



## Echoes of Empires: Five Stans Expedition

*Follow the Silk Road's Eternal Trail*

**Countries:** *Kazakhstan - Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan – Turkmenistan*

**Tour length:** *19 days / 18 nights*

**Itinerary:** *Almaty - Charyn Canyon - Kolsay Lakes - Kaindy - Karakol - Djety-Oguz gorge – Skazka - Bokonbaevo village - Kochkor - Bishkek - Tashkent - Khujand - Istaravshan - Penjikent - 7 Lakes - Samarkand - Bukhara - Mary - Merv - Ashgabat*

Step into the heart of Central Asia on this once-in-a-lifetime journey across **five fascinating countries** – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. From the dazzling skylines of Almaty and Ashgabat to the timeless caravan cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, this expedition weaves together the living echoes of empires, Silk Road heritage, and breathtaking landscapes.

Marvel at natural wonders like the **Charyn Canyon** and the alpine lakes of Kyrgyzstan, spend nights in yurts under star-filled skies, and witness the traditions of nomadic falconers. Discover UNESCO treasures from the ruins of ancient **Merv** to the blue domes of Samarkand, while wandering through bazaars alive with spices, silks, and stories.

Blending vibrant cities, desert fortresses, mountain valleys, and warm local hospitality, this 19-day expedition offers not just a tour, but a **grand adventure across cultures, history, and landscapes that shaped the Silk Road world.**

### **Guaranteed arrival dates in 2026:**

**Group #1: 09.05 – 27.05.2026**

**Group #2: 30.05 – 17.06.2026**

**Group #3: 22.08 – 09.09.2026**

**Group #4: 19.09 – 07.10.2026**

**Group #5: 10.10 – 28.10.2026**

## Guaranteed arrival dates in 2027:

Group #1: 08.05 – 26.05.2027




Group #2: 29.05 – 16.06.2027

Group #3: 21.08 – 08.09.2027

Group #4: 18.09 – 06.10.2027

Group #5: 09.10 – 27.10.2027

## 2026-2027

Day	Tour itinerary
<b>Day 1</b> Sat	<p><b>Almaty, arrival</b></p> <p>We arrive in Almaty early in the morning and transfer to the hotel for rest after the flight. Later we begin a full-day discovery of Kazakhstan's largest city, set against the backdrop of the snowy Tien Shan mountains. Our first stop is the colorful Green Bazaar, followed by a stroll through Panfilov Park, home to the striking wooden Zenkov Cathedral and the moving Memorial of Glory and Eternal Flame.</p> <p>Next, we ride up to Kok-Tobe Hill, crowned by the city's TV tower, where sweeping views over Almaty open before us. We descend by the famous cableway and continue into the mountains. At Medeo, the world's highest skating rink, we pause before ascending by cable car to Shymbulak Ski Resort, reaching 3,200 meters for breathtaking alpine panoramas. Return to the hotel in the evening. Overnight in Almaty.</p> <p> breakfast</p>
<b>Day 2</b> Sun	<p><b>Almaty - Charyn Canyon - Kolsay Lakes</b> by road, 440 km</p> <p>After breakfast, we set out eastward toward one of Kazakhstan's most breathtaking natural wonders — <b>Charyn Canyon</b>. Often called the “little brother” of the Grand Canyon, this spectacular gorge stretches for more than 150 km. Within two hours, we reach the famous <b>Valley of Castles</b>, where centuries of wind and rain have sculpted the sandstone cliffs into shapes resembling ancient fortresses. We'll walk down into the canyon for about 40 minutes until we reach the Charyn River, surrounded by vivid red and orange walls — a perfect spot for photos and quiet admiration.</p> <p>Lunch will be served at a cozy <b>café near the canyon</b>, offering a chance to relax before we continue our journey to the <b>Kolsay Lakes</b> — a pristine mountain paradise nestled in the northern Tien Shan range. On arrival in the late afternoon, you'll be greeted by fresh mountain air and serene alpine scenery. Check into a welcoming guesthouse, enjoy a home-style dinner, and rest after a day filled with adventure and stunning landscapes.</p> <p> breakfast, lunch, dinner</p>
<b>Day 3</b> Mon	<p><b>Kolsay Lakes - Kaindy - "Kegen" land border - Karakol</b> by road, 250 km</p> <p>After breakfast, we check out and set off to <b>Kaindy Lake</b>, a mystical place formed after a powerful earthquake in 1911. A landslide created a natural dam, flooding a spruce forest whose ghostly trunks still rise from the turquoise water. This hauntingly beautiful “sunken forest” must be seen to be believed.</p> <p>We walk from the slope down to the lake for breathtaking views, or, alternatively, ride on horseback (optional, arranged by locals). On the way back, we stop at a village home for a hearty, homemade lunch. In the afternoon we continue to the Kegen border. After crossing into Kyrgyzstan and completing formalities, we drive to Karakol, a charming town at the foot of the Tien Shan mountains. Overnight at the hotel.</p> <p> breakfast, lunch</p>


