

CASPIAN ODYSSEY

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION &
CENTRAL ASIA BY PRIVATE TRAIN ABOARD THE **GOLDEN EAGLE**

23rd September to 9th October 2020



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Lake Sevan

We have joined forces with Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, the world's leading operator of long-distance luxury 'rail cruises', to bring you a spectacular journey by private train through six fascinating countries that border the Caspian Sea. Step aboard the Golden Eagle, a luxury 'hotel on wheels' offering services akin to staying in a private hotel, and enjoy the ever-changing landscape as well as discovering the mysteries, diversity, and traditions of this part of the world which would otherwise be very difficult to reach.

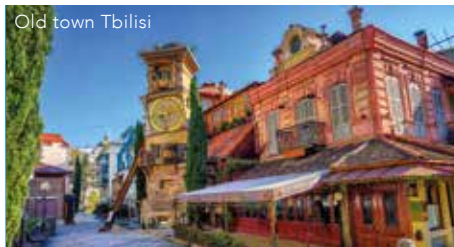
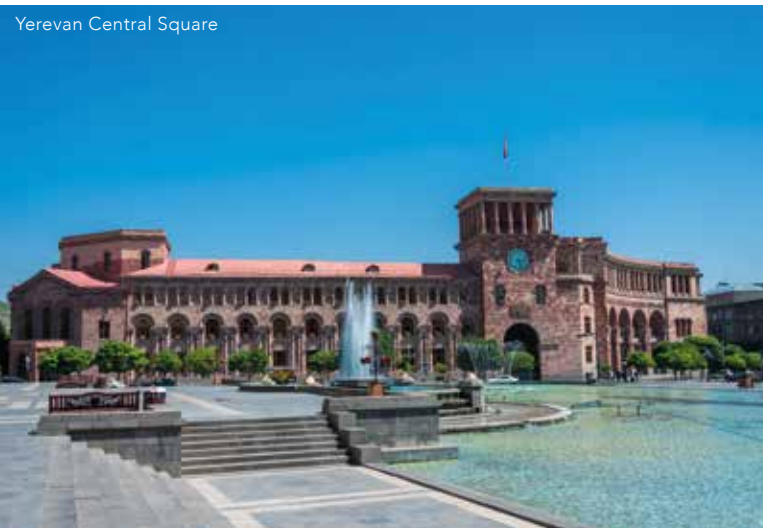


This unique journey takes in the countries of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan which are located at the historic crossroads of trade, religion, language and the arts and are also home to intriguing modern cultures as well as some of the world's most ancient and timeless architecture. From our starting point in the historic Armenian capital of Yerevan, we will explore the beauty and rich history of the South Caucasus while weaving through Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Witness modernising capitals as well as rural scenery as we journey through the dramatic mountainous landscape of these three distinct countries. After our time exploring the South Caucasus, we fly across the Caspian Sea to Ashgabat, the "Las Vegas of Kara Kum", and continue along the great trading posts of the Silk Road in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Following in the footsteps of such legendary figures as Alexander the Great and Marco Polo, we will discover 200 years of history before arriving at our final destination of Almaty.

This extraordinary region, where Europe meets Asia, has drawn travellers for centuries and offers an eclectic mix of ancient and modern including stops at many UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The combination of vast distances along with cultural and geographical diversity means there is no better way to explore and experience the region than by luxury private train.



Golden Eagle



The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Yerevan, Armenia. Fly by scheduled indirect flight. Arrive in the late evening or early hours of Day 2 and transfer to the Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan.

Day 2 Yerevan. Enjoy a day at leisure in Yerevan before we meet this evening for a welcome dinner at the hotel.

Day 3 Yerevan. The Yerevan skyline is dominated by Mount Ararat in nearby Turkey, with its snow-covered peak towering in the distance. Yerevan has a rich history and was occupied as early as 6000 BC and the fortress of Erebuni was erected there in the 8th century BC. Seized by a succession of conquerors, the city later passed back and forth between the Turks and the Persians until 1827, when it was captured by Russia. It became the capital of Soviet Armenia in 1920 and, following the demise of the Soviet Union, the capital of the new nation of Armenia. Our day's touring will take us out of Yerevan to the ancient Geghard Monastery which contains a number of churches and tombs, many of them cut into the rock. The complex of Medieval architecture is set into a landscape of great natural beauty, surrounded by towering cliffs at the head of the Azat Valley. We will also visit the 1st century Pagan temple of Garni, built to worship the Sun God Mitra and explore the remains of an ancient fortress, palace and baths there. Back in Yerevan city, we visit the Cascade giant stairway and inside it the Casfejian Museum of Modern Art. In the evening we board the Golden Eagle private train and start our rail adventure to Almaty.

