

NOBLE CALEDONIA

THE LEGENDARY SILK ROAD

BY PRIVATE TRAIN

From Ashgabat to Almaty
aboard the Orient Silk Road Express

14th to 27th April;
20th October to 2nd November 2020
& 13th to 26th April 2021



Samarkand, Gur Emir Mausoleum



Kukeldash Madrasah Tashkent



Samarkand carpet manufacturer



We are delighted to be working with our German associates, Lernidee Trains and Cruises, to bring you this private train journey from Ashgabat to Almaty. Join us for an unforgettable journey as we retrace one of the most remarkable trading routes of ancient civilisation.

The Silk Road was a network of routes, plied by merchants and traders between China and the Mediterranean. We will follow in the footsteps of such legendary figures as Alexander the Great and Marco Polo, discovering 2000 years of history whilst travelling in great comfort aboard the Orient Silk Road Express Private Train.

During this fascinating tour, you will learn of the manifold cultures along the legendary Silk Road and numerous localities 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 richly endowed with history and culture, a flavour of which you will sample on this exciting journey by Private Train.

From Turkmenistan we travel to Kazakhstan and make our way through the Karakum Desert and into Uzbekistan where we will explore the 2,500 year old cities of Khiva and Bukhara as well as Samarkand, the 'Rome of the East', home to the beautiful Registan Square. We will also venture into Turkmenistan and visit the capital city of Ashgabat and the ancient city of Merv. This is a journey for the adventurous traveller, keen to discover ancient history, hidden wonders and varying cultures, but in great style and comfort.



The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Fly by indirect scheduled flight. Arrive and transfer to the Grand Turkmen Hotel (or similar) in Ashgabat for an overnight stay.

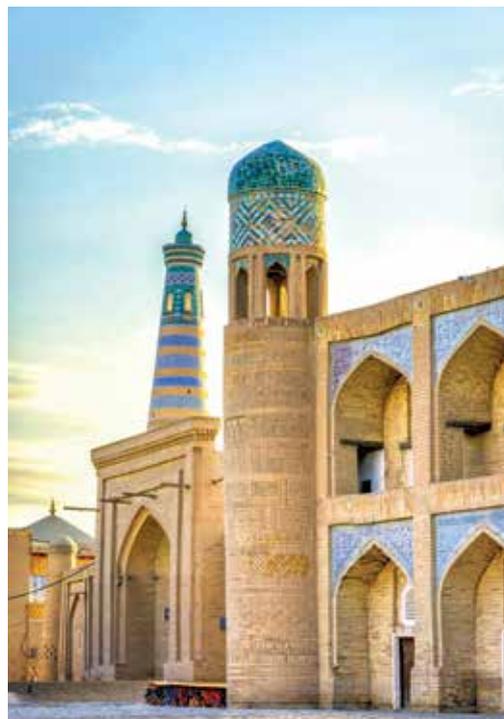
Day 2 Nisa & Ashgabat. This morning we drive to the old Parthian city of Nisa which has a striking geographical location on top of a small hill which offers splendid views towards the Kopet Dag Mountains to the south. While Old Nisa, which seems to have been either a Parthian royal residence or temple complex, was abandoned at the end of the Parthian period, the main town of New Nisa was revived in the 5th century, and grew to become an important Medieval Silk Road centre. After lunch we return to Ashgabat and spend some time at the Russian Bazaar, one of the largest and oldest covered markets in the Turkmenistan. This evening we board our train and enjoy a welcome dinner on board.

Day 3 Merv. Early morning sees us arrive in Mary, where we transfer to the ancient and mainly unrestored city of Merv, a UNESCO World Heritage Site 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. Once an important stopping point on the Silk Road, it claims to have briefly been the largest city in the world during the 12th century. 1794 saw the demise of Merv, after the Emir of Bukhara destroyed the dam which the population depended on for its water. We enjoy lunch in the picturesque courtyard of a family before we re-board our private train and head for Bukhara.

Day 4 Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Bukhara is quite simply outstanding. Situated in the middle of the Kyzylkum desert, Bukhara features about one thousand monuments, which recall the halcyon days of the Great Silk Road. Foreign spices, furs and especially silk fabrics were stored and handled in the caravansaries. In the old city we will see the Kaljan Minaret and the Labi-Hauz Ensemble and in front of the Nasreddin-on-the-donkey monument we will learn of some anecdotes about him. This evening



Tilla-Kari Madrasah, Registan Square, Samarkand



Khiva

we visit the courtyard of a Madrasah with musical accompaniment, local dances and a presentation of colourful national costumes. We spend two nights at the Asia Bukhara Hotel (or similar) in Bukhara.

Day 5 Bukhara. Today we will enjoy a day tour of the city, including lunch. Bukhara is a large, unique and authentic art museum that maintains its old oriental face. In the morning, visit the magnificent Mire-e-Arab Madrasah and the most beautiful and precious building in Central Asia, the Samanid Mausoleum. Then we will take a tour through the fortress Ark where we will see the coronation hall and visit the summer residence of the last Emir. At the end of our stay we will see the only women's mosque in the world.

