Itinerary

19 Day Five Stans Of The Silk Road Tour – 2026

***IMPORTANT NOTE: Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.**

Day 1: Arrive Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan - Sightseeing Tour

You will arrive in Bishkek early in the morning and transfer to your hotel. As the largest city in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek is the country's modern cultural, political, and economic centre. Despite being a capital city, it has a calm and relaxed atmosphere, with wide streets, elegant buildings, and a unique, steady rhythm of life. One of the first things you'll notice is how green the city is, with tree-lined streets and numerous parks creating a fresh and clean environment. It is said that Bishkek has more trees per resident than any other city in Central Asia.

Today, you will enjoy a walking tour of Bishkek's highlights, starting at Ala-Too Square, where you can witness the ceremony of the changing of the Guard of Honour. As you explore, you'll visit the Manas Monument, dedicated to the legendary hero of the Kyrgyz people, and the Independence Monument, symbolising the country's sovereignty. You'll also pass by the main government buildings before reaching the Old Square, home to the Parliament House and one of the last remaining Lenin Monuments in Central Asia.

Next, you will visit the Museum of Applied Arts, where you can admire traditional Kyrgyz craftsmanship, before continuing to Victory Square, where your city tour concludes with a short excursion.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Nil

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Garden

Day 2: Bishkek ~ Bokonbaev

This morning, you will leave Bishkek and begin your journey towards Bokonbaev, covering 300 km along the way.

Your first stop is the Burana Tower, an ancient archaeological and architectural site that is protected as a monument of cultural heritage. Built in the 10th and 11th centuries, the tower was originally 40 to 45 metres high, though time and natural forces have reduced its height. The tower was carefully restored using excavated materials from the 19th century, allowing visitors to appreciate its original design and historical significance.

Continuing your journey, you will travel along the southern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake, one of the largest mountain lakes in the world. Nestled in the Northern Tien Shan at an altitude of 1,608 metres, Issyk-Kul is

often called the “Pearl of Kyrgyzstan” due to its breathtaking scenery, clean air, and unique mountain-sea climate. The lake’s mineral-rich waters and numerous hot springs have made it a popular retreat for centuries, offering both natural beauty and therapeutic benefits.

Tonight, you will experience traditional Kyrgyz hospitality with an overnight stay at a yurt camp, giving you a chance to immerse yourself in the region’s nomadic culture.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 300 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Traditional Yurt Camp

Day 3: Bokonbaev ~ Karakol

Today, you will continue your journey along the southern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake, heading towards Karakol. Along the way, you will stop at Barskoon Gorge, one of the most stunning gorges on the southern coast of Issyk-Kul. Here, you will take a light hike to the Tears of the Leopard waterfall, surrounded by dense spruce forests and dramatic mountain scenery. This gorge is also home to Kumtor, the largest gold mine in Kyrgyzstan.

Later in the afternoon, you will make a short stop at Jeti-Oguz Gorge, famous for its striking red rock formations known as the Seven Bulls and the Broken Heart Rock, both of which hold deep cultural significance in local folklore.

Upon arrival in Karakol, you will take a brief city tour, exploring some of the town’s historical and cultural landmarks before checking into your hotel. In the evening, you will take part in a Laghman cooking masterclass, where you will learn to prepare one of Central Asia’s most famous noodle dishes, known for its rich flavours and hand-pulled noodles.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 170 km

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Green Yard

Day 4: Karakol ~ Almaty, Kazakhstan

Today, you will cross into Kazakhstan, the next country on your journey. After completing border formalities, you will continue your drive towards one of Kazakhstan’s most spectacular natural wonders—Charyn Canyon.

At Charyn Canyon, you will explore the famous Valley of the Castles, named for its towering rock formations that resemble ancient fortresses. Often compared to the Grand Canyon in the United States, Charyn Canyon may be smaller in size but is equally breathtaking, with its dramatic landscapes shaped over millions of years by wind and water.

Here, you can choose to take a scenic hike down to the valley floor and experience the canyon from below or enjoy panoramic views from the canyon rim above.

After exploring the canyon, you will continue your journey to Almaty, where you will check into your hotel for the night.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 430 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Kazzhol

Day 5: Almaty - Sightseeing Tour

Today, you will explore Almaty, a vibrant and picturesque city known for its wide streets, lush green parks, and stunning mountain backdrop. Nestled at the foot of the Tien Shan mountains, Almaty is often called the “garden city” due to its beautiful tree-lined avenues, fountains, and numerous gardens. In spring, the city transforms into a fairy tale landscape, with apple, apricot, and cherry blossoms in full bloom.

