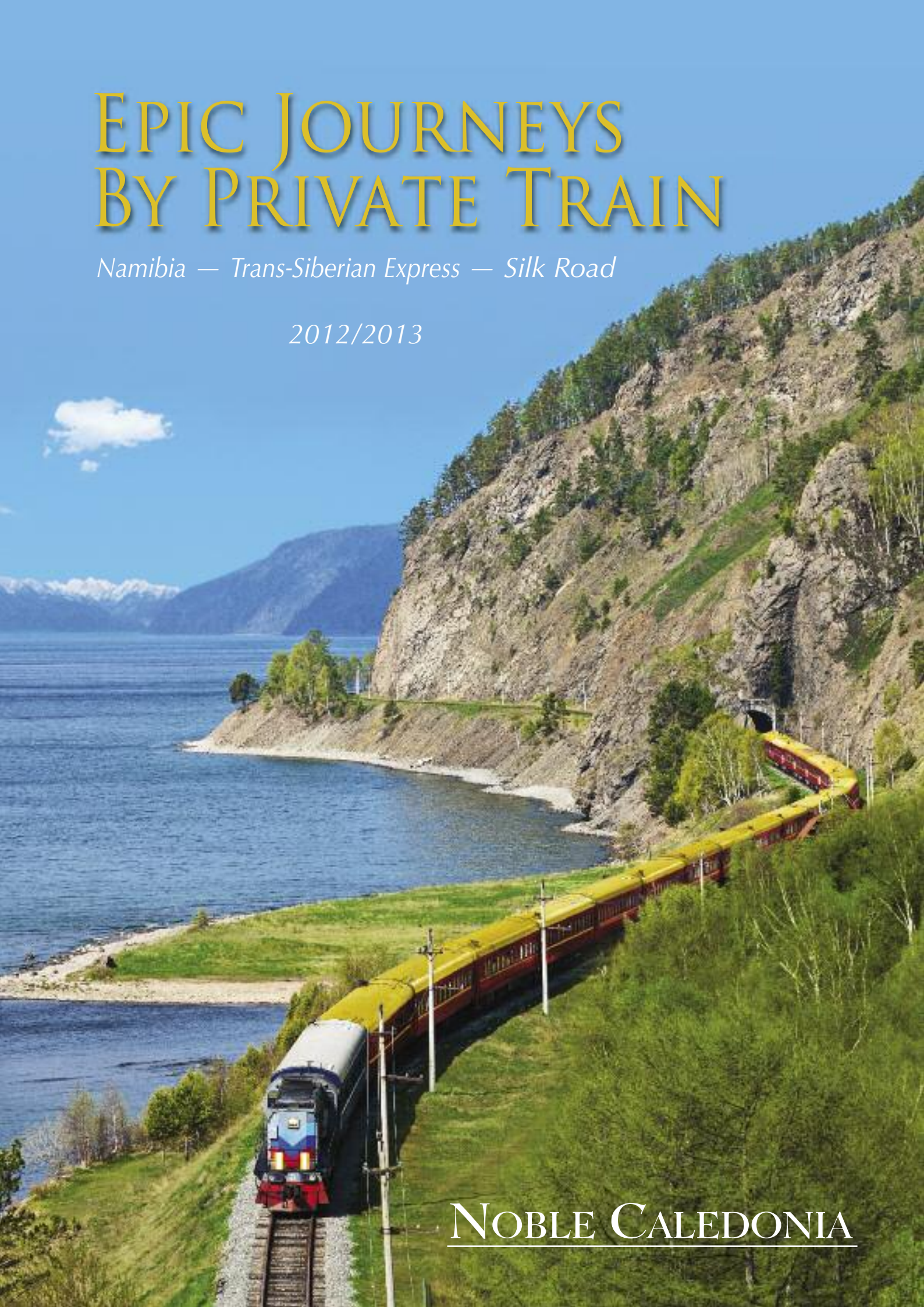
# Epic Journeys By Private Train

*Namibia — Trans-Siberian Express — Silk Road*

*2012/2013*



Noble Caledonia

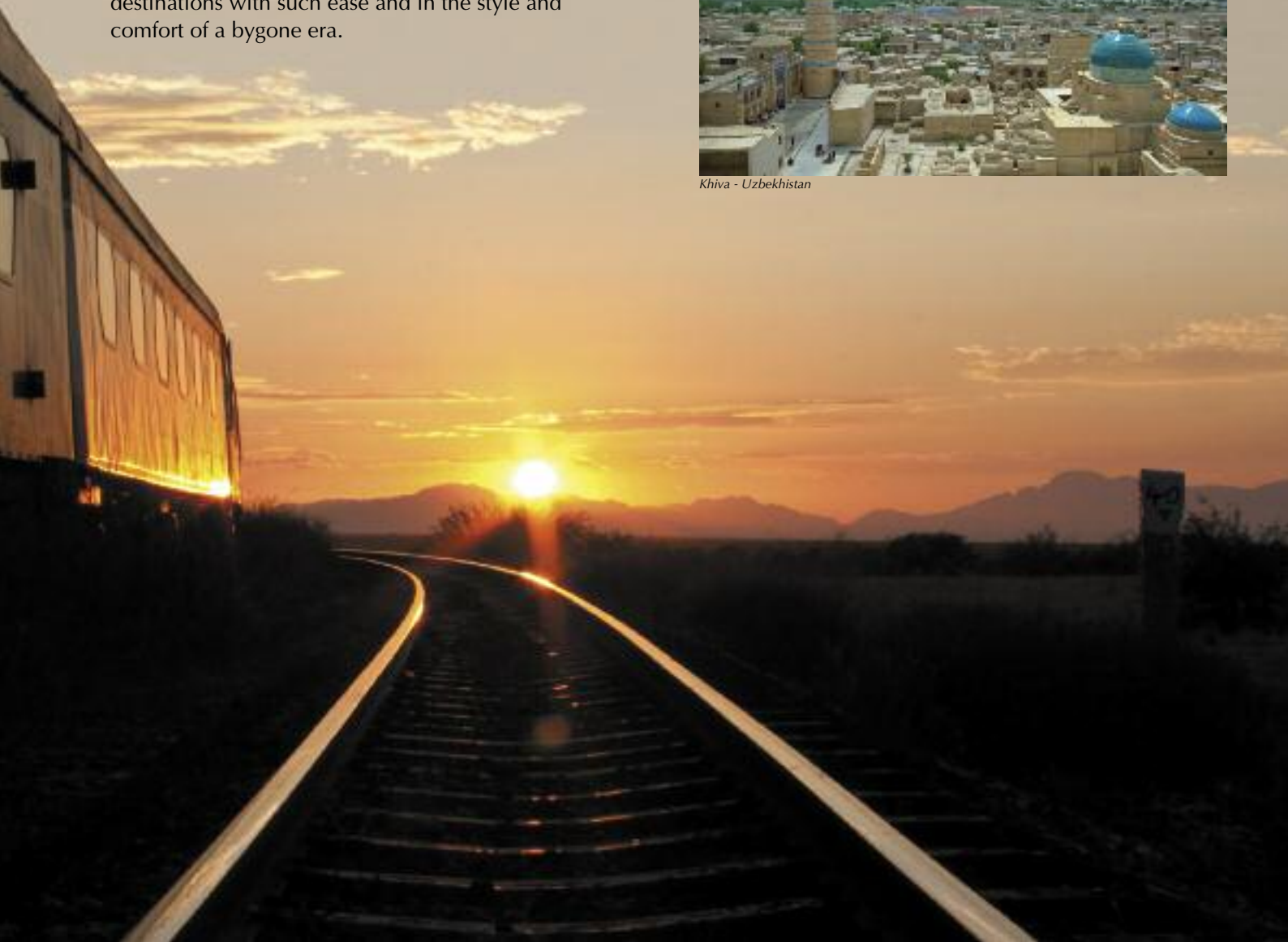
We have joined forces with our German associates, Lernidee Trains and Cruises, to bring you a collection of spectacular journeys by private train through Namibia, along the Trans-Siberian route and the Silk Road. Travelling by train allows the landscape to unfold before you; take in vast deserts, spectacular wildlife, colourful villages and towns as we visit some of the most remote and culturally diverse destinations in the world. Travelling aboard a comfortable private train allows the adventure traveller to immerse themselves in local culture and customs with all the necessary safety and amenities for such a journey. Each departure is overseen by an experienced tour manager as well as dedicated tour guides who will lead small group excursions.

There will be ample time to relax onboard the train and enjoy the changing scenery. Each train is comfortably furnished and there is a dedicated restaurant car which seats all passengers where you can enjoy international and local cuisine in the company of your fellow travellers. After enjoying tours off the train, your cabin attendant will be waiting to welcome you back onboard with a refreshing drink, and will always be on hand to offer round the clock service. The high ratio of staff to passengers means there is always someone available should you need assistance. There really is no better way to experience such a vast array of destinations with such ease and in the style and comfort of a bygone era.

*Elephants - Namibia*

*Qolsharif Mosque, Kazan - Russia*

*Khiva - Uzbekhistan*



# The Desert Express

The interior of the Namibian-German designed *Desert Express* is reminiscent of stylish journeys of the past. It reflects the colours and flavours of the country: beautiful glass engravings of the Namibian fauna and flora, handmade amber-coloured leather armchairs in the lounge car, golden woods with lovingly carved animal motifs. In the Welwitschia Restaurant and the Stardune Bistro exquisite three-course menus and buffet meals are served. Enjoy Namibian and European gourmet cuisine with game such as Oryx or Kudu and fresh ocean specialties together with fine South-African wines. In the Spitzkoppe saloon car you can relax with a freshly tapped Windhoek Lager or a tasty cocktail. There is no dress code on your private train or in the restaurants of your lodges.

