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 2015
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 journey, 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 journey to Kazakhstan and make our way through the Kara Kum Desert and into Uzbekistan where 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 your hotel in Ashgabat for an overnight stay.

**Day 2 Nisa & Ashgabat.** In the morning we will visit the colourful Tolkuchka Bazaar (subject to change due to varying opening times), 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. Following this we will drive to the old Parthian city of Nisa and in Ashgabat’s National Museum we will see ruins of ancient Nisa. After lunch we take a city tour and become acquainted with today’s capital Ashgabat, the most modern city in Central Asia. We will see Independence Park, the Ashgabat opera house, the Independence Gate, the Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque and the old Turkman bazaar. In the evening we will dine and be entertained by a folklore show before boarding our private train.

**Day 3 Merv.** Early morning sees us arrive in Mary, where we transfer to the old Parthian 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 an artist before we re-board our private train for Bukhara.

**Day 4 Bukhara, Uzbekistan.** Bukhara is quite simply outstanding. Situated in the middle of the Kyzyl Kum 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.

**Highlights of the tour at a glance**

**UNESCO’s World Heritage:**
- The old Parthian city of Nisa • The Pearl of the East: Ruins of ancient Merv • Itchan Kala: The inner town of the old Khiva oasis • Historical Centre of Bukhara • Samarkand – Crossroads of Cultures • Historical Centre of Shakhrisabz • Turkestan: Mausoleum Kooja Ahmed Yasawi

**Distinctive capitals:**
- Ashgabat: the most modern city in Central Asia
- Tashkent: the cultural centre of Central Asia

**Places of historic interest:**
- Registan: the most beautiful square of the Orient • Ulug Bek observatory • Ismael Samani and Gur Emir mausoleum • Ark Fortress in Bukhara • Excavations of ancient Afroasiyob town • Shah-i-Zinda complex of mausoleums • Almaty

**Everyday life in Central Asia:**
- The making of traditional art objects: silk and carpets
- Tolkuchka Bazaar in Ashgabat • Valuable cultural insights: lectures, fairy tales and information about history and regional traditions • Dinner with fashion show in the courtyard of an old madrasah • Lunch in the summer palace of an Emir • Lunch in a typical Uzbek house
This evening we will dine in the courtyard of a Madrasah with musical accompaniment, local dances and a presentation of colourful national costumes. We spend two nights in a centrally located hotel in Bukhara.

Day 5 Bukhara. Today we will enjoy a day tour of the city, including lunch. Bukhara is a large, unique and authentic 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 there 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. In the 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, madrasahs 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 in a Samarkand hotel.

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. Enjoy a two night stay in a Samarkand hotel.

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 onboard.

Day 11 Tashkent. In the 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 Sukeldash, the Kavoj and Amir Timur monuments and the opera. In the evening we will also attend the famous Tashkent Navoy Opera (depending on the schedule).

Day 12 Turkestan, Kazakhstan. After breakfast and lunch onboard 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 onboard as we bid farewell to the friendly train staff.

Day 13 Almaty. We arrive in Almaty after lunch. Enjoy a city 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 and overnight in Almaty.

Day 14 Almaty to London. Transfer to the airport for your return indirect scheduled flight to London.

**Prices per person**

**based on double occupancy**

| 14 April & 20 October 2015 |

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<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DOUBLE OCCUPANCY</th>
<th>SOLE OCCUPANCY</th>
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<td>Ali Baba</td>
<td>£4995</td>
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<td>Aladdin</td>
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**Price Includes:** Economy class scheduled flights, seven nights aboard the Orient Silk Road Express Private Train, six nights hotel accommodation as described, all meals throughout tour, tour director, local guides, excursions, onboard doctor, transfers, log book about the Silk Road, airport taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel Insurance, visas (allow 6-8 weeks to obtain), gratuities.
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 allowing you to take only a small bag with you for our overnight hotel stays.

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.

Your Accommodation

There are three categories of compartment onboard the Orient Silk Road Express. In all categories there are power outlets for 110/220 volts and smoker’s corners at one end of each car.

Ali Baba
Each car has nine compartments providing sleeping space for two guests in 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 each car.

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.

Kalif
This category is equipped with two beds, one of which measures 43” x 75”, providing enough space for two people if required. Furthermore, the compartment offers a cozy 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 six compartments. A total of twelve 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

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