Your city tour begins with a walk through Panfilov Park, a peaceful green space in the heart of Almaty. At the centre of the park, you will visit Zenkov Cathedral, one of the world’s most unique wooden buildings. Built entirely without nails, this stunning cathedral is known for its intricate wall paintings and richly decorated interior.

Next, you will visit the Museum of History, home to an extensive collection of artifacts that showcase Kazakhstan’s historical and cultural significance. The exhibits highlight the country’s deep-rooted traditions and its role in shaping Central Asian history.

To end the day, you will take a cable car ride to Kok Tobe Mountain, one of the most scenic spots in Almaty. At the summit, you can enjoy breathtaking panoramic views of the city, both during the day and at night. The Kok Tobe observation deck offers the perfect vantage point to admire Almaty’s skyline and the surrounding mountains.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Kazzhol

Day 6: Almaty ~ Tashkent, Uzbekistan

This morning, you will transfer to the airport for your flight to Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. As one of the largest cities in Central Asia, Tashkent blends modern skyscrapers with historical landmarks, where ancient mosques stand alongside contemporary shopping centres and traditional bazaars. The city’s architecture has been shaped by history, as many old buildings were restored following a powerful earthquake in 1966, giving Tashkent a unique mix of old and new.

Upon arrival, you will begin your city tour with a visit to Kukeldash Madrasah, an important religious school that continues to function as a Koranic institution today. You will then explore Khast Imam Square, home to some of Tashkent’s most beautiful Islamic sites, including the Barak Khan Madrasah, the Tillya Sheikh Mosque, and the Kaffal Shashi Mausoleum, an elegant structure built from simple brickwork. Here, you will also have the rare opportunity to see one of the oldest known copies of the Koran, written by the third Caliph Osman (644–656).

Next, you will visit the Museum of Applied Arts, where you can admire Uzbekistan's rich artistic heritage, featuring traditional ceramics, textiles, and wood carvings. To complete your tour, you will experience a ride on Tashkent's metro, known for its beautifully decorated stations, each with its own unique design.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Al-Anvar Hotel

Day 7: Tashkent ~ Khujand, Tajikistan

Today, you will travel to Khujand, the most ancient city in Tajikistan, with a history dating back over 2,500 years. According to historical records, the city was founded during the time of Alexander the Great, making it one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Central Asia. Despite its rich history, Khujand is now a vibrant and welcoming city, known for its beautiful parks, lively squares, and friendly locals.

The Syr Darya River, which flows through the heart of the city, is a popular spot for relaxation, offering peaceful views and opportunities for swimming. One of the highlights of your visit will be Panjshanbe Bazaar, one of the largest and most famous covered markets in Central Asia. Here, you can experience the bustling atmosphere of a traditional Tajik market, filled with colourful stalls selling fresh produce, spices, textiles, and local handicrafts.

Adjacent to the bazaar, you will visit the Sheikh Muslihiddin Mosque-Mausoleum, a magnificent architectural monument from the early Middle Ages. This historic site, which was used up until the early 20th century, showcases the region's unique blend of Islamic and Central Asian architectural styles.

After a day of exploration, you will check into your hotel and enjoy a relaxing evening in Khujand.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 165 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Firuz

Day 8: Khujand ~ Dushanbe

Today, you will depart early at 8:00 am for a scenic drive to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. Along the way, you will stop in Istaravshan, a city known for its well-preserved old town. Here, you will explore a maze of narrow alleys, winding through traditional Central Asian neighbourhoods with mud-walled homes shaded by trees. Walking through this historic area offers a glimpse into centuries-old traditions and daily life in Tajikistan.

As you continue your journey, you will pass through the breathtaking Fan Mountain range, offering majestic views of towering peaks, deep valleys, and winding mountain roads. This drive is considered one of the most beautiful in the region, with stunning landscapes and ever-changing scenery.

Upon arrival in Dushanbe, you will check into your hotel and have the evening to relax and explore the city at your own pace.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 340 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Atlas

Day 9: Dushanbe - Sightseeing Tour

Today, you will explore Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, visiting some of its most iconic landmarks.

Your day begins with a visit to the Monument of Ismoili Somoni, located in the city's main square. This 40-metre-high monument honours Ismoili Somoni, the founder of the Samanid dynasty in the 10th century, and is one of the most important symbols of Tajik national identity. The base of the monument features a granite-paved exhibition on the Samanid dynasty, while the upper part of the statue is coated in gold, making it a striking landmark.

Next, you will visit the Tajik flagpole, once the tallest flagpole in the world, standing at 165 metres. It was recognised by the Guinness World Records in August 2011 in celebration of Tajikistan's 20th anniversary of independence.

