

## Central Asia on the Silk Road Tour

**Duration:** 16 days / 15 nights

**You will visit:** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan.

### Tour Itinerary:

#### Day 1: Almaty, arrival (KAZ)

Upon your arrival in Almaty, you will check in at the hotel at noon. Following your flight, make sure to allocate some time for relaxation before commencing your sixteen-day Central Asian in the Silk Road Tour. While Almaty itself wasn't a major Silk Road city, it is a modern gateway to historical sites in the region. Overnight in Almaty.

*Optional Activity: Explore the Abay Opera and Ballet Theater. You can acquire tickets either directly from the theater or through their website at [gatob.kz](http://gatob.kz)*

*Meals: none.*

#### Day 2: Almaty – border – Bishkek (KAZ/KYR)

Begin your day with a delicious breakfast at the hotel, and your guide will be waiting for you in the lobby to start a sightseeing tour in Almaty. Your first stop is the Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen, a place where you'll delve into the city's rich history and behold the magnificent Zenkov Cathedral, recognized as one of the world's largest wooden structures. Pay your respects at the Memorial of Glory and the Eternal Flame, a solemn tribute to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the nation's independence. Next on your itinerary is a visit to Republic Square and the Almaty City Museum, offering insights into the city's cultural and historical heritage. Make sure to explore the renowned Green Bazaar, where you can shop for delectable sweets and unique souvenirs to remember your journey by.

As the day progresses, bid farewell to Almaty and embark on a scenic drive to Bishkek, following a highway that grants you picturesque views of the natural landscapes along the way (250 km, 4 hours). Kyrgyzstan offers unique opportunities to explore the natural beauty and cultural heritage that were intertwined with the Silk Road trade network. After completing the necessary border procedures, you'll reach Bishkek and transfer to your hotel. Overnight in Bishkek.

*Tour duration: 5 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

#### Day 3: Bishkek – Burana – Cholpon-Ata (KYR)

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel and start a short city tour, your itinerary includes Oak Park, Ala Too Square, the Manas Statue, the National Museum of Fine Arts, the Philharmonic Hall, and the Victory Monument.

Depart Bishkek and drive to the Burana Tower, located near Tokmok in the Chuy Region (90km). The Burana Tower is a minaret from the ancient city of Balasagun, which was an important Silk Road settlement. Visitors can explore the archaeological site surrounding the tower, Balbals 6th century.

Continue driving to Cholpon-Ata (190km, 3hrs). Cholpon-Ata, on the northern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, is known for its petroglyphs, some of which date back to the Silk Road era. Arrive to Cholpon-Ata and you'll have the evening to relish the crisp mountain air, whether it's a leisurely lakeside stroll or a soothing swim in the naturally warm waters.

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

#### **Day 4: Issyk-Kul – Bishkek – Tashkent (KYR/UZB)**

After breakfast, visit the Rukh Ordo Cultural Center, a complex that holds many points of interest, including a Kyrgyz Art and Culture Hall. Roam the Museum of Petroglyphs (app. 500BC-100AD), a sprawling open-air museum full of grave markers and ancient drawings. Continue your tour with a visit to the Issyk-Kul State Historical and Cultural Museum to become acquainted with the region's flora and fauna and view a range of exhibits, including possessions of 10th-20th century Kyrgyz nomads.

Afternoon, drive back to Bishkek (260km, 4hrs). Arrive in Bishkek and take a flight to Tashkent. Upon your arrival in Tashkent, a transfer to your hotel, where you'll spend a restful night in the city.

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

#### **Day 5: Tashkent (UZB)**

Breakfast at hotel and Tashkent city exploration, your guide and driver will pick you up directly from your hotel. Your exclusive tour of the city will encompass the following highlights: Hast-Imam complex 15th century, Chorsu Bazaar - one of Central Asia's most ancient markets, where you can savor and purchase delectable sweets, fresh fruits, and memorable souvenirs. Experience the unique Tashkent Metro by taking a ride through its stations, each adorned with distinctive ceramic tiles and murals that depict captivating themes. Stroll through Amir Timur Square and Independence Square, visit the Museum of Applied Arts - offer unique experiences for travelers interested in the Silk Road. It showcases exquisite textiles, ceramics, jewelry, and other crafts from different periods and regions along the Silk Road. Overnight in Tashkent.

