EST. 1994
CAPTAIN'S CHOICE

THE FOUR STANS ABOARD THE GOLDEN EAGLE TRAIN

During our private charter of the Golden Eagle train, we stop in four of the 'Stans' within Central Asia. Enjoy an immersion into each country's culture and admire grand mosques and palaces. Unexplored by most travellers, these ancient lands tell tales of commerce and cooperation; where language and culture were exchanged as surely as silks and spice. At every stage, we are accompanied by a Captain's Choice Tour Manager and Tour Doctor from Australia, as well as local guides.

A JOURNEY OVERVIEW

Almaty - Lake Issyk-kul - Bishkek - Tashkent - Khiva - Nukus - Bukhara - Dushanbe - Shahrisabz - Samarkand - Tashkent

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17 Days Rail Journey
Departing 15 April 2027

Day 1 Almaty (Kazakhstan)
Your private transfer transports you to The Ritz Carlton, Almaty. Enjoy a day at leisure to acquaint yourself with your surroundings, as well as the considered amenities of our luxurious hotel. This evening, we reconvene for our Welcome Dinner, providing an opportunity for you to meet your fellow travellers.

Day 2 Almaty
Enjoy breakfast at our hotel this morning, then set out on a Your World experience:

- Discover the local way of life during a morning visit to a Kazakh village, also known as an aul. Enjoy a cup of Kazakh tea while hearing about daily village life. See how a yurt is assembled, watch a cookery demonstration, marvel at local folk performances, and admire the riding skills of local horseman.
- Familiarise yourself with the diverse range of visual arts on display at Kasteyev State Museum of Arts. The museum features regional exhibits, including Kazakh rugs, carvings and embroidery, as well as pieces from Russia, Europe, and other parts of Central Asia. At the National Bank of Kazakhstan Museum, see the archaeological treasure known as the Golden Man, as well as currency from the Soviet era and the earlier czarist period.

This afternoon is yours to explore, or relax, as you wish. Later, enjoy spectacular panoramas of the Tien Shan mountains while dining at one of our hotel's restaurants.

Day 3 Almaty, Embark Golden Eagle
Following breakfast, choose how to spend your morning with one of these Your World experiences:

- Visit Arba Wine, whose vineyard is within the Assa Valley, at the foot of the mighty Tien Shan mountains. Take a behind-the-scenes look at the wine cellar and production facilities, learning about the winery's cultivation techniques, which includes layering the vines with snow. Then sample some of the locally produced reds and whites.
- An easterly drive brings you to Issyk Lake, which presents as a picture of tranquillity amid its forested surroundings. In 1969, the famous Golden Warrior, which sits atop a pillar in Almaty's Independence Square, was found at the site. Take a walk around the lake, admiring its clear blue waters ringed by the spruce forests that scale its adjacent hillsides.

This afternoon, we greet Golden Eagle, smoke billowing from its steam locomotive. Enjoy lunch and relax aboard our rolling residence as we prepare to depart across the Kazakh countryside.

Day 4 Lake Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan)
Having crossed into Kyrgyzstan, we stop to admire the vast Lake Issyk-Kul. While here, we also take in the open-air Museum of Petroglyphs. The landscape is strewn with boulders, many of which feature depictions of animals. The ancient site was once used by nomadic Saka priests, originating from Iran, for their rituals to the sun god. Nearby, we are treated to an eagle hunting demonstration. Only a few skilled hunters remain in the Issyk-Kul region. Their birds of prey take graceful flight, pinpointing their quarry with a deadly self-assurance.

Day 5 Bishkek

Our train pulls into Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital city. Once a caravan rest stop along the Silk Roads, today the city is known for its Soviet-era architecture, tree-lined streets, and staggering backdrop of the Tien Shan mountains. We take in the expansive Ala-too Square, designed to commemorate the former Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic. Close by, we look upon statues of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and the Memorial for the Red Guards.

Day 6 Tashkent (Uzbekistan)

After lunch, our train arrives in the city of Tashkent. Explore the city, which was rebuilt following a devastating earthquake in 1966. From its modern metropolis, we approach the Old Town, where traditional mosques and houses populate narrow streets. At the Hast-Imam library, the world's oldest Koran is revealed. Further enlightenment transpires with visits to the Museum of Applied Arts and the Railway Museum.

Day 7 Khiva

Our journey continues as our train rolls on toward Khiva. The city represents an ancient intersection of the Silk Roads, where travellers from Mongolia, Russia, China and Persia would have greeted each other, rested and traded their various wares. The city's striking architecture emerges from the desert, drawing our focus to its geometric designs and distinctive coloured tiles. The dazzling blue Kalta Minor Minaret stands watch alongside the Kuhna Ark fortress, while in ornate mosques, bazaars and minarets, remnants of Khiva's former glory still prevail.

Day 8 Nukus

Reaching further into the north-west of Uzbekistan, we soon arrive in the city of Nukus, surrounded by the dreamlike deserts of Karakum, Kyzylkum, and Ustyurt. Upon disembarking the train, we head to the Igor Savitsky State Museum of the Fine Arts to view the world's second-largest collection of Soviet-era avant-garde art. Savitsky accumulated some 100,000 paintings, many of which were promptly hidden due to strict Soviet doctrines regarding art. The site in Nukus was chosen for their ultimate curation precisely due to its remote location.

Day 9 Bukhara

Today we are greeted by the oasis city of Bukhara. The World Heritage-listed city dates back more than 2,500 years. We appreciate its history and grandeur during a visit to The Ark, the fortified residence of the Emirs of Bukhara, who ruled here in earlier times. Just outside the city, the Palace of Moon-like Stars, the last Emir's summer residence, invites us to stroll its grounds and pavilions. Upon returning to the station, we enjoy a barbecue along the platform before our train departs.

