THE SILK ROAD
GOLDEN EAGLE & SHANGRI-LA EXPRESS

THE SILK ROAD

MOSCOW - VOLGOGRAD - KARA KUM - KHIVA - ASHGABAT - MERV - BUKHARA
SAMARKAND - TASHKENT - ALMATY - URMQI - TURPAN - DUNHUANG
JIAYUGUAN (EASTBOUND ONLY) - LANZHOU (WESTBOUND ONLY) - XIAN - BEIJING

Retracing one of the most important trading routes of ancient civilisation, the Silk Road follows in the footsteps of such legendary figures as Alexander the Great and Marco Polo. For centuries, merchants and adventurers journeyed to and from China on ancient routes through some of the most testing landscapes in the world trading silk, spices and perfumes. These ‘highways’ – stretching some 4,000 miles (6,400 km) – collectively came to be called the ‘Silk Road’.

Crossing both Russia and China as well as some of the remotest former Soviet Republics our epic journey onboard the Golden Eagle through Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and the Shangri-La Express (see page 68) from the Kazakh border to Beijing across the Gobi Desert and through an ever-changing landscape, will take in some of the most magnificent yet little visited sites and oasis cities from the ancient world.

We travel a total of 6,800 miles (11,000 kilometres) across five countries and six time zones through areas only accessible by train. Whilst the journey may present great difficulties for the independent traveller, our tour provides the opportunity to travel in comfort and safety. A true feeling of adventure and pioneering awaits on this unique 21-day tour by private train.

www.goldeneagleluxurytrains.com
GOLDEN EAGLE & SHANGRI-LA EXPRESS
THE SILK ROAD

TOUR SCHEDULES

EASTBOUND 2015
September 19 – October 9

EASTBOUND 2016
September 17 – October 7

WESTBOUND 2015
September 23 – October 13
October 22 – November 11

WESTBOUND 2016
September 21 – October 11
October 21 – November 10

ACCOMMODATION

2 nights in Moscow | 10 nights onboard the Golden Eagle | 5 nights onboard the Shangri-La Express | 3 nights in Beijing

A TASTE OF THE SILK ROAD

A short tour option between Moscow and Almaty (13 days)
2 nights in Moscow | 9 nights onboard the Golden Eagle | 1 night in Almaty

EASTBOUND
September 19 – October 1, 2015
September 17 – September 29, 2016

WESTBOUND
October 1 – October 13, 2015
October 30 – November 11, 2015
September 29 – October 11, 2016
October 28 – November 10, 2016

DAILY TOUR ITINERARIES

EASTBOUND
Day 1 Arrive Moscow
Day 2 Moscow
Day 3 Depart Moscow
Day 4 Volgograd
Day 5 Onboard
Day 6 Khiva
Day 7 Ashgabat
Day 8 Merv
Day 9 Bukhara
Day 10 Samarkand
Day 11 Tashkent
Day 12 Almaty
Day 13 Border Crossing
Day 14 Turpan & Urumqi
Day 15 Dunhuang
Day 16 Jiayuguan
Day 17 Xian
Day 18 Arrival into Beijing
Day 19 Beijing
Day 20 Depart Beijing

WESTBOUND
Day 1 Arrive Beijing
Day 2 Beijing
Day 3 Xian
Day 4 Lanzhou
Day 5 Dunhuang
Day 6 Urumqi & Turpan
Day 7 Border Crossing
Day 8 Almaty
Day 9 Samarkand
Day 10 Bukhara
Day 11 Merv
Day 12 Ashgabat
Day 13 Khiva
Day 14 Onboard
Day 15 Arrival into Moscow
Day 16 Depart Moscow

www.goldeneaglexpress.com
WHAT’S INCLUDED

FINES RAIL ACCOMMODATION

Private accommodation (en-suite on the Golden Eagle)
Cabin attendant service
Evening turndown service
Complimentary tea, coffee and bottled water in-cabin
Robes and slippers in-cabin
L’Occitane toiletries in-cabin on the Golden Eagle
Complimentary bottle of vodka in your Golden Eagle cabin

OFF-TRAIN EXCURSIONS PROGRAMME

Full guided off-train excursions programme
Fully included Freedom of Choice touring options (options may be changed due to final train times)
Personal Headsets to hear the professional guide’s commentary and bottled water during excursions
Authentic dining experiences in local restaurants with a generous drinks allowance, including international wines