Accommodating just 48 guests, the *Desert Express* has four cars which each have six sleeping compartments. Each compartment has two lower beds (6′2″ x 2′3″), which in the daytime can be transformed into three cosy chairs. The large panoramic windows offer amazing views and are ideal for photography. Every compartment has a shower, toilet and a pivoting wash basin with hot and cold water. The modern fixtures of the compartments include individually adjustable air-conditioning, safe, hair-dryer and 220 V socket. There is also a doctor onboard.

*Please turn to pages 6 and 7 for 'Namibia by Private Train' aboard the Desert Express.*

*Lounge*

*Restaurant*

*Cabin (made up for nightime)*

*Fine South-African wines*

*Cabin (daytime)*

# Tsar's Gold

Accommodating up to 200 passengers, the *Tsar's Gold* private train has four restaurant cars with bar service and modern air-conditioned sleeping carriages, with a choice of four accommodation categories. The Standard Plus and Nostalgic Comfort categories have shared facilities and the Bolshoi and Bolshoi Platinum categories feature en-suite facilities. Each accommodation car has two attendants.

The dining cars, featuring international and traditional Russian cuisine can serve all passengers in one sitting. Water, tea and coffee are served with all meals. Each of the restaurant cars operates as a bar and lounge after dinner. The atmosphere onboard is relaxed and informal and no dress code is required.

Unlike many train tours, the *Tsar's Gold* private train has one tour guide for a maximum group size of 26 throughout the journey, which means exploring off the train will be a pleasant and relaxed experience in small groups. In addition there is a tour manager for the train who will oversee the itinerary and assist all passengers to make this a truly wonderful experience.

*Please turn to pages 8 and 9 for 'Beijing to Moscow Aboard the Trans-Siberian Express' aboard the Tsar's Gold.*

*Corridor*

*International and traditional Russian cuisine*

*Dining Car*

## Standard Plus Category

In the Standard Plus Category, there are 9 compartments per car. A compartment is shared by two guests. Berths are sized 2'3" x 6'2" and arranged adjacent to each other. There is also a table under the window. Toilet compartments are located at each end of the coach and showers are in every second or third car.

## Standard Plus NEW

In the Standard Plus Category New, there are 8 compartments per car. One compartment is shared by two guests. Berths are sized 2'3" x 6'2" and arranged facing each other. There is also a table under the window. Toilet compartments are located at the end of this category's car as well as a spacious shower room. This carriage is newly built and lovingly furnished with red plush cushioning.

