

# *J Yang Tours* Customized Group Travel Specialist to Asia

China • Vietnam • Cambodia • Thailand • Laos • Bhutan • Japan • Mongolia

## **The Legendary Silk Road by Private Train – From Ashgabat to Almaty**

**Duration:** 13 nights/14 days

**We visit:** Ashgabat, Merv, Bukhara, Khiva, Samarqand, Shakhrisabz, Tashkent, Turkestan, Almaty

This journey makes you familiar with the manifold cultures along the legendary Silk Road and numerous localities that made history, among them no less than 7 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

### **Highlights:**

- Private Train through Karakum Desert, fire crater in the desert
- Tolkuchka Bazaar, Ashgabat's National Museum
- UNESCO World Heritage Site of Merv, Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar, the Virgin Fortress
- UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bukhara, Kaljan Minaret, Labi-Hauz Ensemble, Mire-e-Arab Madrasah, Samanid Mausoleum, the Fortress Ark, Coronation Hall, Summer Residence of the last Emir
- City Wall of Khiva, Kalta Minor Minaret
- Shah-e-zende, the excavation sites of Afrosiab, Registan Square, Silk Carpet Factory, Uzbek craftsman's family visit, the observatory of Ulug Beg, the ruins of the Bibi Khanum Mosque, Gur Emir Mausoleum
- Folklore performance
- UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shakhrisabz
- Madrasah Kukeldash, the Kavoj and Amir Timur Monuments, Tashkent Navoy Opera
- UNESCO World Heritage Site - Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi
- Almaty – "Father - apple"

### **Tour Itinerary**

Day 1

#### **Arrive Ashgabat**

Arrival and transfer to your First-Class hotel in Ashgabat.

Day 2

#### **Starting in the Desert**

In the forenoon you'll board your Private Train and start your journey through the infamous Karakum Desert. Witness fascinating nature with sandhills up to 90 meters high. Around evening you will 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! Overnight in your Private Train. (B/L/D)

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## Day 3 **Ashgabat**

In the morning you'll visit the colourful Tolkuchka Bazaar, a 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 you will 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 you'll take a city tour and become acquainted with today's capital Ashgabat, with the unmistakable handwriting of the Turkmenbashi, the leader of the Turkmens: Hollywood-like scenes of the nouveau riche. You'll dine with folklore and later depart on your Private Train. (B/L/D)

## 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. You'll lunch in the picturesque courtyard of an artist and then you will get on your Private Train headed for Bukhara. (B/L/D)

## Day 5 **Bukhara**

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 (UNESCO-World Culture Heritage) you'll see the Kaljan Minaret and the Labi-Hauz Ensemble. In front of the Nasreddin-on-the-donkey monument you'll listen to some anecdotes about him. You'll have dinner in the courtyard of a Madrasah with musical accompaniment, local dances and a presentation of colourful national costumes. You'll spend the night in a centrally located upper Middle-class hotel in Bukhara. (B/L/D)

## Day 6 **Bukhara**

Today, you'll experience the city in an all-day tour program, including lunch. Bukhara is a large, unique and authentic art museum that maintains its old oriental face. In the morning, you will be guided to the magnificent Mire-e-Arab Madrasah and the most beautiful and precious building in Central Asia, the Samanid Mausoleum. Then you'll take a tour through the fortress Ark. You'll see there the coronation hall and visit the summer residence of the last Emir. At the end of your stay you'll see the only women's mosque in the world. In the evening your train departs for Khiva and you will spend the night in your compartment. (B/L/D)

## Day 7 **Khiva**

After breakfast you will go 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 bricks, you are in another world: Around the Kalta Minor Minaret life still pulses today as it did in old times, and on a tour you see palaces, mosques, minarets, mausoleums and Koranic schools show you, what medieval oriental urban development must have been like. You will enjoy lunch in the atmosphere of the former Summer Palace of the Emir. In the evening you will depart to Samarqand. (B/L/D)

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Day 8 **Samarqand**

Today you experience the historical prominence of Samarqand, the most beautiful city in the world 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. You will spend the night in a First-Class hotel in Samarqand. (B/L/D)

Day 9 **Samarqand**

You 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. You will spend the second night in your First-Class hotel in Samarqand. (B/L/D)

Day 10 **On the Great Silk Road to Shakhrisabz**

Enjoy an excursion into the surrounding mountain region where elsewhere forgotten ceremonies of Shaman cult still are held. 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! Next you will follow the Great Silk Road and arrive in the green city, the birthplace of Tamerlane. Here, in Shakhrisabz (UNESCO-World Heritage Site) you'll 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 you'll depart on your Private Train to Tashkent. On board: Uzbek wine tasting. (B/L/D)

Day 11 **Tashkent**

In the morning your Private Train arrives in Tashkent at the foot of the Tien Shan Mountains. On your sightseeing tour you'll experience the green oasis of the Steppe: the Madrasah Kukeldash, the Kavoj and Amir Timur monuments and the opera. In the evening you will attend the famous Tashkent Navoy Opera (depending on the schedule). Afterwards your Private Train departs for Kasachstan. (B/L/D)

Day 12 **Turkestan**

After breakfast and lunch on board you arrive at the city of Turkestan in Kazakhstan (border formalities occur comfortably in your cabin). You will see the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (UNESCO World Heritage Site) with its dome hall, monumental mosque and well house. Then your Private Train will travel on to Astana – at dinner it will be time to say farewell to your friendly train staff.. (B/L/D)

Day 13 **Almaty – The Father of Apples**

You arrive to Almaty after lunch. Enjoy a city sightseeing tour of Almaty, situated at the foothills of the northern Tien Shan Mountains. There are attractive, wide, tree-lined avenues, many parks and street cafes. Visit the Zenkov Russian Cathedral, one of the world's tallest all wood buildings. In the evening, you will enjoy a special farewell dinner in country-specific yurts. Transfer to the airport. (B/L/D)

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Day 14     **Almaty**

An epic journey comes to an end!

For tour price, please contact us

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