

CENTRAL ASIAN SILK ROAD TOUR

Price: €4,060 per person. Deposit: €500. Payment can also be made in USD or CHF.
Single supplement available for €900 and required for solo travelers.

Guaranteed departures 2021 and 2022:

**11 Apr - 25 Apr 2021 | 25 Apr - 9 May 2021 | 9 May - 23 May 2021 | 6 June - 20 June 2021 |
11 July - 25 July 2021 | 8 Aug - 22 Aug 2021 | 12 Sep - 26 Sep 2021 | 10 Oct - 24 Oct 2021**

**10 Apr - 24 Apr 2022 | 24 Apr - 8 May 2022 | 8 May - 22 May 2022 | 5 June - 19 June 2022 |
10 July - 24 July 2022 | 7 Aug - 21 Aug 2022 | 11 Sep - 25 Sep 2022 | 9 Oct - 23 Oct 2022**



Kalpak Travel's Central Asian Silk Road Tour will lead you through the remarkable cities of the [Great Silk Road](#), many of which are now UNESCO World Heritage Sites. You will discover the cultural treasures and traditions of both the nomadic people who have crossed the region for millennia, and of the settled population. Explore three of the sprawling, Soviet-era capitals of Central Asia. Absorb the architectural legacies of flourishing Islamic cultures and the mighty Timurid Empire in [Samarkand](#), [Bukhara](#), and [Khiva](#). In your two-week stay, you will be immersed in centuries of history and the diverse cultures of the peoples who built the 'Stans as you see them today.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Tour modern [Tashkent](#), Uzbekistan's capital and the largest city in Central Asia
- Explore the remarkably well-preserved city of [Khiva](#), an open-air museum surrounded by mud brick walls
- Visit the charming Old City of [Bukhara](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Discover ancient Khorezm, including the ruined fortresses of Ayaz Kala and Toprak Kala
- Be wowed by the spectacular Registan and the other architectural wonders of [Samarkand](#)
- Shop in authentic oriental bazaars for everything from hand-woven silks to spices
- Visit the ancient ruins of Sarazm, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Discover Iskander Kul, an idyllic mountain lake named after Alexander the Great
- Sightsee amongst the parks, museums, and monuments of [Dushanbe](#)
- Tour vibrant [Almaty](#), Kazakhstan's largest city and cultural heart
- Explore Kyrgyzstan's green, modern capital, [Bishkek](#)

ITINERARY OVERVIEW

- Day 1: Arrival in Tashkent
- Day 2: Tashkent – Urgench (flight) – Khiva (40 min drive)
- Day 3: Day Trip to Ancient Khorezm – Bukhara (flight)
- Day 4: Bukhara City Tour
- Day 5: Bukhara – Samarkand (2h train ride)
- Day 6: Samarkand
- Day 7: Samarkand City Tour
- Day 8: Samarkand – Penjikent (70km, c. 2h drive)
- Day 9: Penjikent - Iskander Kul – Dushanbe (300km, c. 7h)
- Day 10: Dushanbe City Tour
- Day 11: Dushanbe - Almaty
- Day 12: Almaty City Tour
- Day 13: Almaty – Bishkek
- Day 14: Bishkek City Tour & Burana Tower
- Day 15: Bishkek Departure

MAP



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival in Tashkent & City Tour

Welcome to Uzbekistan! Transfer to the hotel and early check-in at the hotel. You can have a rest after your long flight, take a shower, and have breakfast before meeting your group and guide in the late morning in the hotel lobby. Today, you will begin an authentic journey deep into the remarkable history of Uzbekistan. **Please note:** If you arrive a day early, we can book an extra night for you. Where better to start than a tour of [Tashkent](#)? The largest city in Central Asia exhibits a curious blend of Islamic and Soviet influences. We will visit the Old City to find the Khast Imom complex, which houses the historic holy Quran of Caliph Osman. At Chor-Su Bazaar, you will mingle with the bustling crowds of traders. You will visit Amir Timur Square to view the statue of the great conqueror and, nearby, grand Independence Square.

Hotel Wyndham 4 or similar*

Day 2: Tashkent - Urgench (flight) - Khiva (40 min transfer) - City Tour

Today we will need to get up very early to catch the domestic flight to Urgench, which departs from Tashkent at 7:15 AM. Arriving at Urgench Airport at 8:55 AM, we will then transfer to Khiva (c. 40 min). We will have breakfast in Khiva before starting our walking tour of the city. [Khiva](#) is bursting with historical sites, and today you will get a chance to see them all. We will visit the walled inner-city called the Ichan-Kala. There are more than 50 historic monuments, plus hundreds of old houses dating back centuries. The entire citadel is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As you walk through the enormous city gates, you will be confronted by a glistening beacon of Islam, the Kalta Minor, a dazzlingly tiled minaret. This tour will enable you to delve deep into the past and discover all the city sites, including a bird's eye view from the top of the Islam Khodja Minaret (the highest minaret in Khiva) and a panorama of the Ichan-Kala from atop the Kunya-Ark citadel.

