

Central Asian Silk Road Tour 2025

Price: USD 6,720 per person. Deposit: USD 500. Payment can also be made in other currencies. Single supplement available for USD 1,600 and required for solo travelers.

Guaranteed departures 2025:

April 1 – April 18, 2025 | September 16 – October 3, 2025 | October 14 – October 31, 2025



Our expert guides will lead you through the “Five Stans” of Central Asia along the [Great Silk Road](#). Many of the remarkable cities you will visit 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 four 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 18 days, you will be immersed in millennia of history and the diverse cultures of the peoples who built the ‘Stans as you see them today.

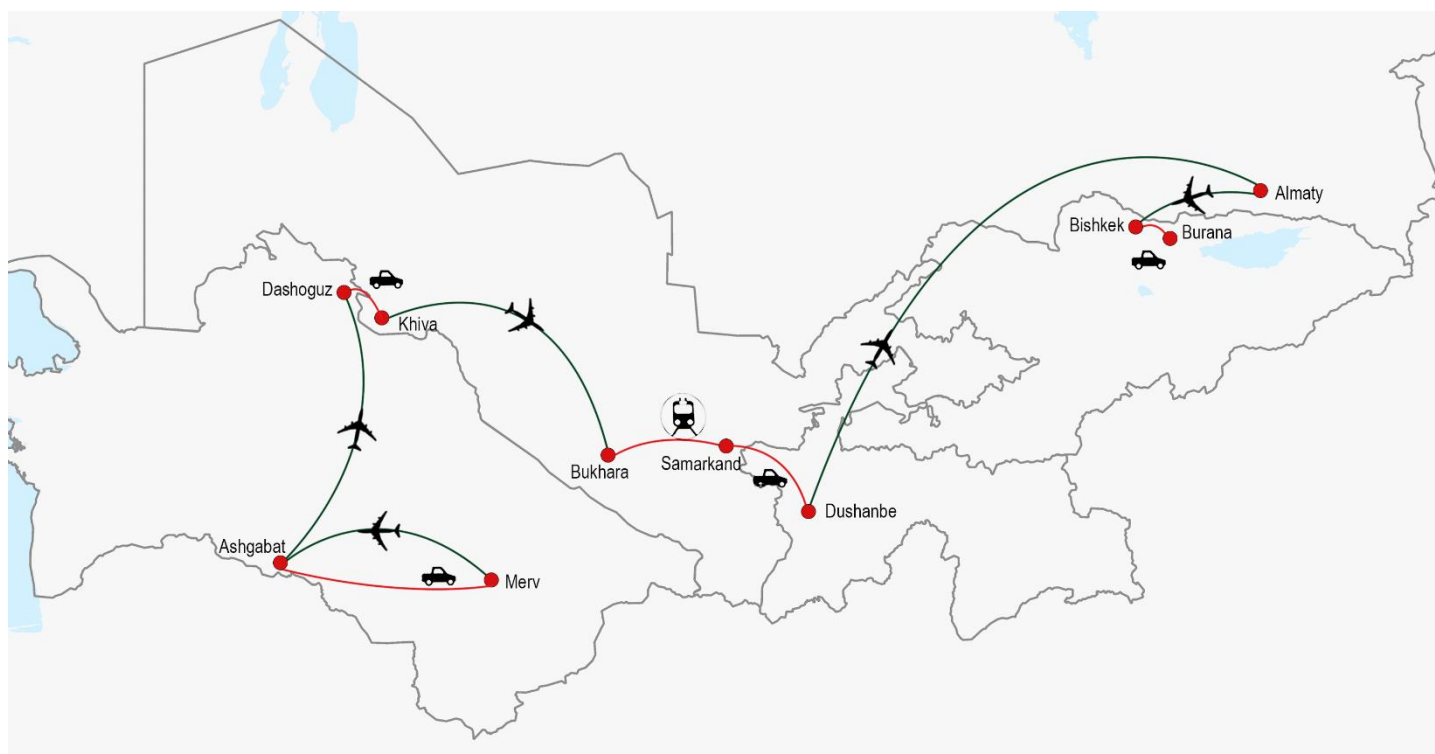
Highlights

- Travel in comfort along the Great Silk Road through the Five Stans of Central Asia
- Stay in 4* and 5* hotels throughout the tour
- Visit four of the five [Central Asian capitals](#) and learn how they have changed over time
- See the ruins of ancient Merv – once one of the world’s largest cities.
- Marvel at Registan Square and other architectural wonders of ancient [Samarkand](#)
- Wander the bustling streets of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of [Khiva](#) and [Bukhara](#)
- Shop in authentic oriental bazaars for everything from hand-woven silks to spices
- Discover Iskander Kul, an idyllic mountain lake named after Alexander the Great
- Visit a mountain village in Uzbekistan and learn about rural life in Central Asia
- Watch a performance of Kyrgyz horse games and meet an eagle hunter