*Tour duration: 5 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

#### **Day 6: Tashkent – border – Khujand (UZB/TAJ)**

Early morning transfer to the Oybek border (100 km). Pass custom and passport control on both sides.

Meet Tajik local guide and driver and drive to Khujand, formerly known as Alexandria Eschate (70 km, 1 h). Sightseeing in Khujand will include the following: The Republican Historical-Ethnographic Museum, Timur-Malik Fortress, Archaeological Museum, Mosque and Madrasah of Shaikh Muslihiddin and vibrant Payshanba Bazaar. Overnight in Khujand.

*Tour duration: 4-5 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

### **Day 7: Khujand – Istaravshan – Penjikent (TAJ)**

In the morning depart Khujand and drive to Penjikent via Istaravshan (Ura-Tyube) - another ancient city in Tajikistan with a rich history connected to the Silk Road. It features historical sites such as the Mug Teppe Fortress. Also visit a local bazaar, Hazrat Shah architectural complex and Namazgah Mosque. Arrival in Penjikent - an archaeological site that was once a thriving Silk Road city. It is famous for its well-preserved ruins, including the remains of ancient houses, palaces, and temples. The Penjikent ruins provide insights into the daily life of people along the Silk Road. Free time. Overnight at the hotel.

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

### **Day 8: Penjikent – border – Samarkand (TAJ/UZB)**

Start your day with a hearty breakfast, and a tour to the ancient city of Penjikent, which dates back to the 5th century when it was founded by the Sogdians. After your exploration of Old Penjikent, transition to the newer part of the city, where you'll visit a local bazaar, a mosque, and the Rudaki Museum, offering valuable insights into the region's culture and heritage. Drive to the Jartepa border crossing (30km). Along the way, you'll pass through Sarazm, a UNESCO World Heritage Site established in the 4th century BC, adding another layer of historical significance to your journey. Upon crossing the border, you will reunite with your driver and be transferred to your hotel in Samarkand - one of the most famous Silk Road cities. It was a major center for trade and culture, known for its stunning architectural wonders. Overnight in Samarkand.

*Tour duration: 4-5 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

### **Day 9: Samarkand (UZB)**

Following breakfast, your guide will meet you at your hotel to commence your private SilkRoad-themed tour of Samarkand. Your day in Samarkand features iconic Silk Road landmarks, including the historic Gur-Emir mausoleum, the enchanting Registan Square adorned with three 15th to 17th-century Madrasahs, the grand Bibi Khanum Mosque, and the bustling oriental Siab Bazaar, where you can shop for souvenirs and savor local delights like sweets, fruits, and the renowned Samarkand bread. Your tour also includes a visit to the awe-inspiring Shakhi-Zinda, a journey to the Ulugbek Observatory (dating back to the 14th-15th century), and an exploration of the Ulugbek Museum. Your overnight stay will be in Samarkand.

*Optional Activity: In the evening you can visit Registan Square, where the enchanting evening lighting creates a breathtaking atmosphere. This magnificent Silk Road sight captivates the hearts of travelers.*

*Tour duration: 6-7 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

### **Day 10: Samarkand (UZB)**

Following breakfast, your exploration of Samarkand continues with the following Silk Road-themed activities: Explore the excavation site and museum of the ancient city Afrasiab, tour of the mausoleum of Khodja Daniyar, a revered site believed to house the tomb of the prophet Daniel, Journey to Konigil Village, where you'll have the opportunity to witness the traditional method of crafting Samarkand paper from mulberry

leaves. Enjoy an excursion to the Oriental Silk Carpet Factory, where you can witness firsthand the meticulous craftsmanship involved in creating top-quality carpets. Overnight in Samarkand.

*Tour duration: 6 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

### **Day 11: Samarkand – Bukhara (UZB)**

Breakfast at the hotel before taking the morning train to Bukhara (280 km, 2h). Arrive in Bukhara, a vital Silk Road city and transfer to your hotel in the Old City.

With your knowledgeable local guide walking tour of Bukhara's Old City, where Silk Road history comes to life: Explore the Bolo-Khauz Complex, an exquisite 18th-century mosque, minaret, and reservoirs that once quenched the city's thirst. Uncover the ancient secrets of the Ark Fortress, a stronghold dating back to the 4th century, now housing a petite museum. Admire the Poi Kalyan Ensemble, a masterpiece from the 12th to 16th centuries, encompassing a minaret, mosque, and madrasah. Stroll through the Four Trade Domes, including Toqi Zargaron, Toqi Sarrafon, Toqi Telpak Furushon, and Tim Abdulla Khan, where you can acquire finely crafted carpets, jewelry, fabrics, ceramics, and unique souvenirs. Discover the enchanting Lyabi-Hauz ensemble, centered around Bukhara's largest medieval artificial reservoir, featuring the Khanaka and Kukeldash Madrassahs from the 16th century and the Nadir Divan Beghi Madrassah, a testament to the Silk Road's enduring legacy. Overnight at the hotel.

