular cable car ride through the mountains



Café Pushkin, Moscow, photo courtesy of Café Pushkin

ITINERARY

Saturday, March 26 DEPARTURE

Depart for Moscow on an overnight flight, group flight pending.

Sunday, March 27 MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Arrive in the Russian capital, and transfer to the stylish, five-star Four Seasons Hotel for a one-night stay. This evening, attend a champagne reception followed by a welcome dinner.

R,D

Monday, March 28 MOSCOW / EMBARK THE GOLDEN EAGLE

Today, experience the grandeur of the Kremlin – the spiritual, historical, and political heart of Moscow. Take in a private viewing of the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber. Continue to Red Square, the iconic symbol of Russia's former military and political might with its eclectic architecture. View the ornate St. Basil's Cathedral with its magnificent onion-domed spires. Marvel at the beautiful façade of the world-famous GUM department store, which was constructed in Tsarist times. Savor traditional Russian cuisine during lunch at the legendary Café Pushkin, housed in an early 19th-century mansion. After lunch, visit the opulent and unique stations of the Moscow metro – once a source of immense Soviet pride and known as "the People's Palaces" for their gleaming chandeliers, mosaics, frescoes, and polished marble. Alternatively, visit the famous State Tretyakov Gallery (National Museum of Fine Art), with its extensive collection of Russian art, or you may opt to explore the Space Museum. Transfer to Moscow's

Kazansky Station in the late afternoon, and attend a welcome reception on Platform 1, where the *Golden Eagle* awaits for departure.

B,L,D

Tuesday, March 29 ABOARD THE GOLDEN EAGLE

Delight in a day to unwind and settle into life on board your private train. Meet your fellow passengers, attend a lecture, perhaps learn a few words of Russian, or simply enjoy the ever-changing landscape outside your window.

B,L,D

Wednesday, March 30 BAIKONUR, KAZAKHSTAN

On the right bank of the Syr Darya River is the Baikonur Cosmodrome, which was originally constructed in the late 1950s as the base of operations for the Soviet space program. *Sputnik 1* made its successful flight into orbit at the Cosmodrome in 1957, and Yuri Gagarin, the first human in space, made his historic launch in 1961. While here, visit the launch station for Gagarin's space mission.

B,L,D

Thursday, March 31 KOKAND, UZBEKISTAN

In the Fergana Valley, make your way to Kokand, situated at the crossroads of the two main ancient trade routes. Admire the impressive citadel of Sayid Muhammad Khudayar Khan, the last ruler of the Kokand Khanate. Explore the Palace of Khudayar Khan's ornately decorated remaining buildings and courtyards as well as its museum, which displays jewelry, clothing, and metalware.

B,L,D

Friday, April 1 OSH, KYRGYZSTAN / ANDIJAN, UZBEKISTAN / MARGILAN

Arrive in Osh this morning. Discover the UNESCO-listed Sulaiman-Too Mountain, a popular Muslim pilgrimage site named after the Quranic prophet Solomon. On a walking tour, behold spectacular Soviet mosaics, murals, and public art, and visit some of the major architectural sites and monuments honoring WWII soldiers. Alternatively, participate in a traditional bread-making class. After crossing into Uzbekistan, stop in the town of Andijan, dating back to the 9th century. Explore the Jami Madrasah and mosque, one of the biggest religious complexes in the region, decorated with beautiful geometric patterns of *pandjara* (gridded lattice work) and Islamic inscriptions. Continue to the ancient city of Margilan, famous for its production of silk. Visit the most renowned silk producer in Uzbekistan, the Yodgorlik Margilan Factory. Observe the process of making silk, and meet the hardworking artisans hand-weaving intricately and colorfully dyed *ikat* fabric on traditional looms. **B,L,D**

Saturday, April 2 SAMARKAND, UZBEKISTAN

Explore Samarkand, the most legendary town along the Silk Road. Founded in the 6th century B.C., Samarkand's stunning architecture hints at its former status as one of the most important cities in Asia. Today, visit some of its most significant 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. Highlights include the three grandiose madrasahs of Registan Square, the beautifully proportioned Bibi Khanum Mosque, and the Ulag Beg observatory, one of the earliest Islamic astronomical observatories built in 1428. Return to Registan Square before dinner to view the awe-inspiring square illuminated at night. **B,L,D**



Registan Square, Samarkand, photo by Ekrem Canli



Sitorai Mokhi Khosa Palace, Bukhara, photo by TravelingOtter

Sunday, April 3 SHAHRISABZ, UZBEKISTAN

Spend a day in this UNESCO World Heritage Site, believed to be the birthplace of Amir Timur (or Tamerlane), the military prodigy who modeled himself on Genghis Khan. Visit the UNESCO-honored statue of Amir Timur and his Ak-Saray Palace. This majestic 14th-century structure took over a quarter of a century to build, and was originally decorated with colorful, highly detailed mosaics as well as delicate calligraphic inscriptions from the Quran. **B,L,D**

Monday, April 4 DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN

This morning, visit Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, situated on the Varzob River. Wander the beautiful halls of the opulent Kohi Navruz Palace, and learn about the fascinating story about its origins as a teahouse. Enjoy tea and local delicacies in this stately palace before returning to the *Golden Eagle* to resume our journey. **B,L,D**

Tuesday, April 5 BUKHARA, UZBEKISTAN

Bukhara underwent a UNESCO-sponsored renovation of much of the city for its 2,500th anniversary in 1999. An extraordinary highlight will be a visit to the Ark of Bukhara, an enormous fortified residence of the Emirs of Bukhara—the despotic and ruthless leaders who ruled until Soviet times. Travel out of the city to experience the Emir's Sitorai-Mokhi Khosa Palace, whose name roughly translates to "Palace of the Moon-like Stars." This evening, weather and time permitting, enjoy a twilight feast at the train station before the *Golden Eagle* departs. **B,L,D**