Day 4 Lake Sevan & Dilijan. The Golden Eagle takes a scenic route today around the stunning Lake Sevan and we make a short stop

to walk to the beach for a photo opportunity. Along with Lake Van and Lake Urmia, Sevan was considered one of the three great lakes of the historical Armenian Kingdom, collectively referred to as the Seas of Armenia and is the only one within the boundaries of today's Republic of Armenia. We continue to Dilijan to visit the nearby Monastery of Haghpat, built between the 10th and 14th centuries. Its beautiful location in dense wood in the gorges of two small mountain rivers make an atmospheric backdrop for St. Astvatsatsin Church, its most important building. We will enjoy an Armenian cognac reception at Avan Dzoraget Hotel on the Debed River, nestled among the forest-covered hills and rocky slopes of the Caucasus Mountains.

Day 5 Tbilisi, Georgia. Heading into Georgia, we visit Tbilisi. Hemmed in by the Surami Range, the city extends for 27 kilometres along the banks of the River Kura. Despite the wars and fires which caused innumerable changes in the topography of Tbilisi, the old part of the city still retains much of its original layout, a spider's web of narrow winding streets and alleyways. Historical sites we visit include the 13th century Metekhi Church, a cross-cupola church which forms part of the Royal Residential complex, and the 5th century Sioni Cathedral, the main church of Tbilisi. We will also visit the recently built Holy Trinity Cathedral, one of the largest Orthodox churches in the world and take a walking tour of the old town and Rustaveli Avenue. Here we will see the Great Hall of the Georgian Philharmonia, built in 1969-71, which has been acknowledged as one of the finest public buildings since the Second World War. We will also see the treasures of the city housed in the Janashia Museum of Georgia.

Day 6 Telavi. Today we explore the beautiful Kakheti region, which borders the Great Caucasus Mountain range. This region is known as a birthplace of Georgian viticulture and wine-making. We tour the Tsinandali country estate of the Alexandre Chavchavadze family with a marvellous garden, house-museum, park and winery dating back to the 19th century, located near Telavi, a couple of hours' drive from Tbilisi.

Day 7 Gori, Uplistsikhe Cave City & Mtskheta. Gori is one of the oldest cities in Georgia, founded in the 7th century AD as Tontio. Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader, was born here in 1879 and he spent his childhood years in the city and later studied at its theological seminary. The small house where Stalin was born is preserved under a canopy outside the huge columned palace-like building that houses the Stalin Museum. To the side of the museum is Stalin's private railway carriage. From the town, we will go directly to Uplistsikhe where we will enjoy a private performance of traditional Georgian polyphonic singing. The famous cave city of Uplistsikhe dates from the 6th century BC and is first mentioned in the chronicles of the 1st century AD. Carved into rocky plateau we find huge echoing halls, meandering corridor-streets, chambers for pagan worship and even the remains of Georgia's oldest theatre, complete with auditorium, stage and orchestra pit. Its strategic position on the approaches to Gori and, in particular, its strong defences made it possible to control the surrounding terrain. There were numerous attempts to destroy Uplistsikhe. Only in the 13th century, however, did the hordes of Genghis Khan's son Khulagu succeed in doing so, after capturing and destroying many fortresses in Transcaucasia with the help of siege machines. The 5000 inhabitants of Uplistsikhe perished and life ended

forever in the fortress. In the late afternoon we visit the city of Mtskheta, Georgia's old capital. Due to its historical significance and numerous ancient monuments, Mtskheta became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994.

Day 8 Baku, Azerbaijan. Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, lies on the western shore of the Caspian Sea and the southern side of the Apsheron Peninsula, around the wide, curving sweep of the Bay of Baku. The bay, sheltered by the islands of the Baku Archipelago, provides the best harbour of the Caspian Sea, while the Apsheron Peninsula provides protection from violent northerly winds. Baku derives its international importance from its huge oil industry. The core of present-day Baku is the old town, or fortress of Icheri-Shekher. Most of the walls, strengthened after the Russian conquest in 1806, survive, as does the 27 metre tower of Kyz-Kalasy (Maiden Tower, 12th century). The walled old town is highly picturesque, with its maze of narrow alleys and ancient buildings. These include the Palace of the Shirvan-Shahs, now a museum, the oldest part of which dates from the 11th century. Also of the 11th century is the Synyk-Kala Minaret and Mosque (1078-79). Other notable historic buildings are the Law Court (Divan-Khan), the Dzhusma-Mechet Minaret, and the mausoleum of the astronomer Seida Bakuvi. Around the walls of the fortress, the regular streets and imposing buildings of modern Baku rise up the slopes of hills surrounding the bay. We stay at the five-star Four Seasons Baku for two nights, while our train is loaded on the ferry to cross the Caspian Sea.