Day 6 Bukhara to Khiva. This morning we will have time to explore Bukhara independently before rejoining our train and continuing in the direction of Khiva.

Day 7 Khiva. After breakfast we will travel to the southern border of the seven river lands, in 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. When you stand before the mighty city wall of Khiva with its gates and bastions of clay you are transported to 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 which convey what Medieval oriental urban development must have been like. Enjoy lunch in the atmosphere of the former Summer Palace of the Emir and in the evening we will depart to Samarkand.

Day 8 Samarkand. Today we will experience the historical prominence of Samarkand, the most beautiful city in Tamerlane's time: the grave city Shah-e-zende ("the living Shah"), the excavation sites of Afrosiab and the Registan Square present an impressive collection of Central Asian architecture. Enjoy a two night stay at the Registan Plaza hotel (or similar).

Day 9 Samarkand. Today we visit a silk carpet factory and an Uzbek craftsman's family, see paper manufactured from mulberry bark, the observatory of Ulug Beg, the ruins of the Bibi Khanum Mosque and the palace-like Gur Emir Mausoleum.

Day 10 On the Great Silk Road to Shakhrisabz. Enjoy an excursion into the surrounding mountain region where elsewhere forgotten ceremonies of the Shaman cult still are held today. You will experience a folklore performance in the unique tradition of this region and get to know the inhabitants in their authentic everyday life. We follow the Great Silk Road and arrive in the green city, the birthplace of Tamerlane. Here, in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shakhrisabz 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 we depart for Tashkent whilst we enjoy Uzbek wine tasting on board.

Day 11 Tashkent. This morning we arrive in Tashkent at the foot of the Tien Shan Mountains. We will enjoy a sightseeing tour and experience the green oasis of the Steppe: the Madrasah Kukeldash, the Kavoj and Amir Timur monuments and the opera. In the evening we will also attend a musical performance (depending on schedules).

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 UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi with its dome hall, monumental mosque and well house. We will travel on to Almaty and enjoy our last dinner on board as we bid farewell to the friendly train staff.

Day 13 Almaty to London. We arrive in Almaty after lunch. Enjoy a sightseeing tour of the city which is situated at the foothills of the northern Tien Shan Mountains where there are attractive tree-lined avenues, many parks and street cafes. Visit the Zenkov Russian Cathedral, one of the world's tallest all wood buildings. This evening we will enjoy a special Farewell Dinner in country-specific yurts followed by some free time to relax at a hotel in Almaty before transferring to the airport for our late, scheduled indirect flight to London.

Day 14 London. Arrive this morning

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Category	April 2020		October 2020 & April 2021	
	Double Occupancy	Sole Occupancy	Double Occupancy	Sole Occupancy
Aladdin	£6595	£7995	£6995	£8395
Sultan	£9195	£12695	£9595	£13095
Kalif	£9595	N/A	£9995	N/A

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled flights • Seven nights aboard the Orient Silk Road Express Private Train • Six nights hotel accommodation as described (four star properties or best available) • All meals throughout tour • Drinks with meals served on board the train • Tour director • Local guides • Excursions • Onboard doctor • Transfers • Gratuities • Log book about the Silk Road • Airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, Turkmenistan visa & entry tax, drinks when not on board the train.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Please note that a 20% deposit is required when booking this tour. A visa is required for Turkmenistan. The train operators, Lernidee, will provide all supporting documentation needed. Applications must be made in person at the Embassy and can take up to 20 days to process. Current visa fee is \$50 per person. This information is correct at the time of printing and should the information change, we will be in touch with booked passengers with updated guidelines.

ORIENT SILK ROAD EXPRESS

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 on board your luggage stays on the train for the duration of the trip allowing you to take only a small bag with you for our overnight hotel stays.

The restaurant cars usually 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 26 guests, ensuring a personal service and informative tour throughout. There is also a doctor on board.

Your Accommodation

Aladdin

Each car has eight compartments for two guests with two lower berths (28" x 72"). In the middle, below the window, you will find a table. Combined washing room/lavatory compartments are located at both ends of the car. Additionally, a shower is located at one end of each car and you will receive a bathing robe and shower utilities.

Sultan

This category is equipped with two beds, one of which measures 44" x 73", providing enough space for two people if required. The compartment also offers comfortable seating, a larger table and a small closet. Each compartment has its own lavatory equipped with toilet, washing basin and integrated shower with shower curtain. A total of twelve guests at most share the whole of the carriage.

Kalif

This category is equipped with two beds, one of which measures 44" x 73", providing enough space for two people if required. Furthermore, the compartment offers a cosy seating bench, a commodious 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 four compartments. A total of eight guests at most share the whole of the carriage.

For your comfort

- No domestic flights
- No long bus rides
- Your luggage remains on board during the entire trip
- All cars air-conditioned while the train is in motion
- Excellent food
- After dinner restaurant cars operate as bars



Aladdin compartment



Kalif compartment



Sultan compartment



Restaurant



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