Itinerary Overview

- Day 1: Arrival in Ashgabat. Orientation tour.
- Day 2: Ashgabat and Old Nisa.
- Day 3: Day trip to Mary/ Merv.
- Day 4: Ashgabat – Dashoguz (flight, 1h) – Khiva.
- Day 5: Khiva city tour.
- Day 6: Khiva – Bukhara (flight, 1h).
- Day 7: Bukhara city tour.
- Day 8: Bukhara – Samarkand (bullet train, 2h).
- Day 9: Samarkand city tour.
- Day 10: Samarkand and visit to mountain village.
- Day 11: Samarkand – Iskander Kul – Dushanbe.
- Day 12: Dushanbe city tour.
- Day 13: Dushanbe – Almaty (flight, 2h).
- Day 14: Almaty city tour.
- Day 15: Almaty – Bishkek (flight, 1h).
- Day 16: Bishkek city tour.
- Day 17: Day trip to Burana tower.
- Day 18: Departure from Bishkek.

Map



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Ashgabat. Orientation tour.

Welcome to Turkmenistan! Most flights arrive very early in the morning (Turkish Airlines from Istanbul, FlyDubai/ Emirates from Dubai). You will get your visa on arrival with our pre-approved invitation letter. Transfer to the hotel and early check-in with breakfast. Have some rest.

In the late morning, meet your tour leader and fellow travelers for the welcome briefing and lunch.

In the afternoon we will have an orientation tour of the Turkmen capital [Ashgabat](#), literally translated as “city of love”, and famous for its white marble architecture. We will explore most striking structures of the city. We will stop at such impressive buildings as the Monument of Independence (resembling a white-marble “Eiffel Tower” located in a beautiful park), a rocket-like Arch of Neutrality, “Palace of Happiness” (the official name for the wedding registration office) shaped like a 3D octagon star, the National Memory complex consisting of an eternal fire rising up to the skies and the Earthquake Memorial (topped by a sculpture of a large bull holding the Earth on its horns).

Welcome dinner with a nice city view.

Hotel Diwan 5 or similar*

Day 2: Ashgabat and Old Nisa.

Breakfast at hotel. We start our touring today with the visit of the ruins of Old Nisa (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the earliest of the Parthian Empire capitals. Erected on the top an irregular pentagon hill at the foot of the Kopet-Dag Mountains, in atmospheric outskirts of the city, Old Nisa is a beautiful landmark. 14 ha in size, the fort accommodates two semi-excavated complexes of the Parthian period (III c. BC - III c. AD), designated as royal residence and temple complex. Abandoned at the end of the Parthian period, Old Nisa conveyed its functions to New Nisa, another archaeological site located a couple of kilometers to the west, an important medieval Silk Road city. After sightseeing at Old Nisa we proceed to Kipchak village to visit a complex of the biggest mosque in Turkmenistan and the family mausoleum of the first President, Turkmenbashi. Then we return to Ashgabat to visit the National Museum of History (more than 327.000 objects on a display) and observe an exclusive collection of ancient artifacts from different historical and archeological sites of Turkmenistan, such as Old Nisa, Ancient Merv and others. We will also have a chance today to visit a local market. In the evening we have dinner with Turkmen folklore show.

Hotel Diwan 5 or similar*

Day 3: Day trip to Mary/ Merv.

Today, we depart from Ashgabat and drive on the new highway to Mary (360 km, c. 4h). We will then drive to the nearby ruins of Ancient Merv (UNESCO World Heritage Site). One of the major archaeological sites of Central Asia, Merv played an important part in the development of the Silk Road for more than 2000 years. Within the limits of the archaeological park, which is 1200 ha, we will have a chance to observe all constituent parts of the “wandering city”. A series of adjacent cities, which can be roughly divided into the ancient (Erk Kala and Gyaur Kala), the medieval (Sultan Kala with its suburbs), and post-medieval (Abdulla-Khan Kala and Bayram-Ali-Khan Kala), appeared over time as a token of the natural progress of the city from initial stages of its existence to a more advanced level. Besides remnants of the cities of Merv, we will visit the VI-IX cc. AD forts of Big and Little Kyz-Kalas, excellent examples of the so-called corrugated Koshks; the splendid XII c. mausoleums of Sultan Sanjar and Muhammed ibn-Zeyd, demonstrating exquisite Seljuk period brickwork and architectural décor. Later, we head back to Mary to visit local History Museum, presenting a wide array of archaeological finds as well as interesting ethnographic displays. In the evening, before dinner, we fly back to Ashgabat (7:35 pm – 8:15 pm).