Hotel Zarafshan 3 or similar*

Day 3: Day trip to ancient Khorezm or free time in Khiva - Bukhara (flight)

Today you are free to spend a day on your own in Khiva or to join the half-day trip to the Ayaz Kala and Toprak Kala ruins in the Kyzylkum Desert. If you choose this option, it will require some steep ascents on foot. First, we will drive two hours to Toprak Kala, which was the capital of Khorezm around the 2nd century AD. From there, it is another shaky one-hour drive to Ayaz Kala. According to archeological excavations, the oldest parts of the Ayaz Kala fortress date from the 2nd century BC. It was one of a chain of border fortresses which stretched from east to west and defended the Khiva oasis from attack. Return to Khiva where we will have lunch and free time in the afternoon. Late check-out from the hotel. After dinner, we take the flight to Bukhara, departing at 9:00 PM. Upon arrival at 10:00 PM at Bukhara airport, transfer to the hotel.

Hotel Safiya 3 or similar*

Day 4: Bukhara City Tour

[Bukhara](#) is the second of our UNESCO World Heritage Site stops. The city's very name -Bukhara - conjures up images of the exotic Orient. For centuries, it was an important trading post and center of scholarship. The Old City has been well preserved and is crammed full of minarets, mosques, and madrassas. Its once notorious canals and pools, the source of many an epidemic, have now been drained, but the most famous, Lyabi-Hauz, is still there. Today it's an oasis shaded by mulberry trees in the heart of the city. Your guide will show you the Bukhara's unmissable sights, and you can soak up the atmosphere wandering through the labyrinthine alleyways. Highlights of today's walking tour in Bukhara include the Poi Kalon complex, the Ark Fortress, Bolo Hauz Mosque, the Ayub Mausoleum

and spring, the bazaars inside Bukhara's unique trading domes, and the Samanid Mausoleum. The guided tour will end in the early afternoon and you will then have some free time before dinner, which will be in the city.

Hotel Safiya 3 or similar*

Day 5: Bukhara - Samarkand (train, 2h)

Today morning you can choose to spend some free time in the city or to visit a couple more sights near Bukhara. First, you may visit the Mausoleum of Naqshbandi, 15 km outside the city center. There are many orders in Sufism, all of which have been represented at different times in what is now Uzbekistan. The Naqshbandiyya order has a great and long-lasting influence, and the memorial place is still a popular place of pilgrimage for Sufis. From here, we will visit the summer residence of the last Emir of Bukhara. In Persian it is called Sitorai Mokhi Hossa, "the place where the moon meets the stars". Return to Bukhara for lunch.

In the afternoon, on the way to the train station, we will stop to see the Chor Minor Madrassa. The style of the madrassa and its four minarets (*chor* means "four") is reminiscent of the Char Minar in Hyderabad, India. Our high-speed train departs from Bukhara at 3:50 PM and we arrive in Samarkand at 5:20 PM. Transfer to the hotel for check-in and dinner.

Hotel Rabat 3 or similar*

Day 6: Samarkand City Tour

Sublime [Samarkand](#) evokes an almost mythical past full of romance and intrigue. This was the domain of Emperor Timur, one of history's greatest (and most ruthless) conquerors. His vast empire rivaled any, stretching across the Eurasian steppe. He ruled his kingdom with an iron fist, whilst at the same time patronizing the arts and literature. Much of Samarkand's Timurid-era architectural heritage has been preserved, allowing us to see how the city might have been at the peak of Timur's power. We will start the day with a visit to the Gur-e-Amir, the mausoleum where Timur is buried. Our guide will tell stories from Timur's life and how and why he began to build in Samarkand. We will then go to the Registan, Samarkand's central square, which is undeniably Uzbekistan's most famous landmark. This focal point of medieval Samarkand is framed by three beautiful madrassas (religious schools): Ulugbek, Sherdor, and Tillya Kori. Next, we will stroll through the spacious courtyard of the Bibi-Khanum Mosque, an impressively tiled structure that is said to have been gifted to Timur by one of his wives. After lunch, we will have time to explore Siyob Bazaar, where fruit and vegetables grown in the rich soils of the Zarafshan Valley are sold in a colorful market. You may explore the city on your own during your free time this evening.