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### Karakol & Jety-Oguz Gorge

This morning we discover Karakol's cultural gems. We start at the colorful Dungan Mosque, built entirely of wood without a single nail, then step into the wooden Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. Our final stop is the museum of Nikolay Przhevalsky, the Russian explorer who mapped much of Central Asia.

Day 4  
Tue

Later we drive into the mountains to the famous **Jety-Oguz Gorge** ("Seven Bulls"), where dramatic red cliffs rise above the lush spruce forests. Here we admire the striking rock formations known as the "Seven Bulls" and the "Broken Heart." The vivid contrast of red sandstone and dark green woods makes this one of the most beautiful places in Kyrgyzstan. Return to Karakol for hotel check-in and rest.

 breakfast

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### Karakol - Skazka canyon - Bokonbaevo village - Kochkor village by road, 250 km

After breakfast, we follow the southern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul toward the **Skazka ("Fairytale") Canyon**. Shaped by wind and water over millions of years, the red and yellow clay has been sculpted into towers, castles, and ridges—some resembling the Great Wall of China. A short walk here feels like stepping into another world.

Day 5  
Wed

Continuing to **Bokonbaevo village**, we meet local eagle hunters and watch a traditional **falconry demonstration**, an ancient practice that has been passed down for generations. Lunch will be arranged on the way.

In the evening, we reach **Kochkor**, a village famous for its felt handicrafts and warm welcomes. Dinner and overnight in Kochkor.

 breakfast, lunch, dinner

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### Kochkor - Bishkek by road, 200 km

This morning we immerse ourselves in Kyrgyz traditions with a **felt-making master class** in Kochkor. Skilled artisans demonstrate how colorful shyrdaks (felt carpets) are crafted, and we join in to learn about the symbolism behind their intricate designs.

Day 6  
Thu

Afterward, we return to Bishkek, arriving in the afternoon. The rest of the day is free: a perfect chance to explore the lively Osh Bazaar, where stalls overflow with fragrant spices, dried fruits, textiles, and handicrafts. It's the ideal place to experience the rhythm of local life and perhaps pick up some souvenirs. Overnight in Bishkek.

 breakfast

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### Bishkek - Tashkent by evening flight

After breakfast we set off on a **guided city tour** of Bishkek. We'll begin with the Monument to Manas, the legendary hero of Kyrgyz epics, then head to Ala-Too Square to watch the solemn Changing of the Guard. At the State Historical Museum we trace the story of Kyrgyzstan, while statues of Kurmanjan-Datka and Lenin remind us of the country's contrasting past. A walk through leafy Oak Park, dotted with sculptures and the Fine Arts Gallery, offers a pleasant pause.

Day 7  
Fri

In the afternoon, we transfer to the airport for our evening flight to Tashkent. Upon arrival, transfer to the hotel, check-in, and overnight.

 breakfast

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### Tashkent

Today we discover Uzbekistan's bustling capital, where old and new meet in surprising harmony. We'll visit the spiritual heart of the city – Khast-Imam Square, home to ancient madrasahs and mausoleums, and wander through the colorful Chorsu Bazaar, alive with the aromas of spices, fresh produce, and handicrafts. After lunch, we'll explore Independence Square and Amir Temur Square, wide spaces framed by impressive architecture. One highlight not to miss is the Tashkent Metro, famous for its ornate stations that feel like an underground art gallery. Overnight in Tashkent.