Day 9 Baku. This morning a Freedom of Choice tour is offered to Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape. Located on the west bank of the Caspian Sea, Gobustan is an outstanding archaeological site of more than 6000 pre-historic rock engravings.



Caucasus Mountain Range, Kakheti

Tsinandali Palace & Garden

Icheri-Sheker, Baku

The area also features the remains of inhabited caves, settlements and burials. This is followed by lunch overlooking the Caspian Sea. Returning to the city in the afternoon, you can choose to enjoy free time in the city or visit a local theatre. Dinner will be held in a traditional local restaurant this evening.

Day 10 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

Following breakfast we take a morning flight to Ashgabat. The capital of Turkmenistan is known as the 'Las Vegas of the Kara Kum'. Situated between the Kara Kum desert and the Kopet Dag mountain range, Ashgabat is a relatively modern city built upon the ruins of the Silk Road city of Konjikala and the Soviet city built after the devastating earthquake of 1948. The city's extravagant fountains, golden domes and towering modern buildings appear strangely incongruous in this desert setting. Highlights on our visit include a trip to the National Museum and Kipchak Mosque. We will stay overnight in the luxury five-star Yyldyz Hotel.

Day 11 Darvaza. Today the Golden Eagle makes a brief scheduled stop at Ichoguz, where we have the option to leave the train and make a short journey to Darvaza's famous burning gas crater, a spectacular sight best seen at night. Located in the middle of the Kara Kum desert where the area is rich in natural gas, the 70 metre-wide crater is known by the locals as the 'Door to Hell' and has been burning for over 40 years.

Day 12 Khiva, Uzbekistan. Our train travels towards Urgench, from where we transfer to the ancient city of Khiva, founded 2500 years ago. As one of the Silk Road's most important trading posts and now a World Heritage Site, it lies at the crossroads of the routes between Mongolia, Russia, China and Persia.

A truly magnificent sight to behold, it rises out of the desert to reveal a wealth of impressive architecture. Stepping back in time, we discover the impressive mosques, bazaars and minarets within Khiva's ancient walls.

Day 13 Bukhara. Bukhara is quite simply outstanding. Like Khiva, UNESCO sponsored the renovation of much of the city for its 2500th anniversary in 1999. The most enjoyable aspect of this city is to just immerse oneself in the atmosphere of this unique and ancient city and re-live some of its fascinating history at the crossroads of Asia. The main highlight of this wonderful tour is a visit to The Ark, a fortified residence of the Emirs of Bukhara – the despotic and ruthless leaders who ruled until Soviet times. We then travel out of the city to experience the Emir's enchantingly named, 'Palace of the Moon and Stars'.

Day 14 Samarkand. Just the mention of Samarkand instantly conjures up evocative images of the Silk Road, more so than any other town. Founded in the 6th century BC, Samarkand's stunning architecture hints at its former status as one of the most important cities in Asia and is particularly noted for its architectural remains from the 14th to the 17th century, when it flourished as the fabled capital of the Mongol empire of Timur and his successors. Today we will visit some of its most significant sites including Registan Square, the refined elegance of the beautifully proportioned Bibi Khanum Mosque and the Ulag Beg observatory, one of the earliest Islamic astronomical observatories built in 1428. Before dinner we will return to the now illuminated and awe-inspiring Registan Square.

Day 15 Tashkent. Tashkent is the capital city of Uzbekistan and we

spend time touring this modern Soviet-style city which was rebuilt following the devastating earthquake of 1966. Our tour of the city includes the Old Town, where traditional homes and religious buildings line the narrow streets and here in a small library we will be privileged to see one of Islam's most sacred relics – the world's oldest Koran. This is followed by a visit to the Railway Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts. This evening we enjoy our farewell dinner on board the Golden Eagle as we head overnight to our final destination of Almaty.

Day 16 Almaty, Kazakhstan. This morning we arrive into Almaty, our final destination and bid farewell to the Golden Eagle. Today we will take a tour of Almaty including a visit to Panfilov Park, located in the heart of the city, and home to the Zenkov Cathedral, a 19th century Russian Orthodox Church made entirely of wood. We will stay overnight at the Intercontinental Almaty hotel, or similar.