GOLDEN EAGLE DIFFERENCE

Experienced Tour Manager
Onboard Doctor - English speaking
Luggage porterage - from the time you are met at the airport until your departure
No tipping policy
Arrival and departure transfers
Detailed Golden Eagle route map
High quality Golden Eagle embroidered backpack

ONBOARD INCLUSIONS

Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily - starting with dinner on first day and finishing with breakfast on last day
Generous drinks allowance, including international wine, with lunch and dinner
Gala Caviar Dinner onboard the Golden Eagle
In-cabin breakfast option to start the day onboard the Golden Eagle
Afternoon tea and cakes onboard the Golden Eagle
In-suite dining option for Imperial Suite guests onboard the Golden Eagle
Inclusive drinks packages for Gold Class and Imperial Suite guests
Tea, coffee, bottled water, soft drinks and local beer in the Bar Lounge Car
Stimulating onboard talks
Resident pianist in Bar Lounge Car

To Book Call +44 (0)161 928 9410 or Call Your Travel Agent
Our touring programme of Moscow principally takes us to the grandeur of the Kremlin – the spiritual, historical and political heart of Moscow – and to see the treasures of the Tsars in the Armoury Chamber. We will enjoy an exclusive private viewing before it opens to the public. We also visit Red Square, an iconic symbol of Russia’s former military and political might with its eclectic mix of fascinating architecture, such as the ornate St Basil’s Cathedral’s magnificent onion-domed spires, the beautiful façade of the world famous GUM department store, constructed in Tsarist times, and the sombre and evocative site of Lenin’s tomb. We end the day with a tour of the opulent and unique stations of the Moscow metro - showpieces of Socialist art furnished with statues, frescoes and mosaics, unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

Why not extend your stay in Moscow with additional nights to explore more of the city at your leisure or have time to take in a performance at the world-renowned Bolshoi Theatre? Tickets need to be pre-booked and are subject to schedule and availability.

With our Freedom of Choice touring option you may instead wish to travel out of the city centre to Sergiev Posad, home to one of the most beautiful monasteries in Russia and the historical and spiritual centre of the Russian Orthodox Church or visit the famous State Tretyakov Gallery (National Museum of Fine Art).

Included in our time spent in Moscow is two nights at the five-star Marriott Royal Aurora. Located in Moscow city centre, and within walking distance of Red Square and the Bolshoi Theatre, this luxury hotel offers spacious accommodation with butler service – the only hotel in Moscow to offer this fine service.
We make a brief scheduled stop at Ichoguz, with 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. A unique experience that is not to be missed.

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 visit to the National Museum and Kipchak Mosque.

From Mary we transfer to the ancient and mainly unrestored remains of Merv. 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.

Bukhara is quite simply outstanding. Like Khiva, UNESCO sponsored the renovation of much of the city for its 2,500th anniversary in 1999. The 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. This evening, weather and time permitting, we will enjoy a barbecue on the station platform before our train departs.
Just the mention of Samarkand instantly conjures up evocative images of the Silk Road, more so than any other place.

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 Ulug 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.

On our Freedom of Choice tour, enjoy lunch with a local family as they prepare traditional cuisine and welcome you into their home. Watch as the matriarch prepares a local dish in the courtyard and then serves us an expansive meal in the family’s dining room.
SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

acja experiences

Evening drinks reception on the beautifully lit Registan Square, Samarkand
See the world’s oldest Koran in Tashkent
Ride camels through the sand dunes to Dunhuang’s Crescent Moon Lake
Look in awe at the Terracotta Warriors in Xian
Climb the Great Wall of China
Almaty is the largest city in Kazakhstan and is notable for its wide tree-lined boulevards. Surrounded by the majesty of the Tien Shan Mountains, this beautifully verdant city derives its name from ‘alma’ meaning ‘apple’. Just a short distance from the city, apple orchards thrive in abundance.

Our city tour includes a visit to Panfilov Park where we have the opportunity to visit the Zenkhov Cathedral which was built entirely of wood. We will have the included Freedom of Choice option to go out of the city to the Chimbulak resort, where a cable car ride will give you spectacular views of Almaty and the mountains.

Urumqi is located in a verdant oasis between the lofty ice capped Bogda Peak, the vast Salt Lake, the pine-covered Southern Hill and the alternating fields and sand dunes of the Zunggar Basin. Urumqi boasts an entry in the Guinness Book of Records for being the city furthest from any sea in the world – a staggering 1,400 miles (2,500 km) from the nearest coastline. This morning we visit the renowned 3,500 year-old mummy exhibition at the Xinjiang Provincial Museum.