## Nostalgic Comfort Category

If you want to travel like the Red Tsars, the Nostalgic Comfort Category is a must. The newly built cars are nostalgically furnished, but also provide modern amenities. You will be travelling in an ambiance, in which even former Soviet leaders would have felt at home – although with the comfort of the 21st century. Each of these rolling hotel rooms offers two large berths (2'6" x 6') bunk beds and an armchair. Every two adjoining compartments share a washroom with hand shower and washbasin. Toilets are at both ends of the coach.

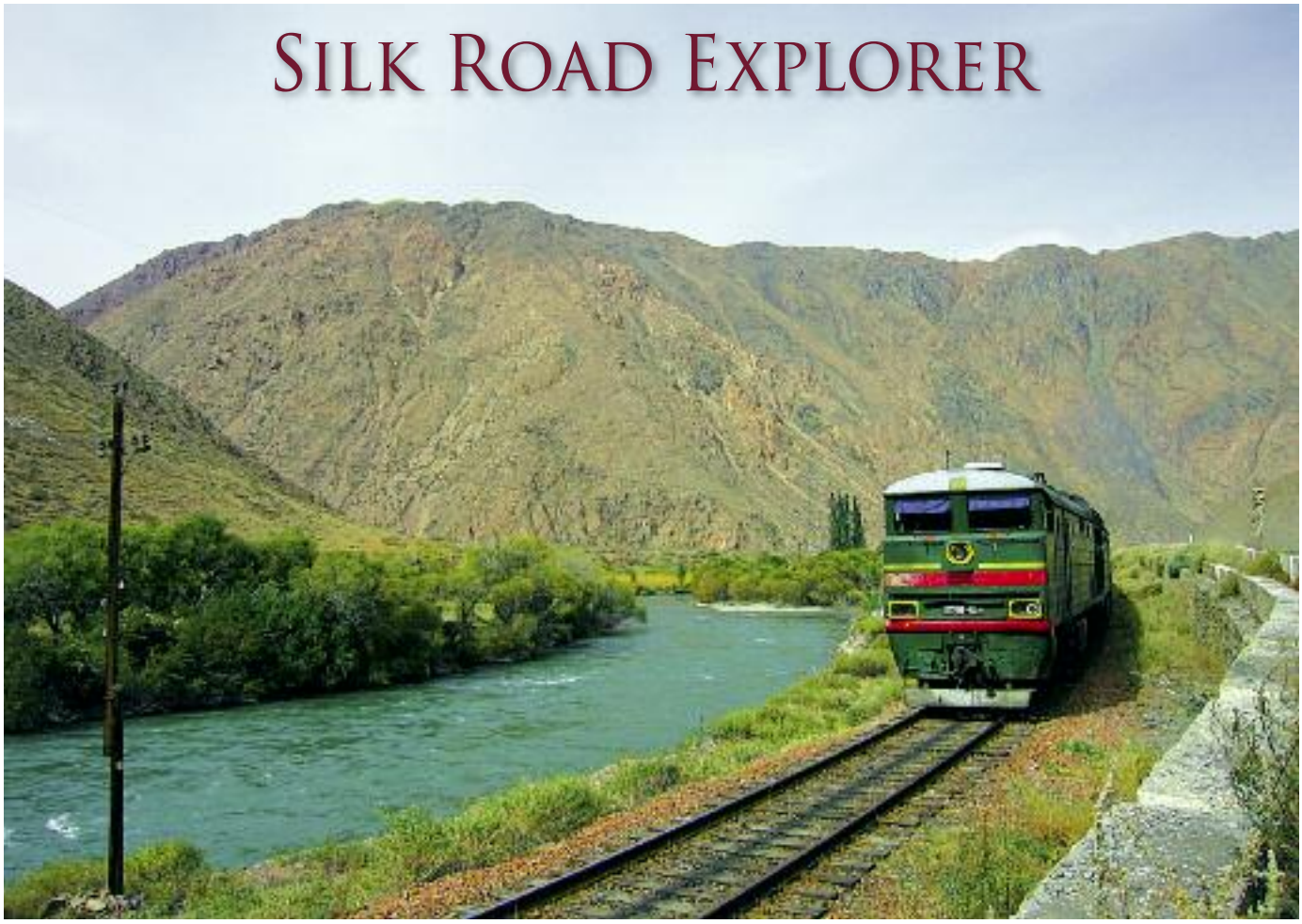
## Bolshoi Category

The Bolshoi Category is equipped with two beds; the lower one measures 3'6" x 6'2", providing room for two people if required, and the upper bed measures 2'6" x 5'8". Furthermore, the large compartments offer a cosy seating bench, a table and a wardrobe. The compartment's exclusive ensuite bathroom contains a washbasin, WC and shower and also enough storage space for your personal belongings. Each coach of this category has only six compartments.

## Bolshoi Platinum Category

The newly introduced Bolshoi Platinum Category features the highest possible comfort on the Tsar's Gold. Each compartment is large with full shower cabin, WC and washing basin. Bed sizes are the same as the Bolshoi Category. There are just 5 of these magnificent cabins in each coach of this category.

# Silk Road Explorer



This private train allows us to explore the fascinating Silk Road in adequate comfort with excellent service. A maximum of 140 guests can be accommodated in modern, air-conditioned sleeping carriages. Once onboard your luggage stays on the train for the duration of the trip. The restaurant cars seat all passengers in one sitting, serving excellent international and local cuisine. After dinner, these cars offer a bar service for you to enjoy a late drink.

There is one experienced tour guide for a maximum of 25 guests, ensuring a personal service and informative tour throughout. There is also a doctor onboard.

*Please turn to pages 10 and 11 for the 'Legendary Silk Road' aboard the Silk Road Explorer.*

*Kalif Compartment*

*Enjoy a glass of wine in the restaurant*

*Ali Baba/Aladin Compartment*

**COMPARTMENT CATEGORIES**

There are three categories of accommodation, and each car has two attendants. In all categories there are power outlets for 110/220 volts and a smoker's corner at one end of each car.

## Ali Baba

Each Ali Baba car has nine compartments providing sleeping space for 2 guests in 2 lower berths (2'3" x 6'). There is a table beneath the window and combined washing and toilet facilities are located at both ends of each car.