Day 8  
Sat



breakfast

Day 9  
Sun

**Tashkent - "Oybek" land border - Khujand** by road, 160 km

After breakfast we drive toward the **Uzbek-Tajik border** at Oybek, complete formalities, and continue to **Khujand**, one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. On arrival, we enjoy a city tour: strolling through bustling Panjshanbe Bazaar, visiting the historical Museum of Khujand, and seeing the city's fortress walls. The mix of ancient history and modern Tajik life makes Khujand an unforgettable introduction to the country. Overnight in Khujand.



breakfast

Day 10  
Mon

**Khujand - Istaravshan - Penjikent** by road, 260 km

After breakfast we leave Khujand and set out towards **Istaravshan**, a city with more than 2,500 years of history and once an important stop along the Great Silk Road. Here we explore its bustling bazaars and historic sites, including Kuk-Gumbaz Mosque and the colorful caravanserai-style markets, where traditional craftsmanship is still alive.

Continuing our journey, we drive through dramatic mountain landscapes to **Penjikent**, often called the "Pompeii of Central Asia" thanks to its fascinating ruins of ancient Sogdian settlements. On arrival we settle into the hotel, with time to rest before dinner. Overnight in Penjikent.



breakfast

Day 11  
Tue

**Penjikent - 7 Lakes - "Jartepa" land border - Samarkand** by road, 180 km

After breakfast we explore Penjikent's surroundings, beginning with the **Sarazm ruins**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site dating back more than 5,500 years — one of the earliest settlements in Central Asia. We then visit the **Rudaki Museum**, dedicated to the great Persian poet, and wander through the lively **local bazaar**, where everyday Tajik life unfolds in a swirl of colors and aromas.

Later, we journey into the **Fan Mountains** to discover the enchanting **Seven Lakes of Marguzor**. Each lake has its own character and color, ranging from deep sapphire to shimmering turquoise, shaped by light, altitude, and legend. Today we'll visit six of them, stopping for a traditional lunch at a local family home near the fourth lake. Short walks along the lakeshores will give us time to absorb the mountain serenity.

In the afternoon, we return to Penjikent and proceed to the **Jartepa border crossing**. After formalities, we cross into Uzbekistan and continue to **Samarkand**, the jewel of the Silk Road. Accommodation at the hotel and rest. Overnight in Samarkand.



breakfast, lunch

Day 12  
Wed

**Samarkand**

After breakfast we set off to discover the treasures of **Samarkand**, one of the most dazzling cities of the Silk Road. Our tour begins at the iconic **Registan Square**, framed by three grand madrasahs – Ulugbek, Sher-Dor, and Tilla-Qori – each a masterpiece of Islamic architecture. We continue to the **Gur-e Amir Mausoleum**, the resting place of Tamerlane and his dynasty, with its turquoise dome and richly decorated interiors.

After lunch, we visit the **Bibi-Khanym Mosque**, once one of the largest in the Islamic world, and wander through the **Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis**, where vibrant blue-tiled mausoleums line a narrow medieval street. The day ends at the **Ulugbek Observatory**, where the great astronomer charted the stars centuries ago. Return to the hotel for overnight.



breakfast

Day 13  
Thu

**Samarkand**

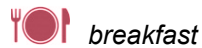
This morning we dive deeper into Samarkand's history and culture. We begin at the **Afrosiab Museum** and nearby archaeological site, which reveal the ancient roots of the city long before the Timurid era.

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Then we visit the **tomb of Saint Daniel**, a unique pilgrimage site venerated by Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike.

Later, we explore the **Khujum carpet factory** and a **silk paper workshop**, where age-old crafts are preserved and practiced with pride. Finally, we stroll through the bustling **Siab Bazaar**, a lively market brimming with spices, dried fruits, nuts, and handicrafts – the perfect place to experience the flavors and energy of modern Samarkand.