Hotel Rabat 3 or similar*

Day 7: Samarkand City Tour

After breakfast, we will check-out from the hotel and continue to explore the fairytale city of Samarkand. We go first to the Shah-i Zinda, a magnificent tiled necropolis; and then visit Ulugbek's Observatory, which was once the biggest research center in Central Asia. Ulugbek was decades ahead of the West with his observations of the solar system and the Earth, and we will learn more about his story in this prestigious setting. Our next stop will be the Konigil Paper Mill. Here you will see the process of making paper from mulberry tree bark, just as it was done in 8th century Samarkand. We will enjoy lunch together, after which those who wish to do so can visit Afrasiyab Museum to learn about the ancient city of Samarkand – then known as Afrasiyab – which was destroyed by the Mongols in the early 13th century. Alternatively, you may choose to skip the museum and have some extra free time, which will stretch on into the evening.

Hotel Rabat 3 or similar*

Day 8: Samarkand – Penjikent (70km, c. 2h)

Today's check-out will be at 8:30 AM as it is time to say goodbye to the marvelous cities of Uzbekistan and transfer to the border crossing with Tajikistan. We will pass through both border checkpoints on foot, completing all necessary formalities, and meet our Tajik guide and driver on the other side.

On the way to Penjikent, just off the main road, we will stop at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sarazm, the ruins of which date from the 4th to 2nd millennia BC. Upon arrival in Penjikent, we will then check-in at the hotel and have lunch in the city. Penjikent translates as "the city of five villages" and is located in the verdant Zeravshan River valley. Established in the 5th century, Penjikent was a thriving regional hub on the Great Silk Road. Together we will visit the local market, the mosque, and the local history museum, where our guide will tell us more about the region's influential past.

Hotel Umarion 2 or similar*

Day 9: Penjakent – Iskander Kul – Dushanbe (300km, c. 7 hours drive)

Today is a long but very scenic driving day through the Zarafshan Mountains to Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan. On the way, we will visit Iskander Kul, an idyllic mountain lake 30km off the main road. The lake, named after Alexander the Great ("Iskander" is the Persian form of Alexander), is triangular in shape and considered one of the most exquisitely beautiful lakes in all of the former Soviet Union. It's nestled in the Fann Mountains at an altitude of 2,200m. We will have lunch on the shore of the lake. Those who want to do so can then take a short hike to a nearby waterfall. Be prepared for colder weather in the mountains.

In the afternoon, we will depart from Iskander Kul and finish driving to Dushanbe. After an ascent to the Anzob Tunnel, our route is along the Vazob River down to the Varzob Gorge, a popular weekend getaway for locals from Dushanbe. We will reach Dushanbe in the evening, check-in at the hotel, and have dinner.

Hotel Serena 5 or similar*

Day 10: Dushanbe City Tour

As well as being the capital, [Dushanbe](#) is the largest city in Tajikistan. It was a small village with a market every Monday. The Persian word for Monday is Dushanbe, and that's how the settlement got its name. It was not until the Soviet period that Dushanbe grew into the political and industrial center of Tajikistan.

Our city tour will start with a visit to the National Museum of Antiquities with its famous Sleeping Buddha, excavated from the Buddhist monastery at Ajina Teppa. Our next stop is the Navruz Palace. Initially, this building was envisaged as the largest teahouse in the world. However, during construction (which involved hundreds of artisans from all over Tajikistan), the interior became so impressive that it was decided to use it as a palace instead of a teahouse. Most of the rooms are now used for official government meetings with guests from abroad, or for international conferences. Just one room is open to the public, and usually, weddings take place there. This is a unique opportunity to tour the interior of this ornate modern palace. After lunch, we will visit the statue of Ismail Somoni whose mausoleum you saw in Bukhara. This large monument commemorates the 1,100th anniversary of the Samanid State, a Golden Age of the Tajik nation, when science and arts flourished. From there, we will walk up to Rudaki Park, dedicated to the great Persian poet Rudaki, who also lived during the Samanid period, in the 10th century AD.

Hotel Serena 5 or similar*

Day 11: Dushanbe – Almaty (flight)

Today you can have some free time in the morning before we make our way to Dushanbe International Airport to catch the Air Astana flight to Almaty. It departs at 12:50 pm and arrives in Kazakhstan at 3:45 pm local time. We will meet our Kazakh guide at the airport and transfer to the hotel for check-in. We will then go to the city center to have dinner.