Your tour continues at the Museum of National Antiquities, where you will see a fascinating collection of artifacts and exhibits showcasing Tajikistan's rich history. One of the most famous displays is the massive reclining Buddha, a highlight of the museum. As you explore, you will gain insight into the evolution of the people who have lived in Tajikistan over thousands of years.

Later, you will visit Kohi Navruz, a magnificent cultural and architectural complex, before heading to meet Djamshed Juraev, a master of mosaic art. This visit offers a unique opportunity to learn about the traditional craftsmanship that continues to shape Tajik culture today.

After a full day of sightseeing, you will return to your hotel to relax.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Atlas

Day 10: Dushanbe ~ Penjikent ~ Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Today, you will travel to Penjikent, a city renowned for its historical sites, architectural monuments, and scenic location along the Zaravshan River. Penjikent is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia, with a history dating back 5,500 years. Its name translates to "Five Villages" in Russian, reflecting its ancient origins.

Upon arrival, you will visit the excavation site of Old Penjikent, often referred to as the "Pompeii of Central Asia. "Dating back to the 5th century, this site once housed grand palaces, temples, and necropolises, providing a fascinating glimpse into the city's past.

Next, you will visit the Rudaki Museum, dedicated to Abu Abdallah Rudaki, the celebrated founder of Persian classical literature. Here, you can explore artifacts that highlight the rich cultural and artistic heritage of the region. You will also take a walk through the old town of Penjikent, where centuries-old traditions and architecture can still be seen.

After exploring Penjikent, you will continue your journey to Samarkand, one of Uzbekistan's most famous and historic cities.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 300 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Grand Samarkand

Day 11: Samarkand - Sightseeing Tour

Today, you will explore Samarkand, one of the oldest cities in the world, founded over 2,800 years ago. Once a major hub on the Great Silk Road, Samarkand played a crucial role in connecting the East and West, leaving behind a rich legacy of mausoleums, mosques, museums, and ancient ruins.

Your city tour begins at Registan Square, the heart of Samarkand for centuries. This grand square is surrounded by three magnificent madrasahs (Islamic schools), each showcasing stunning Islamic architecture:

- **Ulug-Bek Madrasah (15th century)** – Built by the famous astronomer and ruler Ulug-Bek, known for its intricate tilework and geometric designs.
- **Tilya-Kori Madrasah (17th century)** – Featuring a breathtaking gold-covered interior, this madrasah also served as a mosque.
- **Sher-Dor Madrasah (17th century)** – Recognisable for its iconic mosaic of tigers, a rare depiction in Islamic art.

You will also visit Gur-e-Amir, the mausoleum of Tamerlane (Amir Timur), the legendary conqueror who shaped much of Central Asia. This beautifully decorated tomb is an architectural masterpiece, with its turquoise dome and intricate carvings.

In the evening, you will enjoy a traditional dinner in a local home, experiencing the warmth of Uzbek hospitality and authentic cuisine.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Grand Samarkand

Day 12: Samarkand ~ Bukhara

Today, you will travel to Bukhara, one of the greatest trading centres of the Silk Road. With a history spanning thousands of years, Bukhara has been a hub of trade, scholarship, culture, and religion for over 2,500 years. The city's strategic location along the Silk Road made it a meeting point for merchants, scholars, and travellers from across Asia, leaving behind a rich architectural and cultural heritage.

Upon arrival, you will embark on a city tour, exploring some of Bukhara's most famous landmarks:

- **Poi Kalon Complex** – A stunning architectural ensemble featuring:
    - **Kalon Minaret** – An iconic 12th-century tower, once the tallest structure in Central Asia, used as both a watchtower and a call to prayer.
    - **Kalon Mosque** – A vast and beautifully designed mosque that has served as a centre of worship for centuries.
    - **Mir-Arab Madrasah** – An Islamic school still in use today, known for its ornate blue domes and intricate tilework.

- **Toki Zargaron Trade Domes** – Historic covered bazaars where Silk Road merchants once traded jewellery, spices, and fabrics.

- **Magok-i-Attori Mosque** – One of Bukhara's oldest mosques, built on the site of a pre-Islamic Zoroastrian temple, showcasing the city's layered history.

After a day of exploring, you will check into your hotel and have the evening to relax or continue discovering Bukhara at your own pace.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 370 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Asia Bukhara

Day 13: Bukhara - Sightseeing Tour

This morning, you will start your day by exploring a traditional oriental bazaar, filled with vibrant colours, rich aromas, and authentic local goods. This is the perfect place to experience the lively atmosphere of Bukhara, where merchants sell everything from handwoven textiles and spices to handcrafted ceramics and jewellery.