## Aladin

Each Aladin car has eight compartments for 2 guests with 2 lower berths (2'3" x 6'). There is a table beneath the window and combined washing and toilet facilities are located at both ends of each car. In addition, a shower is located at one end of each car and you will receive a bathing robe and toiletries in your compartment.

## Kalif

This category is equipped with two beds, the lower of which measures 3'6" x 6'2", providing enough space for two people if required, while the upper bed measures 2'6" x 5'8". Furthermore, the compartment offers a cosy seating bench, a table and a wardrobe. The compartment's exclusive en suite bathroom does not only contain a washing basin, WC and shower, but also storage space for your personal belongings. Each car of the Kalif category has only six compartments. A total of twelve guests at most share the whole of the carriage.

# Namibia by Private Train

## An escorted tour of Namibia including five nights aboard the *Desert Express*

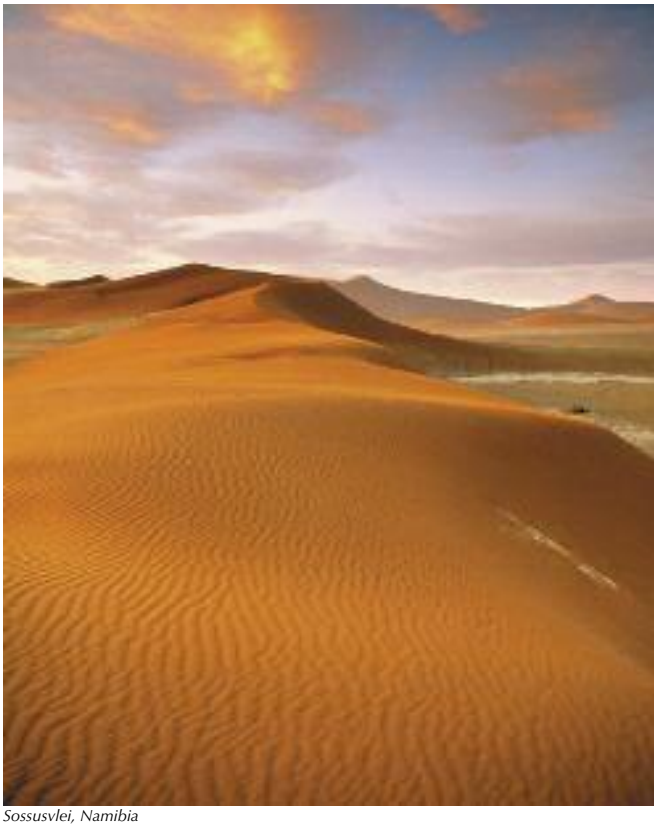
### *28th November to 11th December 2012; 16th to 29th October; 27th November to 10th December 2013*

Join us for an exclusive private train journey aboard the renamed *Desert Express* as we explore the amazing landscapes and rugged grandeur of Namibia. Travelling from Windhoek, our train continues through the desert and mountainous landscapes of Namibia. We will stop to take in the scenery, visit villages and view some stunning and diverse wildlife.

Highlights of this remarkable itinerary are numerous and include Fish River Canyon, Africa's largest canyon, the rugged Atlantic coast, Swakopmund which is located on the Skeleton Coast and an excellent example of German colonial architecture, and the wildlife rich Etosha National Park, one of Southern Africa's finest and most important Game reserves.

The beauty and the colours of Africa truly need to be seen to be believed and are brought right to the compartment doors of our rolling hotel, while enjoying four-star comfort and first-class service. Spend nights in the Namib Desert and Etosha National Park in stylish lodges as well as enjoying adventurous game drives.

The ultimate highlight for many will be the sand dunes at Sossusvlei for which Namibia is so renowned. Sossusvlei lies in the heart of the Namib Desert and is home to the world's tallest sand dunes, some of which tower over 300 metres high. Watching the changing mood and colours at sunrise and sunset is a once in a lifetime experience.



*Sossusvlei, Namibia*

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Windhoek.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight.
**Day 2 Windhoek.** On arrival transfer to your lodge for an overnight stay. Influenced by its German colonial past, Windhoek is the capital of Namibia and is surrounded by the Khomas-Hochland Mountains.
**Day 3 Windhoek.** Today we board the *Desert Express*, leaving the historic train station of Windhoek as we roll slowly through the Auas Hills southwards. Settle in to your compartment and enjoy the landscapes with a glass of wine or an ice cold Windhoek Lager. There will be a short lecture about our journey and Namibia before a welcome dinner in the onboard restaurant, 'Welwitschia'.
**Day 4 Fish River Canyon.** Drive through pristine semi desert landscapes to the gorge of the Fish River Canyon, the second biggest canyon on earth. Take a walk along the canyon edge and enjoy breathtaking views into the 500m deep and 160km long canyon. Return to your private train for lunch while the train heads northwards through the Kalahari. In the small village of Keetmanshoop there will be time for a short excursion to the Quiver Tree Forest. These strange looking tree aloes are very photogenic.
**Day 5 Mariental to the Namib Desert.** This morning we arrive in Mariental and leave the train with hand luggage for two nights. Take a four hour bus ride through a barren and mountainous landscape, stopping for a traditional Namibian brunch in Maltahöhe before arriving at your stylish lodge in the Namib Naukluft Park. Spend two days enjoying the solitude and awe inspiring landscapes of the oldest desert on earth, the Namib Desert. The Southern Cross and other constellations of the fascinating Milky Way will remain clear in your memory forever.
**Day 6 Sossusvlei.** Visit the brick-red, glowing, gigantic dunes of the Sossusvlei area. After a photo stop at Dune 45, continue the drive through the endless sea of apricot coloured sand. Dune 45 is over 150 metres high, the name derives from the fact that it is placed 45 kilometres away from the entry to the National Park. In open vehicles we drive the last five kilometres into the Sossusvlei, a clay depression surrounded by dunes which only fills with water from the Tsauchab River in good rain years. See the Dead Vlei, with its dead camel-thorn trees with a backdrop of huge red dunes, some of them more than 300 metres high. Continue to the Sesriem Canyon, where layers of conglomerate stone are exposed. Enjoy a late lunch back at the lodge and afterwards take an optional excursion to admire the dunes from above in a small Cessnas plane, flying over the Sossusvlei and the Namib-Naukluft Park to the Atlantic Coast. The duration of the flight is approximately 70 minutes and booking and payment is on location. At sunset enjoy a romantic sunset drive with light refreshments and drinks.