Return to the hotel in the afternoon. Evening at leisure. Overnight in Samarkand.



Day 14  
Fri

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### Samarkand - Bukhara by morning train

After breakfast we transfer to the railway station and take a morning train across the steppe to **Bukhara** (09:55–11:38). On arrival, we begin our exploration of the Old Town - one of the most atmospheric and best-preserved medieval cities in Central Asia. Our walk starts at **Lyabi-Hauz Square**, a lively plaza shaded by old mulberry trees and surrounded by beautiful madrasas and cozy teahouses. Here we see the **Nadir Divan-Begi Madrasa** and **Kukeldash Madrasa**, two fine examples of Islamic architecture. We continue through the **ancient trading domes (Toqi)** - **Toki Zargaron**, **Toki Telpak Furushon**, and **Toki Sarrafon** — where merchants once sold jewelry, silk, and coins. Today these domes are filled with local crafts, carpets, and souvenirs. We end the day with a leisurely stroll through the narrow lanes of the Old Town, soaking up the peaceful atmosphere of Bukhara at sunset. Overnight in Bukhara.



Day 15  
Sat

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### Bukhara

After breakfast, we continue discovering the treasures of Bukhara. We visit the **Ismail Samani Mausoleum**, a true masterpiece of early Islamic architecture, and the **Chashma Ayub Mausoleum**, connected to the legend of the Prophet Job. Then we explore the **local bazaar**, full of life, colors, and aromas. Next, we head to the **Bolo-Hauz Mosque**, famous for its elegant wooden pillars reflected in the pool, before entering the mighty **Ark Citadel**, the former residence of Bukhara's emirs, with its old Zindan prison. We finish our sightseeing at the majestic **Po-i-Kalyan Complex**, the spiritual heart of Bukhara, with its impressive minaret, madrasa, and mosque - a perfect finale to our journey through this timeless city.

In the evening, we are welcomed into a **traditional local home** for an authentic cultural experience. Here we'll take part in a **master class on cooking plov**, Uzbekistan's most famous dish, learning its secrets step by step. Afterward, we'll share a delicious dinner with the family, enjoying warm hospitality and stories of local life. Overnight at the hotel.



Day 16  
Sun




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### Bukhara - "Farab" land border - Merv - Mary by road, 385 km

Today we say farewell to Uzbekistan and cross the **Farab land border** into Turkmenistan. After completing border formalities, we continue to the ancient city of **Merv** (UNESCO World Heritage site), once one of the largest and most splendid cities on the Silk Road. We explore its sprawling historical park: the monumental **Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum**, the crumbling mudbrick citadels of **Erk Gala** and **Gyaur Gala**, the mysterious **Keshk fortresses**, and the **Muhammed ibn Zaid Mausoleum**. Each ruin tells a story of empires risen and fallen.

In the late afternoon we drive on to **Mary**, a modern city built near the ruins. Overnight at the hotel.



<p><b>Day 17</b> <b>Mon</b></p>	<p><b>Mary - Ashgabat</b> by road, 365 km</p> <p>After breakfast we take a short tour of Mary, visiting its lively <b>Central Bazaar</b>, the <b>Russian Orthodox Church</b>, and the elegant <b>Gurbanguly Haji Mosque</b>. Then we set off westward toward Ashgabat. Along the way we stop at the atmospheric <b>ruins of the Anau Mosque</b> and visit the renowned <b>Ahalteke horse stables</b>, home to the legendary Akhal-Teke breed, prized for their speed and beauty. By evening we arrive in Ashgabat, check into the hotel, and enjoy some free time to relax or explore the city at your own pace. Overnight in Ashgabat.</p> <p> <i>breakfast</i></p>
<p><b>Day 18</b> <b>Tue</b></p>	<p><b>Ashgabat</b></p> <p>Today we discover the fascinating capital of Turkmenistan, a city of marble avenues, grand monuments, and hidden history. Highlights include the striking <b>Ertogrul Ghazi Mosque</b>, <b>Independence Park</b>, the <b>Rukhnama Monument</b>, and the gleaming <b>Neutrality Arch</b>. We'll also admire the statue of national poet <b>Magtymguly</b>, before venturing out to <b>Old Nisa</b>, a UNESCO World Heritage site that was once the seat of the mighty Parthian Empire. To conclude, we visit the impressive <b>Turkmenbashi Mosque-Mausoleum</b>, the largest mosque in Central Asia. Return to the hotel for an overnight stay in Ashgabat.</p> <p> <i>breakfast</i></p>
<p><b>Day 19</b> <b>Wed</b></p>	<p><b>Ashgabat, departure</b></p> <p>Breakfast at the hotel and check-out before 12:00. Transfer to the international airport for your onward flight — carrying with you warm memories and vivid impressions of your unforgettable journey through Central Asia.</p> <p> <i>breakfast</i></p>

