

## Journey through Central Asia: The Three 'Stans (14 days)

### Private Train Journey from Ashgabat-Mary/Merv-Bukhara-Khiva-Samarqand-Shakhrisabz-Tashkent-Turkestan-Astana

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.

### Inclusions

- 5 overnights in upper middle- or first-class hotels
- 8 overnights on the Private Train according to the booked category
- All meals according to program (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner)
- Sightseeing program including all entrance fees
- Guided transfers to and from all airports and train stations according to program
- Dining car onboard which turns into a bar after dinner
- Lunch/dinner with an Uzbek and a Turkmen family as well as in a Madrasah with folklore
- Wine and Vodka tasting
- Doctor on board

### Not included

- Flights
- Tips
- Beverages
- Visas - Visas must be obtained to travel Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (additional costs will apply)  
Rail Plus offer visa support only they do not issue visas.

## Cabins

### Habibi

Each car has nine compartments fitting up to four guests, providing sleeping space in 2 upper and 2 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.

### Ali Baba

Each car has nine compartments providing sleeping space for 2 guests in 2 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.

### Aladin

Each car has eight compartments for 2 guests with 2 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. Additionally, a shower is located at one end of each car and you will receive a bathing robe and shower utilities.

### Kalif

The 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 cosy 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.

## Departures 2012

### Journey Through Central Asia: The three 'Stans

#### Ashgabat to Astana

- 17 Apr - 30 Apr
- 16 Oct - 29 Oct

### Journey Through Central Asia: The three 'Stans (14 days, 2 nights in Ashgabat)

- Day 1**                      **Welcome to 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. (BLD)
- Day 3**                      **Former Royal City of Nisa and today's Capital Ashgabat**  
In the morning you'll visit the colourful Tolkuchka Bazaar, 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. 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. (BLD)
- Day 4**                      **Merv, the Ancient Pearl of the East**  
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. (BLD)
- Day 5**                      **Bukhara--The City with the Desert Lighthouse**  
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. (BLD)

## Day 6

### **Bukhara, the Noble**

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, we guide you 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. (BLD)

## Day 7

### **A Fairy Tale of 1001 Nights**

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. (BLD)

## Day 8

### **Samarqand--Intersection of Cultures**

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. (BLD)

## Day 9

### **Samarqand, the Magnificent**

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. (BLD)

## 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. (BLD)

## Day 11

### **Tashkent, the Green Oasis**

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. (BLD)

## Day 12

### **Nomad's Pilgrimage Center: 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. (BLD)

## Day 13

### **Astana, Art object of the Steppe**

You will reach Astana in the early afternoon and check into your room at a First-Class hotel. In the afternoon you will take a city tour of the modern metropolis and experience architectural masterpieces of our time, among others, the famous pyramid of the British star architect Norman Foster and the government buildings with their impressive glass fronts. At the banks of the Jesil you will be surprised by the view of Astana's sky line. Depending on your flight arrangement you will be either taken to the airport in the evening or the next morning. (BLD)

## Day 14

**Astana** - An epic journey comes to an end!

## Are visas required?

Yes visas are required Rail plus does not issue visas but will provide invitation letters along with visa guidelines.

## Is there air-conditioning on board the train?

All cars are air-conditioned whilst the train runs.

## Is there a dining car on board?

There is a dining car on board along with a bar car.

## Is there a doctor on board?

Yes there is a doctor on board the train.

## Can you smoke on board?

There are areas designated to smoking only.

## Are there luggage restrictions?

We recommend rather smaller travel bags that are more flexible than a large hard shell suitcase - there is space under the lower bunk for the travel bags

## Conditions

- A 20% non refundable security deposit is required 5 days from advise of availability, with the full balance payable 92 days prior to departure date
- Prices indicated are one way per person

## Refunds

CANCELLATION POLICY: the following rules apply to all bookings:

- Up to 92 days prior to departure: Loss of deposit
- From 91 days to 42 days prior to departure: 50% of total price
- From 41 days to 15 days prior to departure: 85% of total price
- From 14 days prior to departure: 100% of total price