*Giraffe, Etosha National Park*

*Flamingos, Walvis Bay*

**Day 7 Walvis Bay and Swakopmund.** During our five hour bus drive to the Atlantic Ocean, you will have the chance for photo stops at the bizarre rock formations of the Gaub-Pass and the Kuiseb Canyon. Namib is the Nama bush people's word for extensive, rough plain – a description that could not be more apt. Passing the Vogelfederberg, known as the Ayers Rock of the Namib Desert, we continue on to the harbour village of Walvis Bay. This was an African enclave until 1994. With any luck we will see flocks of flamingos and pelicans at the lagoon's edge. Drive along the coast road to Swakopmund, which has a very German character due to its colonial past. In the afternoon there will be time for a stroll along the waterside promenade, before being welcomed back onboard the *Desert Express*.

**Day 8 Spitzkoppe.** Early in the morning, your private train leaves Swakopmund and travels eastwards back to the inland plateau. Enjoy breakfast with panoramic views of the desolate gravel plains outside. The route between Swakopmund and Windhoek was established in 1902 and is the oldest train track in the country. At Usakos, we stop for an excursion to the 1700m high Spitzkoppe, a characteristic granite mountain, visible from miles around. Mighty granite blocks appear to balance over deep rifts and individually standing acacias shape the landscape. In 'Bushman's Paradise' you can see ancient rock paintings of the Bush-People. Return to your private train which turns north towards Otjiwarongo shortly after departing from Usakos. Today a lecture is dedicated to the San, the original inhabitants of Southern Africa. There will be a Biltong tasting, where you can try many different styles of the popular dry meat, used by the Voortrekkers on their long journeys.

**Day 9 Etosha National Park.** After your train has crossed the Otavi Highlands, it reaches siding KM72 via newly built train tracks. Transfer by bus to your spacious lodge for a two night stay. On a game drive look out for elephants, lions, gnus and other game close up. In the heart of the largest game reserve in Namibia lies the gigantic Etosha Salt Pan, "The Place of Dry Water". The big, wide pan with its mirages and passing animal herds will make your game drive a memorable experience. In the afternoon enjoy some free time. Lunch and dinner will be served in the lodge's restaurant.

**Day 10 Etosha National Park.** This morning is reserved for an extensive game drive in the park. The animal herds of the Etosha Park rely on the water holes, so the park offers ideal conditions for watching and taking pictures of the animals. In the afternoon, relax in your lodge or join another optional game drive.

**Day 11 Etosha National Park & crossing the Damaraland.** This morning there will be one more opportunity for close encounters with the African animal kingdom. Leave the park during the late afternoon and reboard the train. A lecture about the history of Namibia will round off your day.

**Day 12 Windhoek.** Early in the morning our journey may become a train safari as the route leads through private game farms with chances to see giraffe, springbok and ostrich. Around noon, arrive at Windhoek station and transfer to a city hotel centrally located on Independence Avenue, the main street of Windhoek. During a city tour see buildings from colonial times and gain an insight in to the contrasting life styles between the exclusive residential area Ludwigsdorf and the township of Katutura. We will visit a skills development project for women as well as a typical market. This evening, enjoy a farewell dinner in a typical restaurant.

**Day 13 Windhoek to London.** After breakfast transfer to the airport for the scheduled indirect flight to London.

**Day 14 London.** Arrive this morning.

## Prices per person

Based on double occupancy Tour code: LANAMIBIAT

**2012 Departures – Twin: £5995 Single: £8495**

**2013 Departures – Twin: £6595 Single: £9295**

**Price includes:** Economy class scheduled air travel, overnight lodge accommodation near Windhoek, 2 nights accommodation in Namib Naukluft Park, 2 nights lodge accommodation near Etosha National Park, 5 nights accommodation aboard the *Desert Express*, overnight hotel accommodation in Windhoek, all meals, services of a tour manager, local tour guides, transfers, airport taxes.

**Not included:** Travel insurance, optional excursions, gratuities, visas, local departure taxes.

*Waterbuffalo*

*Quiver Tree Forest*

*Oryx*

*Skeleton Coast*

# Moscow to Beijing Along the Trans-Siberian Railway

### An epic journey aboard the *Tsar's Gold*

A journey on the legendary Trans-Siberian Railway is one of the epic travel adventures of the world, crossing one third of the world, from Beijing to the heart of Moscow. Travelling this route aboard a private train however, offers the ultimate experience. Journey through fascinating China, across the great expanse of Siberia to the heart of Russia from aboard the Tsar's Gold train, one of the most comfortable trains on the route.

This comprehensive itinerary will include a wide variety of sightseeing tours and excellent tour guides as our private train travels across Mongolia from the wilds of the Gobi Desert, across the endless steppe, where Genghis Khan's armies once galloped, to the modern capital, Ulan Bator. Continue up to the steep shores of ancient Lake Baikal and on to the striking city of Moscow.

## Westbound Itinerary

**Day 1 London Heathrow to Beijing.** Fly by scheduled flight.
**Day 2 Beijing.** Upon arrival, transfer to your first class hotel for your two night stay. Enjoy a tour of Beijing, including Beijing's most stunning sights, the Temple of Heaven and the famous Tiananmen Square. This evening enjoy a welcome reception and dinner at the hotel.
**Day 3 Beijing.** The Great Wall of China is the 8th Wonder of the World; this is your chance to experience it up close. Stop at a pearl farm as well as at the famous Ming Tombs (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the Sacred Way, a boulevard lined with carved stone animals. Wrapping up the day is a feast featuring what is surely the world's best-known Chinese delicacy, Peking Duck, at one of China's most famous theme restaurants.