Day 10 Dushanbe (Tajikistan)

Tajikistan's capital sits along the banks of the Varzob River; its centrepiece, the opulent Kohi Navruz Palace. Incredibly, the building was originally designed as a teahouse. Our guide reveals the story of its transition to a grand palace in detail as we wander its majestic rooms and golden halls. A glittering chandelier weighing almost seven tonnes hangs from the ceiling of the Zarandud Hall, whose many columns are adorned with 24-carat gold leaf. Absorb the grandeur further while enjoying tea and some local delicacies inside the palace. With an air of regality, we then return to our luxury train.

Day 11 Shahrisabz (Uzbekistan)
Thought to be the birthplace of the Turco-Mongol conqueror Amir Timur, Shahrisabz was once one of Central Asia's great cities. We pass the proud statue of Amir Timur surveying his lands en route to the Ak-Saray Palace. The imposing twin facades of the ruined, yet still exquisite, palace stand as beacons to Timur's ambition.

Day 12 Samarkand, Disembark Golden Eagle
One of Central Asia's longest inhabited cities, Samarkand marks the crossroads of Eastern and Western cultures. Now described as the Paris of the Muslim world, the city's grand mosques reflect its tradition as a mecca of ancient arts and crafts. We explore the grand architecture of Bibi-Khanym Mosque and Ulugh Beg Observatory. We later return to see the awe-inspiring Registan Square awash with light at dusk; its three facing madrassahs illuminated during a staggering display of colour. This evening, we stay at the Hilton Samarkand Regency.

Day 13 Samarkand, Embark Golden Eagle
Continue to explore Samarkand this morning, as we arrive at Shah-i-Zinda, a complex of more than 20 mausoleums and other ritual buildings erected between the 11th and 19th centuries. Close by, we visit the Afrasiab Museum of Samarkand. The museum houses ancient artefacts that were collected during the city's excavation. These include ancient frescoes from the palace of Varkhuman, who once ruled over the region. We make our return to Golden Eagle in time for lunch and continue our journey through Uzbekistan towards the Fergana Valley.

Day 14 Margilan, Rishtan, Kokand
Our train rolls eastward to the ancient city of Margilan, renowned for producing some of the finest silk in Central Asia. We visit the Yodgorlik Margilan Factory, where we are acquainted with its raw materials and manufacturing processes. In the city of Rishtan, meanwhile, we find the dominant industry to be the creation of exquisite ceramics. Discover the techniques of this age-old craft from highly skilled local artisan, Rustam Usmanov.

Our next stop is Kokand, once a critical trading post along the Silk Roads. During our time here, we visit the Palace of Khudáyár Khán, admiring its intricate blue tilework, which is prevalent throughout traditional Islamic architecture. Our final stop is the grand Jami Mosque, an impressive structure whose intricately designed ceiling is supported by 98 wooden columns. This evening, we enjoy a Farewell Dinner aboard Golden Eagle as we make our return to Tashkent.

Day 15 Tashkent, Disembark Golden Eagle
We pull into the platform in Tashkent and disembark Golden Eagle for a final time. Should you wish, take the option to check into the Hyatt Regency Tashkent after lunch. Alternatively, join us for a further exploration of Tashkent.

Stand before the blue-domed rotunda of the Shahid Memorial Complex, which honours those killed during Stalin's purges. We then head to the Tashkent TV Tower for panoramic views of the city. You can even track your progress as you ascend the tower, courtesy of the elevator's CCTV feed of its shaft and system of cables. Nearby, the Monument of Courage observes the loss of

life and property experienced by Tashkent's residents as a result of the 1966 earthquake which devastated the city. Then, passing beneath the broad blue and white colonnade at Independence Square, we discover its gardens, fountains and monuments.

This afternoon, you may like to pay a visit to the Alisher Navoiy Opera and Ballet Theatre, whose productions include Uzbek music and dance, as well as international opera and ballet. Afterwards, wander Sayilgoh Street, also known as Broadway. This bustling pedestrian area is renowned for the many artists and musicians who line the street and offer their goods and services. Of course, you're also welcome to explore independently or relax at our hotel.

Day 16 Tashkent

On our final full day in Tashkent, we make a beeline for Chorsu Plaza, a lively marketplace whose vendors trade in everything from fresh produce to clothing and wood carvings. From here, we head to Tashkent's underground metro network, the first to be established in Central Asia. Each station is individually styled, often lavishly so, with different themed murals and ornamentation throughout. At Abul Kasim Madrassah, observe the creation of many art and craft pieces, and perhaps purchase a one-off keepsake.

This afternoon, immerse yourself in Tashkent with a final Your World experience:

- ✯ Take a tour of some of the city's imposing Soviet architecture. Your guide will explain what daily life was like behind the Iron Curtain for the residents of Tashkent. Contemplate the facades of the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, the Tashkent Circus, and the Wedding Palace, among other grand structures.
- ✯ Appreciate the detailed craftsmanship of Uzbek ceramics at the Rakhimov Family Ceramics Studio. Akbar and Alisher are a father and son team who have studied hundreds of years of Uzbek styles and techniques, which now suffuses their own work.

You may prefer to spend this afternoon on your own schedule, exploring the city at leisure or simply relaxing at our hotel.

This evening, we celebrate our magnificent journey during a Farewell Dinner.

Day 17 Tashkent

Enjoy a final breakfast at our hotel. We are then transferred to Tashkent's airport, our journey at an end.