Next, you will continue your walking tour, visiting some of Bukhara's most beautiful architectural landmarks:

- **Ark Citadel** – The oldest structure in Bukhara, once serving as the royal fortress and residence of the Emirsfor centuries.

- **Mausoleum of the Samanids**– A masterpiece of early Islamic architecture, dating back to the 9th century, built as the final resting place of the Samanid dynasty rulers.

- **Chor Minor Madrasah** – A unique four-towered madrasa, unlike any other in Uzbekistan, featuring intricate, blue-tiled domes.

- **Lyabi Khauz Square** – One of Bukhara's main public squares, home to a beautiful architectural ensemble that includes a mosque, a madrasah, and a statue of Khoja Nasreddin, a beloved character in Central Asian folklore. The square is centred around a peaceful pond with a fountain, making it a popular spot for local gatherings, festivals, and celebrations.

Your tour continues with visits to:

- **Chashma-Ayub Mausoleum** – Also known as the "Spring of Job," a religious site believed to be blessed with holy water.

- **Bolo Haouz Mosque** – Famous for its elegant wooden pillars and beautifully decorated ceiling, this mosque was once the official place of worship for the Emir of Bukhara.

In the evening, you will attend a folklore show at Nadir Divan Begi Madrasah, where you will enjoy traditional Uzbek music, dance, and cultural performances in a historic setting.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Asia Bukhara

Day 14: Bukhara ~ Khiva

Today, you will travel to Khiva, following the historic route through the Kizilkum Desert, known as the "Red Sands." This vast desert landscape has witnessed the passage of invaders, nomadic hordes, and legendary armies, including those of the Persians, Alexander the Great, and Genghis Khan.

Khiva, once part of the ancient Khorezm empire, was an important city along the Great Silk Road. Today, it is often described as a living open-air museum, with its historic old town, Ichan-Kala, earning UNESCO World Heritage status. This beautifully preserved area is home to around 60 historical monuments, including citadels, palaces, mosques, minarets, and mausoleums.

The origins of Old Khiva date back to the 5th century, when it served as a major stop for traders and travellers along the Silk Road. The walled city of Ichan-Kala spans an area of 30 hectares, enclosed by massive 6-8-metre-high walls, which were once surrounded by defensive water-filled ditches. The fortress walls also feature four grand entrance gates, reinforced with watchtowers and observation galleries to protect the city from invaders.

After arriving in Khiva, you will check into your hotel and have time to relax before continuing your exploration of this ancient and magical city.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 450 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Asia Khiva

Day 15: Khiva - Sightseeing Tour

Today, you will embark on a sightseeing tour of Khiva, a city that feels like a step back in time. The old town of Khiva, known as Ichan-Kala, is a UNESCO-listed heritage site and is one of the best-preserved historical cities along the Silk Road.

Your exploration begins at the Kunya Ark Fortress, the former residence of Khivan rulers, which includes palaces, a mosque, and watchtowers offering panoramic views of the city. You will then visit the Mohammed Amin Khan Madrasah, once the largest Islamic school in Central Asia, followed by the Islam Khodja Minaret, a beautifully decorated tower with intricate blue tiles, making it one of the most iconic landmarks in Khiva.

Continuing through the old town, you will explore the Palvan Kari Complex and Rafanek Madrasah, both showcasing stunning Islamic architecture and historical significance.

In the afternoon, your tour continues with visits to:

- **Uch-Avliyo Mausoleum** – A sacred burial site known for its spiritual significance.
- **Juma Mosque** – Famous for its unique wooden pillars, creating a serene and atmospheric interior.
- **Tash-Hauli Palace** – A former royal palace with beautifully decorated courtyards, intricate tilework, and stunning ceiling designs.
- **Arab Mohammed Khan Madrasah** – Another historically significant Islamic school, reflecting Khiva's rich cultural and religious heritage.

After a full day of discovering Khiva's fascinating past, you will return to your hotel to relax and soak in the historic charm of this ancient city.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Asia Khiva

Day 16: Khiva ~ Darwaza, Turkmenistan

This morning, you will enter the final "Stan" of your journey—Turkmenistan. After completing border formalities between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, your adventure continues towards Konya-Urgench, the former capital of the powerful Khorezm Empire. This ancient city was once a thriving centre of culture and trade until it was devastated by the Mongol invasion.