*Gobi Desert*

**Day 4 Beijing.** For centuries the doors to the former Emperor's Palaces have been closed to the public, today the glorious halls and mysterious temples of the Forbidden City are open to view. In the evening, the rail part of the journey begins. A modern Chinese train will pull out from Beijing's station, en route to Mongolia. Witness China's busy rural life unfolds outside your window, people working in the fields, donkey-drawn carts on dusty roads, and the great steppes of the Gobi Desert.
**Day 5 Erlian & the Gobi Desert.** At noon we arrive in Erlian at the Chinese-Mongolian border and change to the Tsar's Gold private train. In Erlian you can explore the colourful border market before our train takes us through the vast expanse of the Gobi Desert, then through the great green steppes of Mongolia.
**Day 6 Ulan Bator.** In the morning arrive in the Mongolian capital Ulan Bator. Major luggage can be left on the train while you check into the centrally located hotel and enjoy a city tour. You will see the Choijin Lama temple and at night and we have the unique opportunity to watch traditional Mongolian music performances.
**Day 7 Gandan Monastery & the Mongolian Alps.** After breakfast you will visit the Buddhist Gandan Monastery and undertake an excursion to a mountainous area with stunning rock formations, known as the Mongolian Alps (about 90 minutes east of Ulan Bator). Along the way, an openair railroad museum puts the Mongolian railway in context. A picnic lunch in a yurt is followed by a demonstration of Mongolian horsemanship and the traditional wrestling match. Try some lamb in milk, a culinary specialty of Mongolia. Or, for the brave of heart, there's always kumys (fermented mare's milk), the beer of the nomads. We return to the train tonight to continue our journey.
**Day 8 Ulan Ude.** Bid farewell to the Mongolian steppes as the train rolls on through the valley of Selenga, the largest river of Mongolia. In Ulan Ude, capital of the Buryat Republic your train joins the main route of the Trans-Siberian railroad. Take a stroll through the city streets or join a guided tour of the city.
**Day 9 Lake Baikal.** The entire day is dedicated to Lake Baikal, we arrive at the old station of Port Baikal, located directly on the shore. During two photo stops on the ancient tracks running parallel to the shore we will have the chance to capture the beauty of the lake on film and explore the wonderful scenery. Take a moment to have a dip in the lake or visit a picturesque Baikal village. Enjoy a short boat ride on the lake, and if the night is warm your dinner will be served as a picnic on the shores of the spectacular lake before reboarding the train.
**Day 10 Irkutsk.** In the morning check into a centrally located hotel in Irkutsk for an overnight stay, you can safely leave your bags on the train. A tour of the city includes the lively market hall, the drama theatre and a rather spectacular oddity, a newly erected statue of the Tsar. The afternoon features an excursion to an open-air museum displaying Siberian life in the old days.
**Day 11 Across Siberia.** After breakfast the train takes you through the beautiful landscapes of Eastern Siberia. On board the train enjoy entertaining lectures about Siberia and a social get-together complete with caviar and vodka tasting makes you familiar with Russian hospitality.
**Day 12 Novosibirsk.** Novosibirsk is Siberia's biggest city. We will be greeted in the traditional Russian way, with bread and salt. The city tour includes a visit of the Trans-Siberian monument and the mighty Ob River. After dinner, the train continues its ride westwards.
**Day 13 Ekaterinburg.** In the afternoon the train stops in Ekaterinburg, the capital of the Ural Mountains and the border between Asia and Europe, where you enjoy a short tour of the city centre which was just restored in 2009. During the city tour you will see the newly

*Tsar's Private Gold Train at Lake Baikal*

*Gandan Monastery, Ulan Bator*

erected Cathedral-on-the-blood, built in memory of Tsar Nicholas II and his family who were executed by the Bolsheviks in 1918. From now on your train is on European ground.

**Day 14 Kazan.** After breakfast we arrive in Kazan, the old Tartar capital on the banks of the Volga. There is plenty of history here. Take a guided tour of the Kremlin and learn about the wild and often bloody relations of the Tartars, Cossacks, and Russians. Later, enjoy lunch before taking a boat ride on the Volga.

**Day 15 Moscow.** Arrive in Moscow, Russia's capital and one of the world's richest and most dynamic cities and transfer to your first class hotel. Visit the Kremlin with its glorious cathedrals and see the interiors of some of the buildings. After dinner enjoy a magical evening tour through the city which includes a stop at Red Square as well as a subway ride with a visit to two beautiful old stations.

**Day 16 Moscow to London Heathrow.** After breakfast take a guided tour of Moscow to see the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Lomonossov University, the New Virgin Monastery, and Red Square with its colourful St. Basil's Cathedral. Afternoon departure to London Heathrow by scheduled flight, arriving in the evening.

## Eastbound Itinerary

**Day 1 London Heathrow to Moscow — Day 2 Moscow — Day 3 Kazan — Day 4 Ekaterinburg — Day 5 Novosibirsk — Day 6 Across Siberia — Day 7 Irkutsk — Day 8 Lake Baikal — Day 9 Ulan Ude — Day 10 Ulan Bator and the Gandan Monastery — Day 11 Ulan Bator and the Mongolian Alps — Day 12 Through the Gobi Desert — Days 13 to 15 Beijing — Day 16 Beijing to London Heathrow.**

***The Eastbound itinerary has an extra night in Beijing. Detailed itinerary available on request.***

## Departure dates & prices per person

Based on double occupancy Tour code: LATRANS12

***WESTBOUND:***

| | *13th to 28th May; 5th to 20th Jul; 16th Sep to 1st Oct 2012* | | *11th to 26th May; 4th to 19th Jul; 14th to 29th Sep 2013* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Double occupancy | Sole occupancy | Double occupancy | Sole occupancy |
| Standard Plus | £5295 | £7295 | £5995 | £7695 |
| Standard Plus NEW | £5795 | £7995 | £6395 | £8195 |
| Nostalgic Comfort | £7195 | £10795 | £7695 | £11395 |
| Bolshoi | £9595 | £15795 | £10295 | £15995 |
| Bolshoi Platinum | £11495 | - | £12295 | - |