In the small oasis city of Dunhuang we will visit the fascinating Mogao Thousand Buddha Cave Complex. This impressive site contains almost 500 grottoes, carved between 700 and 1,700 years ago. Inside we will see an amazing collection of beautiful sculptures and murals depicting the evolution of Buddhist religious art over this 1,000-year period.

In the afternoon we explore the vast natural beauty of the Gobi Desert by camel. Here we discover Crescent Lake. Hidden amongst towering sand dunes, it has sustained life in this region for millennia. Tonight we experience dinner and a local folk performance in this magical setting.

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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.

Jiayuguan is most famous for being the first pass at the most westerly point of the Great Wall of China; it was given the rather poetic name, ‘The first and greatest pass under Heaven’. Our tour takes us to the perfectly restored fortress at the end of the Great Wall which dates back to 1372. Considered one of the greatest sites in north-west China, we spend time here and visit its excellent museum.

Lanzhou is a vital city on the Silk Route due to the mighty Yellow River that runs through it. A visit to the Gansu Provincial Museum here provides evidence of the kind of goods that moved in an eastward direction along the Silk Route and the famous ‘galloping horse’ dating from the Eastern Han period that was found in a nearby tomb.

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Our fascinating journey of discovery takes us to Xian. We will have several hours to explore the world famous Terracotta Warriors, discovered by peasants only 40 years ago. The 6,000 terracotta figures and their horses are one of the greatest archaeological finds of the 20th century.

Alternatively, as part of our Freedom of Choice programme we will offer a visit to the Han Yangling Museum. This tomb, dating back 2,000 years with its adjoining museum, is one of China’s best kept secrets.

In the evening we enjoy the Tang Dynasty Dinner, Music and Dance Show, a wonderful performance of ancient entertainment.
Beijing mixes both ancient and modern and is where we spend three nights staying at the five-star Regent Beijing hotel (or similar), which is located in the historical centre of the city. This luxurious Beijing hotel is minutes from the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, Wangfujing shopping street, the Oriental Plaza and picturesque hutongs (old lanes).

Our cultural exploration starts at the Temple of Heaven, built during the Ming Dynasty to offer sacrifices to the heavens, which is the grandest of the four great temples situated in Beijing. Here we experience enchanting displays of morning exercises including traditional dancing, singing and the delicately precise ancient art of calligraphy. In our extensive touring programme of the Imperial City, we visit Tiananmen Square and explore the magnificently restored Forbidden City which was built in the early 14th century and was home to the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties. We will also explore the small ‘hutong’ lanes of old Beijing by rickshaw and visit a local family in a traditional courtyard house.

Alternatively, with our Freedom of Choice touring programme we offer a tour to Cuandixia ancient village, nestled in the mountains 90km (56 miles) west of Beijing. Cuandixia is known for its architecture and the natural beauty of the area. It is home to more than 500 well preserved courtyard houses dating to the Ming and Qing dynasties.

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

During our three-night stay in Beijing we devote a day to the most awe-inspiring site in the whole of China – The Great Wall. This amazing edifice is perhaps the most evocative symbol of Chinese skill and precision. Originally built to protect the Chinese Empire from raids by nomadic tribes, it is the world’s longest man-made structure in the world and part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. We have the privilege of walking along a portion of the wall – the perfect opportunity to take some memorable photographs with your fellow guests.

We host our exclusive farewell dinner (or welcome dinner if you are travelling on the Westbound tours) in an authentic Peking Duck restaurant. The banquet will be complimented with specially selected international wines, as with all our meals, as well as a glass of local rice wine also known as ‘firewater’ as befitting this special occasion.

Please note that the Eastbound Silk Road tour operates on National Day and during the Chinese National Holidays, which usually runs from October 1-7. This national holiday commemorates the founding of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949. Whilst this makes for a lively exciting atmosphere please note that tourist attractions may be more crowded than usual and we may modify the itinerary to ensure your enjoyment of the tour.
Voyages of a Lifetime by Private Train™ | THE SILK ROAD

Forbidden City, Beijing

Hutong lanes of old Beijing

Great Wall of China
Modern comfort in an ancient country ... unquestionably the best private train available in China today, the Shangri-La Express guarantees you good living even in the remotest places.