*Optional Activity: In the evening enjoy a national folk-show and dinner at Nadir Divan-begi Madrasah.*

*Tour duration: 6 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

### **Day 12: Bukhara (UZB)**

After breakfast, explore Bukhara - visit the Samanids Mausoleum, Central Asia's oldest brick building from the 9th to 10th centuries. Discover the intriguing Chor Minor ("Four Minarets"), an 18th-century madrasah with a unique design. Explore the Emir's Summer Residence, Sitorai Mokhi-Khosa, a 19th-century marvel blending Oriental and Russian architectural influences. Pay your respects at the Bakhautdin Naqshband Mausoleum, an ensemble dedicated to the founder of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order. Step into the Fayzulla Khodjaev House Museum, a representation of Bukhara's residential architecture. Immerse yourself in Bukhara's rich heritage along the Silk Road. Overnight in Bukhara.

*Tour duration: 6 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

### **Day 13: Bukhara – border – Merv (UZB/TKM)**

Breakfast and depart for the Alat-Farab border crossing (100km). After completing border formalities, meet your guide and continue to Merv (270km, 4hrs). It was one of the most important Silk Road cities and a major trading center. It was located at the crossroads of several Silk Road routes and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Explore Merv, where ancient cities, fortifications, and historical treasures await. Highlights include the 12th-century Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum, the 8-9th century Kyz Kala, the 9-12th century Askhab Mausoleums, the 6th century BC Erk Kala, the 3rd century BC Gyaur Kala, and the Keshk Fortress. After your Old Merv tour, travel to Mary (35km) for an overnight stay.

*Tour duration: 4 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

#### **Day 14: Mary – Ashgabat (TKM)**

Relish a leisurely morning at your own pace. Later in the day, you will be transferred to the airport for a short 40-minute flight to Ashgabat, Turkmenistan's capital, preserves its Silk Road heritage with Nisa's ancient ruins. This UNESCO site showcases the city's vital Silk Road history. Ashgabat harmoniously combines traditional Turkmen design with modern elements, celebrating its Silk Road legacy. Upon arrival, you'll be transferred to your hotel for an overnight stay in Ashgabat.

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

#### **Day 15: Ashgabat (TKM)**

After breakfast, start a captivating Ashgabat city tour with a Silk Road twist: Explore Old Nisa, the former capital of the Parthian Empire and a vital Silk Road city. Witness excavated remnants of palaces, temples, and defensive structures. Visit the Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque, Arch of Neutrality, Independence Park, Statue of Lenin, and the National Museum of History. Discover the vibrant Gulistan Bazaar, also known as the Russian Bazaar, and make a stop at the Akhalteke horse stables. After your enriching tour, return to the hotel for an overnight stay in Ashgabat.

*Tour duration: 5-6 hours.*

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

#### **Day 16: Ashgabat, departure (TKM)**

Breakfast at the hotel, followed by a free morning. Check out from the hotel and transfer to the airport. End of Central Asia on the Silk Road Tour.

*Meals: breakfast.*

### **Inclusions:**

- Accommodation based on double/twin room sharing, with breakfast, 15 nights;
- All road transfers including airport and train station;
- Local English-speaking escort guide on days 3-4, 6-8 and 13-15;
- Local English-speaking guide for city tours in Almaty, Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara;
- Entrance fees to sights as per itinerary;
- Economy-class tickets for Samarkand-Bukhara train;
- Economy-class tickets for Mary-Ashgabat flight;
- Meals as designated in the program.

## Exclusions:

- Tour leader to accompany the group for the whole duration of the tour;
- Meals not indicated in the program;
- Hotel charges for additional services;
- Personal travel insurance;
- International flight tickets before and after the tour;
- Flight ticket from Bishkek to Tashkent;
- Visa, e-visa and visa support letters to Central Asia countries;
- Tips are not included (driver, guide, porter);
- All other charges and services not mentioned under "Inclusions".