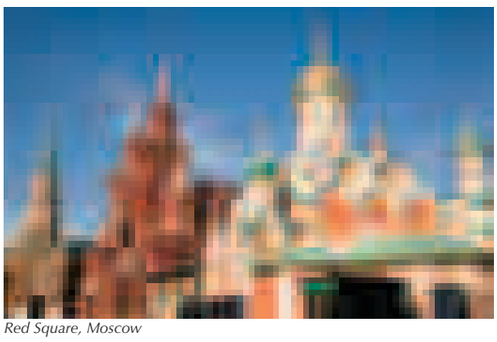
***EASTBOUND:***

| | *6th to 21st May; 3rd to 18th Jun; 22nd Jul to 6th Aug 2012* | | *4th to 19th May; 1st to 16th Jun; 20th Jul to 4th Aug 2013* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Double occupancy | Sole occupancy | Double occupancy | Sole occupancy |
| Standard Plus | £5495 | £7495 | £6195 | £7895 |
| Standard Plus NEW | £5995 | £8295 | £6595 | £8495 |
| Nostalgic Comfort | £7395 | £10995 | £7895 | £11595 |
| Bolshoi | £9795 | £15995 | £10495 | £16195 |
| Bolshoi Platinum | £11695 | - | £12495 | - |

***Please note that for the journey between Erlian and Beijing (approximately 16 hours), it is necessary to change trains due to the different track gauge on the railways. For this part of the journey all sleeping compartments are the same and we cannot offer Nostalgic Comfort, Bolshoi or Bolshoi Platinum.***

**Price includes:** Economy class scheduled air travel, two or three nights hotel accommodation in Beijing, overnight train accommodation from Beijing to the Gobi Desert, overnight accommodation in Ulan Bator and Irkutsk (luggage can be left on the train), 8 nights accommodation aboard the *Tsar's Gold*, overnight hotel accommodation in Moscow, all meals (excluding two dinners on the Eastbound itinerary), tour manager, group guide, local guides, excursions, gratuities, transfers, airport taxes.

**Not included:** Travel insurance, Chinese, Mongolian and Russian visa, optional excursions.



*Red Square, Moscow*

*The Great Wall, Beijing*

*Open Air Museum near Irkutsk*

# The Legendary Silk Road

## *Ashgabat to Astana*

### A private train journey aboard the *Silk Road Explorer*

***17th to 30th April; 16th to 29th October 2012; 9th to 22nd April; 15th to 28th October 2013***

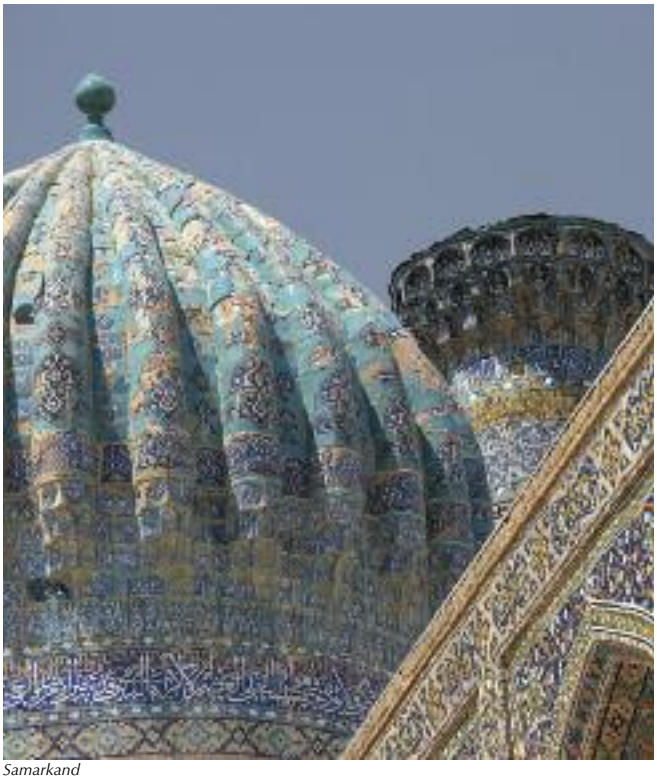
Join us for an unforgettable journey along the legendary Silk Road, visiting some fascinating places that made history, among them no less than seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Tien Shan Mountains, the Central Asian countries of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are rich in history and culture, boasting beautiful architecture and ethereal landscapes. Our private train journey will take in some of the most magnificent yet little-visited sites of the ancient world.

### The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight. Arrive this evening and transfer to your first class hotel in Ashgabat.

**Day 2 Karakum Desert.** In the early afternoon we transfer to our waiting private train and start our journey through the infamous Karakum Desert. Witness fascinating nature with sandhills up to 90 metres high. In the evening we reach a train station in the Karakum where, after a short bus ride, you will see a gas crater with a huge fire, burning day and night since the 1960s - an unforgettable sight.

**Day 3 Ashgabat.** In the morning visit the colourful Tolkuchka Bazaar, a typical oriental market, one of the largest in Central Asia, where in addition to camels one can also buy precious silver jewellery and valuable carpets. Then we drive to the old Parthian city of Nisa. In Ashgabat's National Museum you will be able to see ruins of ancient Nisa. After lunch enjoy a city tour and become acquainted with today's capital Ashgabat, with the unmistakable influence of the Turkmenbashi, the leader of the Turkmens: Hollywood-like scenes of the nouveau riche. Dine with folklore and later depart on your private train.



*Samarkand*

**Day 4 Merv.** In the early morning your private train will arrive at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Merv with its gigantic walls and ramparts in the desert and the impressive ruins of old buildings such as the Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar, the Virgin Fortress (Kis Kale), the cold room and other mausoleums. Enjoy lunch in the picturesque courtyard of an artist before returning to your private train for our onward journey towards Bukhara.

**Day 5 Bukhara, Uzbekistan.** Situated in the middle of the Kyzyl Kum desert, Bukhara features around 1000 monuments, which recall the halcyon days of the Great Silk Road. Foreign spices, furs and especially silk fabrics were stored and handled in the caravanserais. In the old city which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, you will see the Kaljan Minaret and the Labi-Hauz Ensemble. In front of the Nasreddin-on-the-donkey monument, listen to some anecdotes about him. Enjoy dinner in the courtyard of a Madrasah with musical accompaniment, local dances and a presentation of colourful national costumes. Tonight we will stay in a centrally located first class hotel in Bukhara.