**Cost of the tour is 3900 USD upon twin sharing basis**  
*Supplement for single accommodation is 645 USD*

***A tailor-made version of this trip is available on request***

**Tour price includes:**

- ✓ Accommodation at the hotels listed below, or at similar properties of the same category, in double/twin rooms with breakfast. Early check-in on Day 1 in Almaty is included; check-in at other hotels is at 14:00, check-out at 12:00.
- ✓ Accommodation at the guest house in Kolsay (twin accommodation).
- ✓ Meals – daily breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 3 dinners (incl. a cooking class in Bukhara) as per the program.
- ✓ Entrance fees to the monuments and museums mentioned in the itinerary.
- ✓ Falconry demonstration and felt-making master class in Kyrgyzstan.
- ✓ Services of English-speaking local guides for sightseeing.
- ✓ Comfortable air-conditioned transportation throughout the tour, including all airport–hotel–airport transfers.
- ✓ Railway transfer from Samarkand to Bukhara (economy class).
- ✓ Flight ticket Bishkek – Tashkent (economy class).
- ✓ Visa invitation letter for Turkmenistan.

**\* Tickets for high-speed trains are subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed in advance.**

**Tour price does not include:**

- International flight tickets.
- Pre-tour accommodation: USD 110 per night (single room) / USD 130 per night (double room).
- Post-tour accommodation: USD 148 per night (single room) / USD 190 per night (double room).
- Meals not mentioned above.

- Medical expenses and travel insurance.
- Portage at hotels, railway stations, and airports.
- Tips for guides and drivers.
- Visa fees (*Turkmenistan visa: approx. 100–120 USD per person*).
- Other personal expenses (*e.g. tourist fee in Turkmenistan hotels — 2 USD per person per night*).

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### Accommodation

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City	Hotels 3*
Almaty	<b>Grand Sapphire 3* or similar</b>
Kolsay Lakes	<b>Alban / Taushelek guesthouse</b>
Karakol	<b>Green Yard 3* or similar</b>
Kochkor	<b>Nomad Lodge Hotel / Bagysh Hotel</b>
Bishkek	<b>Bishkek Boutique 3* or similar</b>
Tashkent	<b>Human 3* or similar</b>
Khujand	<b>Khujand Deluxe Hotel 4* or similar</b>
Penjikent	<b>Panjakent Plaza Hotel or similar</b>
Samarkand	<b>Arba 3* or similar</b>
Bukhara	<b>Rangrez 3* or similar</b>
Mary	<b>Mary Hotel 4* or similar</b>
Ashgabat	<b>Sport Hotel 4* or similar</b>

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### Transportation (by group size)

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Group size	Vehicle
1-2 travelers	<b>Chevrolet Lacetti or similar</b>
4 travelers	<b>Hyundai Starex minivan for 6 seats</b>
6-8 travelers	<b>King Long minivan for 10 seats or similar</b>
9-14 travelers	<b>Eurise minivan for 18 seats or similar</b>

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*We may occasionally adjust the order of visits and activities (museums and sites) if required due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances. Any changes will be made with your comfort and overall experience in mind.*