Hotel Diwan 5 or similar*

Day 4: Ashgabat – Dashoguz (flight, 1h) – Khiva.

Catch a flight from Ashgabat to Dashoguz at 9:50 am (50 min flight). We will have Turkmen farewell lunch in Dashoguz at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, we transfer to the nearby border with Uzbekistan. After crossing the border on foot, we will meet our Uzbek local guide and driver and drive for another hour to Khiva. Please note that the border crossing may take a couple of hours. Dinner in the old town and overnight in a comfortable hotel, five minutes' driving distance from the old town.

Hotel Farovon 4 or similar*

Day 5: Khiva city tour.

A jewel of desert architecture, [Khiva](#) is one of the most important centers of ancient Khorezm. Locals believe that Shem, son of Noah, founded the city when he discovered a freshwater spring in the middle of this vast desert. Archeologists believe the city was founded some 2,500 years ago. Today, Khiva is the most architecturally intact and tightly packed of Central Asia's Silk Road cities. Its intense blue-and-green tile work ranks as some of the most ornate in Uzbekistan, and the entirety of the Ichan-Kala - the inner city - is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It also has the feel of a movie set or an open-air museum. Khiva is full of incredible architecture, and today we will get the chance to see it all. The focus of our tour is the walled Ichan-Kala, within which are preserved more than 60 historic monuments and hundreds of centuries-old houses. You will also have time on your own to wander around this fabled town.

Hotel Farovon 4 or similar*

Day 6: Khiva – Bukhara (flight, 1h).

Our short flight to Bukhara departs only at 3:20 pm from Urgench Airport (30 minutes' ride from Khiva). For those who like, we offer a half-day trip to Toprak Kala and Ayaz Kala, clay ruins of ancient Khorezm in the desert. First, we drive 2 hours to Toprak Kala, ancient capital city of Khorezm around 2nd century AD). From there it is another shaky one hour drive to Ayaz Kala. According to archeological excavations, the Ayaz Kala fortress dates from the 2nd century BC. It was part of a system of border fortresses which stretched as a chain from east to west and defended the Khiva oasis from the desert side. We will then transfer to nearby Urgench, where we take the flight to Bukhara in the afternoon.

If you prefer, you may instead spend a free morning in Khiva, doing some shopping or wandering through the old town. We plan to arrive at Bukhara Airport at 4:10 pm. It's just a 10 minutes' ride from the airport to the old town of Bukhara, where we check in at a beautiful boutique style hotel. Dinner in a nice local restaurant in the old town.

Hotel Alexia Suite 4 or similar*

Day 7: Bukhara city tour.

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 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. Bukhara is also a great city to see artisans at work.

Hotel Alexia Suite 4 or similar*

Day 8: Bukhara – Samarkand (bullet train, 2h).

Today morning we will visit a couple more sights near Bukhara. First, we 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.

Our high-speed train departs from Bukhara at 3:45 pm and we arrive in Samarkand at 5:30 pm.

Transfer to the hotel for check-in and dinner. After dinner, we may walk to Registan Square for an evening view of the magnificent madrasahs.

Hotel Kosh Havuz 4 or similar.*

Day 9: Samarkand city tour.

Sublime [Samarkand](#) was the capital of the Timurid Empire; Timur was one of history's greatest 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 the architectural heritage from this period has been preserved, allowing us to see how the city might have been at the peak of Timur's power.

We will start the city tour with a visit to Bibi-Khanum Mosque, a structure that legend says was gifted to Timur by one of his wives. We will also have some time to explore Siyob Bazaar.

We will then visit Registan Square, the most famous landmark in all of Uzbekistan. This square was the focal point of medieval Samarkand and is framed by three beautiful madrassas (religious schools), Ulugbek, Sherdor, and Tillya Kori. Our next stop is Gur-e-Amir, the gilded mausoleum where Timur is buried. We will hear stories from his life and how he began the construction of Samarkand.

Hotel Kosh Havuz 4 or similar.*

Day 10: Samarkand and visit to mountain village.

After breakfast, we will 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. At Afrasiyab Museum you will get a chance to learn about the ancient city of Samarkand – then known as Afrasiyab – which was destroyed by the Mongols in the early 13th century.