A state-of-the-art shower car, centrally located on the train, complements the two washrooms/WC’s in every sleeping carriage.

Meals are served in the train’s spacious restaurant cars, where our dedicated chefs serve a western breakfast followed by a wide range of authentic Chinese specialities at lunch and dinner, using only the finest local ingredients. As well as soft drinks, tea and coffee, meals are accompanied by a selection of wines from around the world.

Equally special is the unique ambience of the piano bar car, where our resident pianist will entertain you during the evenings. Staying open until the last person leaves, the bar is the perfect place to get to know your fellow passengers... or simply wile away some time, reading or taking in the scenery while enjoying your favourite drink.

Note that tours running through both Russia and China on the Silk Road will use the Golden Eagle for the Moscow – Almaty part of the journey.

www.goldeneagleluxurytrains.com
ONBOARD ACCOMMODATION

**SHANGRI-LA EXPRESS**

- Sleeps 2 in bunk style beds
- Wash basin facility shared between 2 compartments
- Toilet/wash facilities are available at the end of each sleeping carriage
- Towels, robes and slippers provided
- Towels and linens changed regularly
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water in cabin
- Separate state-of-the-art shower car with individual compartments. Each spacious compartment features shower, mirror, hairdryer and changing area
- Cabin Area: 38 sq ft (3.6 sq m)

Configuration and styles of all cabins may vary

To Book Call +44 (0)161 928 9410 or Call Your Travel Agent
WHAT’S INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE

As far as possible our tours are all-inclusive with no hidden extras. What follows are all those elements which are included in the tour price. The only extra items you may need to budget for include personal expenses such as International and Internal flights that are not included in the itineraries, visa costs, insurance, selected drinks from the Bar Lounge Car and laundry.

EXPERIENCED TOUR MANAGERS
Our experienced Tour Managers are selected for their travel knowledge, and their linguistic and organisational abilities allowing you to relax and enjoy your rail cruise. We receive exceptional passenger comments about our Tour Managers and their aim is to ensure you enjoy every minute of your holiday.

GUIDED OFF-TRAIN EXCURSIONS
The history and culture of the places we visit on our rail cruises will come alive through our expert local guides. All our tours include a wide-ranging sightseeing schedule to make the most of the time you have off the train and bring you closer to the culture, people and history of your destinations. We believe it is the special little touches that help create magical memories.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AIRPORT TRANSFERS
Arrival and departure transfers are included.

HOTEL AND ONBOARD ACCOMMODATION
Although you will spend much of your time sightseeing or relaxing in the train’s public areas, you will find your cabin a welcome retreat at the end of a rewarding day. All hotels are of five-star standard, or the best available.

BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER DAILY
All meals are included, starting with dinner on the first day and ending with breakfast on the last day. All departures feature one or two uniquely designed Restaurant Cars where you can enjoy the excellent waiter-served food and wine. Several times during the tour we will also sample authentic local cuisine with wine and a selection of drinks off the train, which is also included in the tour price.

DRINKS WITH MEALS
A generous drinks allowance, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, is included with lunch and dinner on and off the train.

ONBOARD SERVICE
You can expect service which is attentive, friendly and unintrusive. Your car attendants provide 24-hour housekeeping and bedding turndown services, with one attendant always on duty to assist you and to ensure you are comfortable in your cabin. Complimentary tea, coffee and bottled drinking water are available in your cabin 24 hours a day.

PERSONAL HEADSETS
On all the off–train excursions, to enhance your enjoyment and insights into the places you visit, you will be provided with a lightweight personal headset on which to listen to your tour guide as you take in the sights. The range of the headset means that you do not need to worry about missing any of the guide’s commentary on your excursion, even if you prefer to wander away from the group.

ONBOARD DOCTOR AND MEDICAL FACILITIES
To give you peace of mind our tours are accompanied by a doctor who travels with us for the entire journey; so you can rest assured that medical assistance is always available. On call 24 hours a day, the doctor is on hand to give primary care as required. In almost every case, the doctor will be English-speaking and registered with the General Medical Council in the UK.

PORTERAGE
As you only have to unpack once your luggage and belongings will stay with you on the train throughout the journey but, wherever necessary, porterage is included between the hotels and stations.

ALL GRATUITIES
You will not have to worry about tipping on or off the train on your rail journey with Golden Eagle Luxury Trains as all gratuities are included in the tour price.

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