Today, Konya-Urgench remains one of Turkmenistan's most significant archaeological sites and has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2005. The city, abandoned 350 years ago, has remained largely untouched, offering an authentic glimpse into its past. As you explore the ruins, you will discover mosques, fortress gates, caravanserais, mausoleums, and towering minarets, many of which influenced the architectural styles of Iran, Afghanistan, and even the Mughal Empire in India.

During your visit, you will see some of Konya-Urgench's most remarkable landmarks, including:

- **Kutlug Temir Minaret** – One of the tallest minarets in Central Asia, dating back to the 12th century.
- **Tubarek Khanum Mausoleum** – A stunning example of Islamic architecture.
- **>Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum** – The resting place of a powerful Khorezm ruler.
- **Fahriddin Mausoleum** – A historical burial site with intricate brickwork.
- **Burial Mosque of the 12th century** – An important religious site from medieval Turkmenistan.

After exploring Konya-Urgench, you will continue your journey to Darwaza, home to one of the world's most unique and surreal natural wonders—the Darwaza Gas Crater, famously known as the "Gateway to Hell".

Located in the middle of the Karakum Desert, this massive burning crater was accidentally created in 1971, when geologists discovered a natural gas pocket. To prevent the release of toxic methane, they decided to ignite the gas, expecting it to burn out within days. Instead, it has continued burning for over 50 years, creating an eerie yet breathtaking sight.

Upon arrival at Darwaza, you will experience the fiery glow of the crater, which becomes even more spectacular at sunset. The surrounding desert landscape, flickering flames, and sulfuric scent make this an unforgettable experience. Tonight, you will enjoy a BBQ dinner under the stars, embracing the mystical atmosphere of the Karakum Desert.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 380 km

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT: Traditional Yurt Camp

Day 17: Darwaza ~ Ashgabat

After breakfast at the yurt camp, you will begin your drive to Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. You will arrive around midday and head straight to a local restaurant for lunch, where you can enjoy traditional Turkmen cuisine.

After lunch, you will transfer to your hotel for check-in and have some time to rest and refresh before heading out for an introductory city tour of Ashgabat.

In the afternoon, you will explore some of the city's key landmarks, including:

- **City Centre** – Discover the modern architecture and grand monuments that define Ashgabat's unique skyline.

- **Russian Bazaar** – One of the city's oldest and most vibrant markets, offering a variety of local crafts, spices, and traditional goods.

- **Ertogrul Gazi Mosque**– A magnificent Turkish-style mosque, known for its white marble façade and intricate interior designs.

- **Independence Park** – A vast green space featuring impressive monuments and statues celebrating Turkmenistan's independence.

- **Neutrality Arch** – One of Ashgabat's most famous landmarks, a 75-metre-high monument topped with a golden statue of the first president.

- **Wedding Palace Viewpoint** – Offering panoramic views of Ashgabat, this spot provides a perfect opportunity to admire the city from above.

After your city tour, you will return to your hotel for a relaxing evening.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: 250 km

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Sport

Day 18: Ashgabat - Sightseeing Tour

Today, you will embark on a full-day city tour of Ashgabat, a city that holds a Guinness World Record for being the most white-marble city in the world—even its telephone booths and bus stops are lined with white marble. Ashgabat is also home to the fourth-largest natural gas reserves in the world and is often referred to as "the most closed city in the world" due to its strict regulations and unique culture.

Your first stop is the Akhal-Teke Horse Farm, where you will see the legendary Akhal-Teke horses, a purebred breed that has been around for over 5,000 years. These horses were originally bred by ancient civilizations in Turkmenistan and are known for their sleek, shiny coats and incredible endurance, making them perfectly suited for hot desert climates. Over the centuries, Akhal-Teke horses have influenced the development of many other horse breeds worldwide.

Next, you will visit Nisa, one of Turkmenistan's most significant historical monuments. This ancient site, dating back to the Parthian Empire, is located near Ashgabat, at the foot of the Kopet Dag Mountains. Once a thriving royal residence and fortress, Nisa is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offering a fascinating glimpse into the region's past.

Your final stop is the Museum of History, where you will explore Turkmenistan's rich cultural heritage, including archaeological finds, ancient artifacts, and exhibits on the country's Silk Road history.

After a day of history, culture, and exploration, you will return to your hotel for the evening.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING DISTANCE: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Sport

Day 19: Depart Ashgabat

Today marks the end of your incredible journey through Central Asia. At the scheduled time, you will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight.

As your adventure comes to a close, take a moment to reflect on the rich history, stunning landscapes, and unique cultures you have experienced along the way. We hope you leave with unforgettable memories and a deeper appreciation of this fascinating region.

Safe travels, and we hope to welcome you on another journey in the future!

MEALS: Breakfast