Next, we will drive about one hour out of Samarkand to visit an Uzbek village in the foothills of the Hissar mountain range. We will have lunch together with a family, and learn about rural life in Uzbekistan. There is also a folklore show arranged specially for us by a group of local musicians and dancers. Return back to Samarkand in the afternoon. Have some rest before Uzbek farewell dinner.

Hotel Kosh Havuz 4 or similar.*

Day 11: Samarkand – Iskander Kul – Dushanbe.

After breakfast, 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, complete all necessary formalities, and meet our Tajik guide and driver on the other side. A few minutes after the border, 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. We will then continue on a long but very scenic driving day through the Zarafshan Mountains to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. On the way, we

will visit Iskander Kul, an idyllic mountain lake 30 km 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 like, 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 12: 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.

After breakfast, we start the day with a visit to the National Museum of Antiquities with its famous Sleeping Buddha, excavated from the Buddhist monastery at Ajina Teppa. Next, we visit 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. Today we will also have a chance to visit a famous stone mosaics master, whose works are also on display in Navruz Palace. Touring today also includes the Museum of Musical Instruments and Folklore. Badakhshani actor Gurminj Zavkybekov began this small but fascinating museum. Displaying a fine collection of beautifully crafted antique and modern instruments from Afghanistan, the Pamirs, Turkey, and China, the museum is often the scene of exuberant performances and demonstrations.

After, 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. The main walking avenue of Dushanbe, where our hotel is located, is also named after Rudaki.

Hotel Serena 5 or similar.*

Day 13: Dushanbe – Almaty (flight, 2h).

After breakfast, check out from the hotel. We will first visit the newly built independence monument. From the top we can enjoy a nice last view of Dushanbe, before taking the flight to Almaty, Kazakhstan. The Air Astana flight is scheduled to depart at 1:30 pm and will arrive in Almaty at 3:15 pm. We will meet our Kazakh local guide and driver and transfer to the city center. Check-in at the hotel and Kazakh welcome dinner in a nice local restaurant.

Hotel Mercure Almaty City Center 4 or similar.*

Day 14: 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.

We will visit Panfilov Park to see the impressive memorial dedicated to the Soviet soldiers who fought in WWII and take a look at the most famous Orthodox cathedral of Almaty. Then we drive around one hour to a village outside of Almaty, where we visit a local family of farmers, who produce their own cheese and wine. They will show us around the farm, and we will have a meal together. We will then drive back to Almaty.

Hotel Mercure Almaty City Center 4 or similar.*

Day 15: Almaty – Bishkek (flight, 1h).

Free time in the morning. Your guide and tour leader will provide different options.

After lunch, transfer to the airport to catch Air Astana flight to Bishkek (4:35 pm – 6:25 pm). The duration of the flight is less than an hour, but because Kyrgyzstan is one hour ahead of the other Central Asian countries, you are scheduled to arrive only at 6:25 pm. Kyrgyz welcome dinner on the way to your hotel.

Hotel Orion 5 or similar.*

Day 16: Bishkek city tour.

[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.

During the city tour, we will learn the history of both Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan, as part of the Great Silk Road, and the more recent Soviet Union, and get a glimpse of how it is shaping today. We will explore main sights such as the Ala-Too square with the National History Museum, the White House, and the old square, but also discover interesting places off-the-beaten path.

Hotel Orion 5 or similar.*

Day 17: Day trip to 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, the 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 will have a chance to meet an eagle hunter, who will make a short performance for us. Later, return to Bishkek. Before dinner you will have some free time to pack or do some shopping.

Farewell dinner.

Hotel Orion 5 or similar*

Day 18: Departure from Bishkek.

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 you have wonderful photos and memories to share with family and friends back home.

Price includes

- Full board (all lunches and dinners)
- Accommodation based on two people sharing a double/twin room; breakfasts included
- English-speaking expert 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 airport transfers
- Cultural activities mentioned in the itinerary
- Economy class flights: Ashgabat-Dashoguz, Urgench-Bukhara, Dushanbe-Almaty, Almaty-Bishkek
- Train ticket from Bukhara-Samarkand in Business Class

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

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 fall (September/ October).
- You can 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. All countries are visa-free for most nationalities, except Turkmenistan, where you get the visa on arrival.
- A USD 500 per person deposit is required at the time of booking. The balance is due 15 days before departure. Terms & Conditions: <https://kalpak-travel.com/terms-and-conditions/>
- Travel insurance is required.
- We are happy to suggest flights to Central Asia and back home: please contact us.
- See our [book recommendation on Central Asia & the Silk Road](#)
- Read more about [food in Central Asia](#)