Wednesday, April 6 MERV, TURKMENISTAN

Explore the ancient and mainly unrestored remains of Merv. Once an important stopping point on the Silk Road, Merv evolved from a small oasis town to what may have briefly been the world's largest city during the 12th century. Genghis Khan and his Mongol army infamously razed the city in 1221, and its extensive and impressive ruins have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. **B,L,D**

Thursday, April 7 ASHGABAT, TURKMENISTAN

Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, is known as the “Las Vegas of the Karakum Desert.” Located between the desert and the Kopet-Dag mountain range, Ashgabat is a relatively modern city built upon the ruins of the Silk Road city of Konjikala. 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 include a visit to the National Museum and Kipchak Mosque. **B,L,D**

Friday, April 8 KHIVA, UZBEKISTAN

Today, travel to the ancient city of Khiva, founded 2,500 years ago and now a World Heritage Site. As one of the Silk Road’s most important trading posts, it lies at the crossroads between Mongolia, Russia, China, and Persia. A magnificent sight to behold, Khiva rises out of the desert to reveal a wealth of impressive architecture. Step back in time to discover its impressive mosques, madrasahs, bazaars, and minarets within the city’s ancient walls. **B,L,D**

Saturday, April 9 TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN

Arrive this afternoon in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan. Spend time touring this modern Soviet-style city, which was rebuilt following the devastating earthquake of 1966. Tour the Old Town, where traditional homes and religious buildings line the narrow streets. Enshrined in the small Hast Imam Library is one of Islam’s most sacred relics—the world’s oldest Quran, reportedly dating to the 7th century. Later, visit the Railway Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts. **B,L,D**

Sunday, April 10 BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN / LAKE ISSYK-KUL

This morning, tour Kyrgyzstan’s capital city, Bishkek, originally a caravan rest stop for travelers along the Silk

Road. Visit the Ala-Too Square, and take tours of the local parks, rich with Soviet history, including statues of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and the Memorial for the Red Guards. This afternoon, enjoy the open-air Museum of Petroglyphs at Lake Issyk-Kul, a sacred site used by ancient Saka priests for sacrifices and other rites to the sun god. Some petroglyphs date from the Bronze Age, with later engravings dating to the 10th century. Following this, we are treated to breathtaking demonstrations of eagle hunting, a 4,000-year-old art and Kyrgyz nomadic tradition. **B,L,D**

Monday, April 11 ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN / DISEMBARK

Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, is notable for its wide, tree-lined boulevards. Just a short distance from the city, apple orchards thrive in abundance. Tour Panfilov Park and the strikingly colorful Ascension Cathedral, thought to be the world’s second-tallest wooden structure, built completely without nails. Outside Almaty is the Chimbulak ski resort, where a cable car ride offers spectacular views of Almaty and the surrounding majesty of the Tian Shan Mountains. Check in at your hotel. This evening, attend a farewell dinner at an elegant venue, toasting the conclusion of a memorable journey. **B,L,D**

Tuesday, April 12 ALMATY / RETURN

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for return flights home. **B**

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Khiva bazaar, photo by Dougie O'Brien (left) and Ascension Cathedral, Panfilov Park, Almaty, photo by Maryjo

ACCOMMODATIONS

Four Seasons Hotel Moscow

Located in the historic building of Moskva Hotel in the very heart of Moscow, the Four Seasons is a short walk from the Kremlin, Red Square, and the Bolshoi Theatre. Restaurants include the Quadrum, featuring Italian cuisine; Bystro Restaurant, highlighting Russian cuisine; Bar Moscovsky; the Silk Lounge; and the pool-side Amnis Cafe.

InterContinental Hotel Almaty

Centrally located in Kazakhstan's largest city, this hotel boasts stunning mountain views from its elegant rooms and suites. Enjoy its elegant spa and restaurants, cafés, and bars that feature local, Turkish, European, and Asian cuisine.

The Golden Eagle Luxury Train

The lavish, intimate *Golden Eagle* features cabins with state-of-the-art amenities and en-suite facilities. Enjoy the views with fellow passengers from the Bar Lounge Car, and partake in sumptuous meals with carefully selected wines at the onboard restaurant.



Golden Eagle Train Imperial Suite (left), dining service (center) and restaurant car (right)

Cabin Categories	Double Rates	Single Rates
Silver Class 60 sq.ft., lower small double bed and a single upper bed	\$25,999	\$38,999
Gold Class 77 sq.ft., lower standard double bed and a single upper bed	\$32,899	\$53,999
Imperial Suite 120 sq.ft., large double bed, sitting area	\$52,999	Inquire

Rates Include

Two nights hotel accommodations as per itinerary; fourteen nights cabin accommodations aboard the *Golden Eagle* as per itinerary; meals as per the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception; D=Dinner); bottled water, soft drinks, juices, and coffee/tea with all meals, specially selected international wines with dinners, as well as lunches during the tours; airport/hotel/airport group transfers for all participants on suggested flights; escorted sightseeing, transportation and entrance fees for all included visits; enrichment program of lectures and talks; gratuities to local guides and drivers; customary shipboard gratuities; taxes, service, and portage charges; personal protective materials, including masks, hand sanitizer, wipes, and gloves.

Not Included in Rates

International airfare; passport/visa fees; meals not specified; alcoholic beverages other than noted in inclusions; personal items and expenses; airport transfers other than for those on suggested flights; excess baggage; trip insurance; any other items not specifically mentioned as included.