



Lernidee Trains & Cruises

The Legendary Silk Road

13 Nights

March & October 2017



Summary

Experience the fascination of the diverse cultures in three of the countries along Central Asian's Silk Road while travelling in the comfort of your private train. You start your journey in Almaty, "the father of the apple", and travel to the Uzbek oasis of Tashkent, to Samarkand and to Khiva, where a tale from 1001 Nights – preserved in stone – awaits you, to romantic Bukhara in the middle of the Kyzylkum Desert, to the ruins of the ancient cities of Merv and Nisa, and finally to Turkmenistan's capital of Ashgabat. You have the opportunity to experience the region's cultures, peoples, and delicious cuisine along this otherwise quite inaccessible section of Central Asia's Silk Road, while enjoying the amenities of private train travel: all the makings of your very own 1001 Nights tale.

Overview

Country:	Kazakhstan, Turkistan, Uzbekistan, Samanid Empire, Turkmenistan
Cities:	Almaty, Turkestan, Tashkent, Tamerlane, Samarkand, Khiva, Bukhara, Samanid, Merv, Ashgabat
Duration:	14 days /13 nights
Port of departure:	Almaty
Starting Price:	\$ 3300

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**Day 1: Almaty**

Upon arrival to Almaty, meet greet and transfer to hotel

Day 2: Life in Almaty

Standing beneath the brilliantly colored patterns on the Ascension Cathedral, you gaze up at one of the largest wooden buildings in the world. It's been a morning of discovery, strolling through Kazakhstan's capital of avenues and cafes, framed by the foothills of the Tian Shan mountain range. Soon you will be treated to a welcome lunch in a yurt restaurant, before you board your private train. Your luggage is ready and waiting for you in your personal compartment. You unpack and relax, then head for the dining car.

Day 3: Nomad's Pilgrimage Center: Turkestan

As you eat breakfast, the glorious steppe unfolds outside the window to the steady beat of the railroad moving along the tracks. Soon you arrive in Turkestan, and stand before the magnificent Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi: the vast, brightly-tiled testament to power and beauty that UNESCO have made a World Heritage site and the Kazakhs revere as their national icon.

Day 4: Tashkent, the Green Oasis

Under the cover of night, your train crosses the border into Uzbekistan. By morning, you are in Tashkent, a city studded with monuments that hark back to the Silk Road. You experience the lush, green oasis of the steppe and tour caravanserais, fortresses and madrasah—history in earthen brick and turquoise tile. As evening arrives, you depart and travel the Silk Road trail to Shakhrisabz.

Day 5: Shakhrisabz, the Mighty

Under wide blue skies, you explore Shakhrisabz, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Timur, the fourteenth-century Mongol conqueror, filled this once-mighty city with grandiose testaments to his earthly power. Now his palaces stand in ruins around you in the bustling market town as crumbling reminders of a lost empire. You experience a folklore performance in a small village and meet some of the locals. Before night closes in, the train departs, and you join fellow travelers for an Uzbek wine tasting in the dining car.

Day 6: Samarqand, the Ancient

Wealth, conquest and faith intertwine among the splendors of Samarqand, one of the oldest settlements on Earth. At the time of Timur, this was called the most beautiful city in the world. Today, as you stand among the ornate marble pillars and vaults of Registan square or the exquisite glazed tiles of the Shah-i-Zinda necropolis, it's impossible to suppress your sense of wonder. In visiting the Afrosiyab excavation site you untangle the roots of this astonishing civilization.

Day 7: Samarqand, the Magnificent

Another day to soak up the UNESCO World Heritage site of Samarqand on this train journey. Delve into its Islamic past and sift through its riches. You see Uzbek craftsmen skillfully weave silk into carpets and press paper from mulberry bark, before casting your eyes to the magnificent past at the Ulugh Beg Observatory, the ruins of Bibi Khanum Mosque and the impressive Gur Emir Mausoleum.