Day 17 Almaty to London. After breakfast in the hotel, transfer to Almaty Airport for the scheduled flight to London.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE TOURING

In select locations, in addition to the main excursions, it is possible to choose from a range of activities or tours at no extra cost. Please note that these options are subject to availability, minimum numbers, local conditions and timings.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

CATEGORY	PRICE
Silver Class	£18495
Gold Class	£22995
Imperial Suite	£36595 (On Request)
Silver Class for sole use	£26495

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Internal flight from Baku to Ashgabat • Two nights hotel accommodation in Yervan • 10 nights on board the Golden Eagle • Two nights accommodation in Baku • Overnight accommodation in Ashgabat & Almaty • Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily (except lunch on day 2) • Wine with lunch & dinner • Excursions • Train Tour Manager • Onboard Doctor • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Portage.
Not Included: Travel insurance, visas, lunch on day 2.

Please note: A 20% deposit is required when booking this tour. Please also note that visas are required for Azerbaijan & Turkmenistan. Golden Eagle Luxury Trains will provide all supporting documentation needed - the process to apply for some visas may take up to six weeks. This information is correct at the time of printing and, should the information change, we will be in touch with booked passengers with updated information.



Golden Eagle

THE GOLDEN EAGLE

In 2007 HRH Prince Michael of Kent unveiled the Golden Eagle, a private train that brings unprecedented luxury to the world's greatest railway journey. The Golden Eagle has been carefully designed with comfort and enjoyment in mind and provides the ideal base from which to explore this fascinating region.

Your Accommodation

The full train comprises of three categories of sleeping cars which feature state of the art amenities, all with en-suite facilities and luxury toiletries. All of the cabins and communal carriages were refurbished in 2018 to the highest of standards and the accommodation has been cleverly designed to maximise the available space as cabins convert from a sitting area by day into a cosy sleeping area by night. All cabin categories benefit from an evening turndown service and a cabin attendant is on hand 24 hours a day.

Imperial Suites

The Imperial Suites are the most spacious cabins available, measuring 120 square feet and benefiting from a large and luxurious king size bed, lounge area with dressing table and two large picture windows. The facilities include private en-suite bathroom with power shower and underfloor heating, individual air-conditioning, wardrobe and a DVD/CD player with LCD screen. Bathrobes, slippers and toiletries are also provided. Guests will also benefit from a complimentary fully stocked minibar, included drinks from the standard and premium bar list from the Bar Car (excluding premium wine list), included laundry service, the option of in-suite dining and hotel room upgrades.



Gold Class

At 77 square feet, Gold Class cabins are well proportioned and have everything from a private bathroom with power shower and underfloor heating to a DVD/ CD player with LCD screen. The cabins also feature individual air-conditioning, wardrobe, large picture window and a double lower bed or the option to use the upper bunk bed. Bathrobes, slippers and toiletries are also provided. Guests in Gold Class enjoy included drinks from the standard bar list from the Bar Car.



Silver Class

Silver Class cabins are more compact at 60 square feet but have similar facilities to those of Gold Class. The Silver Class cabins have their own en-suite wet room with washbasin, toilet and shower. The cabins feature a small double lower bed and single upper bed as well as DVD/CD player with LCD screen, individual air-conditioning, wardrobe and large picture window. Bathrobes, slippers and toiletries are also provided.





Bar Lounge Car



Restaurant Car

Your Space

The Bar Lounge Car is the perfect location to relax and unwind as you watch the ever-changing scenery pass by. Reminisce about the day's adventures with fellow passengers over afternoon tea or perhaps challenge your friends to a game of cards before dinner. As evening falls, enjoy the sounds of the resident pianist playing on the baby grand piano in the Bar Lounge Car.

Your Dining

Each morning, enjoy a bountiful breakfast buffet in the beautifully appointed Restaurant Car, offering a fresh selection of fruit, cereals, cold plates and freshly squeezed orange juice. For something more substantial enjoy a breakfast cooked to order by the onboard Chef. At lunch and dinner you will enjoy a delightful culinary experience inspired by the countries we venture through. All meals are skillfully prepared by the Executive Chef and his onboard team, using the very best ingredients and locally sourced wherever possible. Attentive service and an excellent choice of wines accompany lunch and dinner, in addition to bottled mineral water, draught beer and soft drinks. Expect a relaxed and convivial atmosphere at meal times with the freedom to dine wherever, and with whomever, you please in a single sitting.

Life On Board

Throughout the journey, you can expect a service which is attentive, friendly and unintrusive. Your car attendants provide 24-hour housekeeping and bedding turndown services and the Train Tour Manager is there to co-ordinate all of the elements and to assist you as required. There is a Wi-Fi service on board though coverage is limited and will usually only be available as we pass through larger cities and towns. However, the aim is to provide internet access in a local hotel or restaurant for guests at least every other day.



Bar Lounge Car



Preparing for dinner



Cabin attendant



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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
 Cover image: Khiva.