

TRAIN : **Golden Eagle Luxury Train**
JOURNEY : Jewels of the Silk Road
Journey Duration : Upto 8 Days

DAY 1 ASHGABAT

Arrive at Ashgabat Airport.

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 and the Soviet city built 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 trip to the National Museum and Kipchak Mosque.

Upon arrival we will board the Golden Eagle. Once settled into our cabins, lunch will be served in the Restaurant Cars. This afternoon we have the opportunity to explore Ashgabat and highlights on our panoramic city tour includes visits to the National Museum and Wedding Palace.

DAY 2 ASHGABAT & DARVAZA

A further morning of touring in Turkmenistan features a visit to nearby Nisa, an ancient settlement of the Parthians, and was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007.

The Golden Eagle departs Ashgabat at lunch and makes a scheduled stop tonight at Ichoguz. We 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 3 KHIVA

Our train travels towards Urgench, from where we transfer 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, bazaars and minarets within Khiva's ancient walls.

DAY 4 BUKHARA

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 programme 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.

This evening, weather permitting, we will enjoy a barbecue on the station platform before our train departs – a unique farewell to an incredible city.

DAY 5 SAMARKAND

More so than any other town, just the mention of Samarkand instantly conjures up evocative images of the Silk Road. 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.

Prepare for an unforgettable evening in Samarkand that will leave an indelible mark on your memory. As the sun sets and night descends upon this ancient city, we will whisk you away to the illuminated Registan Square, where an extraordinary spectacle unfolds. From your prime front-row seats, you'll be treated to a dazzling light show that weaves the rich tapestry of Samarkand's history and significance.

DAY 6 TASHKENT

Tashkent is the capital city of Uzbekistan and 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 and here in a small library, we'll 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.

This evening, we enjoy our Farewell Dinner onboard the Golden Eagle as we head overnight to our destination of Almaty.

DAY 7 ALMATY

This morning, we arrive into Almaty, our final destination and bid farewell to the Golden Eagle. Today we will take a tour of Almaty including a visit to Panfilov Park, located in the heart of the city, and home to the Zenkov Cathedral, a 19th century Russian Orthodox Church made entirely of wood.

Overnight we stay for one night at the Ritz-Carlton, Almaty, or similar.

DAY 8 ALMATY

Following breakfast, you will be transferred to Almaty Airport for your onward flight.

Or extend your stay in Almaty with additional nights to explore more of the city and surrounding region at your leisure.