**Day 6 Bukhara.** Today we have a full day in the city, including lunch. Bukhara is a large, unique and authentic art museum that maintains its old oriental face. In the morning, we visit the magnificent Mire-e-Arab Madrasah and the most beautiful and precious building in Central Asia, the Samanid Mausoleum. Other highlights of the day include a tour through the fortress Ark where you will see the coronation hall and visit the summer residence of the last Emir, and a visit to the only women's mosque in the world. Return to the train and in the evening we depart for Khiva.

**Day 7 Khiva.** After breakfast we leave the train and make our way to the southern border of the seven river lands, in the oasis of Khiva. When you stand before the mighty city wall of Khiva with its gates and bastions of clay, you are in another world. Around the Kalta Minor Minaret life still pulses today as it did in old times, and on our tour we will see palaces, mosques, minarets, mausoleums and Koranic schools, giving us a flavour of what medieval oriental urban development must have been like. Enjoy lunch in the atmosphere of the former Summer Palace of the Emir. Return to the train and in the evening our train departs for Samarqand.

**Day 8 Samarkand.** Today we experience the historical prominence of Samarkand, the most beautiful city in the world in Tamerlane's time. See the grave city Shah-e-zende ("the living Shah"), the excavation sites of Afrosiab and the Registan Square, an impressive collection of Central Asian architecture. Later we transfer to a first-class hotel for a two-night stay.

**Day 9 Samarkand.** We have another full day in this fascinating city. Our tour includes a visit to a silk carpet factory and an Uzbek craftsman's family, a paper manufactured from mulberry bark, the observatory of Ulug Beg, the ruins of the Bibi Khanum Mosque and the palace-like Gur Emir Mausoleum.

*Karakum Desert*

*Bukhara, Uzbekistan*

**Day 10 The Silk Road & Shakhrisabz.** Enjoy an excursion into the surrounding mountain region where ceremonies of Shaman cult still are held, forgotten elsewhere. You will experience a folklore performance in the unique tradition of this region and get to know the inhabitants in their authentic everyday life. A friendly welcome is guaranteed. Our train continues along the Great Silk Road, arriving in the green city, the birthplace of Tamerlane. Here, in Shakhrisabz (UNESCO-World Heritage Site) we will tour the monumental memorials of the barbaric Mongol Prince and also have the opportunity to watch the thriving bustle of this lively town. In the evening our private train departs for Tashkent whilst we enjoy some Uzbek wine tasting.

**Day 11 Tashkent.** In the morning the Silk Road Explorer arrives in Tashkent at the foot of the Tien Shan Mountains. On today's sightseeing tour you will experience the green oasis of the Steppe: the Madrasah Kukeldash, the Kavoj and Amir Timur monuments. This evening, there will be a visit to the famous Tashkent Navoy Opera (depending on performance schedule). Later, your private train departs for Kazakhstan.

**Day 12 Turkestan, Kazakhstan.** After breakfast and lunch on board, we arrive at the city of Turkestan in Kazakhstan (border formalities occur comfortably in your cabin). You will see the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its dome hall, monumental mosque and well house. Then our private train will continue to Astana as we enjoy our final dinner onboard.

**Day 13 Astana.** We reach Astana in the early afternoon and disembark the train. From here we transfer to a first-class hotel for an overnight stay. An afternoon city tour will include the modern metropolis and here we can experience architectural masterpieces of our time, among others, the famous pyramid of the British star architect Norman Foster and the government buildings with their impressive glass fronts. At the banks of the Jesil you will be surprised by the view of Astana's sky line.

**Day 14 Astana to London.** Transfer to the airport for the return scheduled indirect flight to London, arriving in the afternoon.

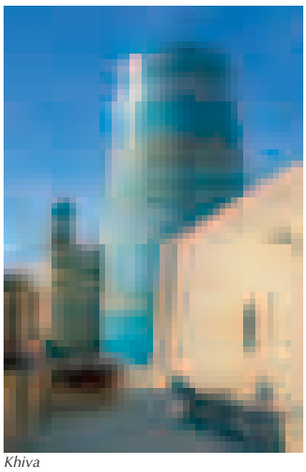
*Central square, Ashgabat*

## Prices per person

Based on double occupancy Tour code: LASILKEX12

| | *17th Apr 2012* | | *16th Oct 2012* | | *9th Apr; 15th Oct 2013* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Double occupancy | Sole occupancy | Double occupancy | Sole occupancy | Double occupancy | Sole occupancy |
| Ali Baba | **£4295** | **£5395** | **£4495** | **£5595** | **£4695** | **£5895** |
| Aladin | **£4795** | **£5995** | **£4995** | **£6195** | **£5195** | **£6495** |
| Kalif | **£7495** | **£10995** | **£7695** | **£11195** | **£8195** | **£11695** |

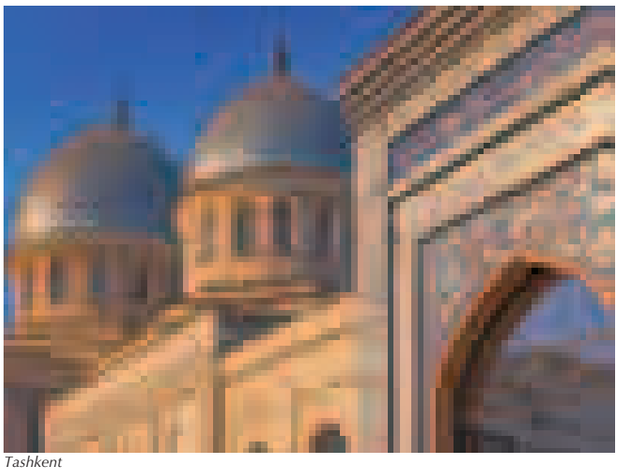
**Price includes:** Economy class scheduled air travel, overnight hotel accommodation in Ashgabat and Bukhara, two nights hotel accommodation in Samarkand, 8 nights accommodation aboard the *Silk Road Explorer*, overnight hotel accommodation in Astana, all meals, tour manager, group guide, local guides, excursions, gratuities, transfers, airport taxes.
**Not included:** Travel insurance, visas.



*Khiva*

*Horsemen, Turkmenistan*

*Fabric seller, Bukhara*



*Tashkent*

***Front cover:*** *Tsar's Private Gold Train at Lake Baikal;* ***back cover:*** *The Great Wall, Beijing*

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