Hotel Novotel 4 or similar*

Day 12: Almaty City Tour

[Almaty](#) is the largest city in Central Asia's richest country, Kazakhstan. Until 1997, it was the capital, and it remains the country's business and educational center. Roads here are wide and tree-lined, and there are good views of the Zailisky Ala-Too Mountains which form the backdrop to the city. The name Almaty means "the place with apples" and it is believed that this is where apples originated from. Today, we will have a whole day to spend in the city.

We will start at Almaty Museum, which is a major scientific and cultural center exploring the entire gamut of historical and cultural heritage of the Zhetysu Region. Next, we will visit Panfilov Park to see Almaty's most famous sight, Zenkov Cathedral. It was built in 1904 and is one of the world's tallest wooden buildings. The last stop will be Green Bazaar, where you will get a chance to meet local Kazakhs as you shop for fresh fruits and vegetables. From the second floor, you will also be able to observe the hustle and bustle inside the market. There will be free time in the afternoon.

Hotel Novotel 4 or similar*

Day 13: Almaty – Bishkek (flight)

The flight to Bishkek is not until the evening, so there will be plenty more time to explore Almaty. In the morning, we will drive half an hour up to Medeo to see the world's highest ice skating rink, and take a cable car to enjoy the panoramic view of the Shymbulak ski area. It will be cold and windy on top as the altitude is 3,200m, so make sure you bring a warm jacket.

Back in the city, we will have farewell lunch with our Kazakh guide before heading to the airport at 3:00 PM to catch the flight to Bishkek at 5:45 PM. The flight is just under an hour, so on arrival in Bishkek, we will head directly to the restaurant for the welcome dinner with our Kyrgyz guide, before checking in at the hotel.

Hotel Orion 5 or similar*

Day 14: Bishkek City Tour & Burana Tower

We will begin the day with a two-hour drive to [Burana Tower](#), 85km east of Bishkek. The minaret at Burana was built in the 11th century in the medieval city of Balasagun, capital of the mighty Karakhanid Empire. You can climb up the winding staircase to enjoy extensive views of the Chuy Valley. There is also an open-air museum featuring a collection of ancient balbals, carved stone figures used as monuments. We will have lunch in a local family's house in the nearby village and watch a performance of national horse games called Kok Boru or Ulak Tartysh. In the afternoon we return to Bishkek.

[Bishkek](#), the charming capital of Kyrgyzstan, is relatively young. It started as a Russian garrison named "Pishpek" in the late 19th century, and it was only during the Soviet period that it grew into a city. It is a very green place, with tree-lined boulevards and many parks. Our sightseeing program in Bishkek includes Oak Park, the Ala Too Square, and Victory Square. Farewell dinner.

Hotel Orion 5 or similar*

Day 15: Bishkek Departure

Sadly the time has come to transfer to the airport for your flight back home. We hope you will have enjoyed your trip to Central Asia and will return soon to discover more places in this beautiful part of the world!

Price includes

- Full board (all lunches and dinners)
- Accommodation based on two people sharing a double/twin room; breakfasts included
- English-speaking local tour leader in each country / for groups of more than 6 people tour leader accompanying the group during the whole trip
- Entrance fees to all sights listed in the itinerary
- All transfers in a safe and comfortable vehicle with A/C, including pick up and drop off from the airport
- Cultural activities mentioned in the itinerary
- Economy class flights: Tashkent-Urgench, Dushanbe-Almaty, Almaty-Bishkek
- Train ticket from Bukhara-Samarkand

Price does not include

- International airfares to and from Central Asia
- Hotel charges for additional services
- Consular fees for tourist visas
- Travel insurance (required)
- Personal expenses (e.g. souvenirs)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tips for guides and drivers (optional)

Important Information

- All listed departures are guaranteed, starting from 1 person
- The maximum group size is 12 people
- The weather in Central Asia is stark continental, with cold winters and hot summers. We recommend traveling in spring (April/ May) or in fall (September/ October).
- The Uzbekistan part of the itinerary can be booked individually (“Best of Uzbekistan Tour”), and you can also opt to book the whole itinerary as a private tour. We can also arrange extra nights before or after the trip, and suggest private tour extensions.
- We can advise and take care of all visas for you. Citizens of most countries are eligible for an e-visa for Tajikistan. Other countries are visa free for most nationalities.
- A €500 per person deposit is required at the time of booking, and the balance is due 15 days prior to departure. Terms & Conditions: <https://kalpak-travel.com/terms-and-conditions/>
- Travel insurance is required
- We are happy to suggest flights to get to Central Asia and back home: please contact us
- See our [books recommendation on Central Asia & the Silk Road](#)
- Read more about [food in Central Asia](#)