Day 8: From Samarqand to Khiva

On a last bright morning in Samarqand, you breakfast, wander the city, and board your private train as the sun touches noon.

The spectacular steppe scrolls by your window in green hills, ancient rock and distant mountains.

Day 9: A Fairy Tale of 1001 Nights

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This is Khiva, an ancient city fortress. Beneath the vivid blue glazed bands of the Kalta Minor Minaret, you set out through the sun and shadow of winding streets on a dreamlike tour of the town's palaces, mosques, mausoleums and madrasah. All inhabited, thriving – a living museum. You lunch in the old Summer Palace of the Emir.

Day 10: Bukhara, the Noble

Beneath the imposing yellow brickwork of the Kaljan minaret, you gaze at the magnificent gateways on either side of the courtyard, each a heady cocktail of intricate tilework and grand design. This is only a first glimpse of old Bukhara, a site of UNESCO World Heritage that holds a miraculous city-museum of a thousand monuments, each a testimony to the glory days of caravan trade. At the Lyab-i Hauz ensemble, you witness the 500-year-old architectural ingenuity that keeps a pool full in the baking Kysylkum desert. You learn about the satirical Sufi Nasreddin Hodja, watch local dances, listen to exotic Uzbek tunes and have dazzling national costumes paraded in the courtyard of a madrasah.

Day 11: Mausoleum of the Samanid

Another long, glorious, desert day devoted to the infinitely rich Bukhara. From the sumptuous stylings of the Mire-e-Arab Madrasah, you move to the textured geometry of the Samanid Mausoleum regarded by many as the most beautiful and precious building in Central Asia. Then onto the gargantuan, 1,500-year-old Ark fortress, and the only women's mosque in the country. Standing on its vast rampart, you take a last view out over Bukhara, glistening turquoise and yellow in the bright afternoon light. A diamond in the dust.

Day 12: Merv, the Ancient Pearl of the East

At daybreak, your private train draws into the ancient oasis of Merv. In the twelfth-century, this was one of the largest cities in the world. Nourished by the Silk Road, its fame crossed continents. Now you stand surrounded by imposing ruins that rise up from the desert sand and crumbling arches framing bright blue sky. You walk among the relics of this UNESCO World Heritage site, including the gigantic Tomb of Ahmed Sanjar, the Virgin Fortress, and the cold room, and are invited to lunch in the courtyard of a family home.

Day 13: Former Royal City of Nisa and Today's Capital, Ashgabat

You begin the day at the site of ancient Nisa, and follow its smaller relics to their new home in Ashgabat, at the National Museum. The gleaming white marble of the city center testifies to the young city's new wealth. In the evening, you settle down to a farewell dinner.

Day 14: Ashgabat – An Epic Journey Comes to an End

You catch the transfer for your flight home, leaving wide blue skies, the open steppe, and epic monuments behind you, laden with unparalleled memories of the Silk Road.

Prices Include

Round trip transfer: airport – pier – airport
7-night accommodation on full board basis
5-night accommodation in hotels
All transfers and bus tours according to itinerary
Sightseeing tours/guided walks in Almaty, Tashkent, Samarkand, Khiva, Bukhara and Ashgabat
Traditional welcome in the train stations of Bukhara, and Samarkand
Lunch/dinner with an Uzbek and a Turkmen family as well as in a Madrasah with folklore

Prices Exclude

Round trip ticket (economy class)
Airport taxes
Travel insurance
Gratuities

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Wine and Vodka tasting
Log book with information about the Silk Road
Porter service at all railway stations
Local travel guides

Starting price per person sharing double compartment in €Euro

Compartment Habibi	3300
Compartment Ali baba	5000
Compartment Aladin	5900
Compartment Sultan	9350
Compartment Kalif	9500

- Possibility to board the train from Ashgabat

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CODE: HIGHLIGHTS-SUM17-TRAINS – LERNIDEE TRAIN OUT OF ALMATY

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