PALACE TOURS

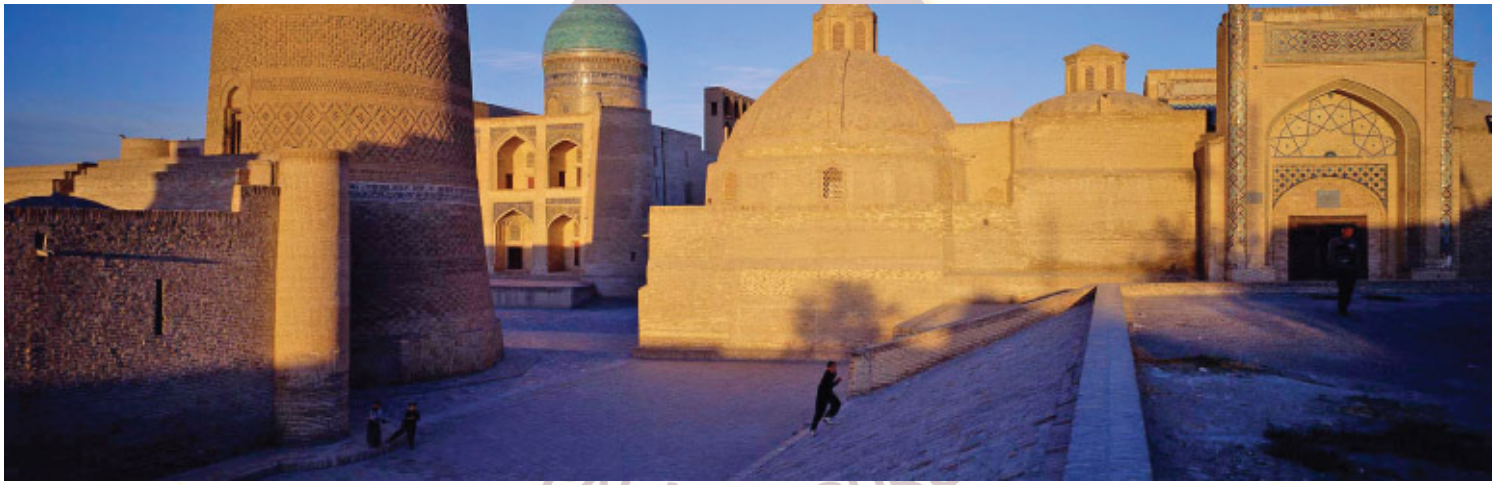
Golden Eagle Luxury Train: Single-Departure Journeys

Caspian Odyssey / 15 nights

Yerevan-Almaty

Tour Dates
2016: October 14-October 29
2017: October 17-November 1

Price
Starting from $21,495



Explore the region of the Caspian Sea while indulging in luxury on board the Golden Eagle Luxury Train. This journey takes you through Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. You will find the influence of many cultures along the way, and the visions and crumbling ruins of ancient cities. Discover oasis cities sitting proudly in the desert, view stunning architecture, and witness prehistoric traditions and cave paintings. This journey takes you to cities like Yerevan, Baku, and Samarkand. Luxury and indulgence frame your journey in an unforgettable whirlwind of adventure.

Price Details

Prices in US Dollars

Silver Class (Twin)	Silver Class (Single)	Gold Class (Twin)	Gold Class (Single)	Imperial Class (Twin)	Imperial Class (Single)
$21,495	$31,295	$27,195	$39,495	$43,795	On Request

Itinerary

Day 1: Yerevan

Arriving at Yerevan International Airport, a representative will meet you and you will transfer to the centrally-located Armenia Marriott Hotel (or similar). Here you stay for one night. Tonight, enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel and meet your fellow travelers. As you look forward to the journey across six countries of the South Caucasus region and Central Asia, you can discuss the upcoming trip and make friends. You also have the option to extend your stay in Yerevan for additional nights before your Golden Eagle tour commences.

Day 2: Yerevan

Dominated by the snow covered Mount Ararat in nearby Turkey, the Yerevan skyline will keep you enthralled as you start your tour in the city. First you will discover Yerevan's rich history and has been occupied since about 6,000 BC. Then you will proceed to the fortress of Erebuni which was erected in the 8th century BC. You will discover how the city was seized by a succession of conquerors, and on several occasions passed back and forth between the Turks and the Persians. This lasted until 1827, when it was taken by Russia. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, it was pronounced as the capital of the new nation of Armenia.

Today you can also take a 23 mile (37 km) journey out of Yerevan to the ancient Geghard Monastery. Here you will visit a number of churches and tombs, many of them cut into the rock. As you explore this complex of medieval architecture, you will find that it is set into a landscape of great natural beauty and surrounded by towering cliffs at the head of the Azat Valley. Then visit the 1st Century pagan temple of Garni, which was built to worship the Sun God Mitra. The remains of an ancient fortress, palace, and baths will provide you with a glimpse of life in the era. Back in Yerevan city you will head over to visit the Cascade giant stairway and from here, head to the Casfejian Museum of Modern Art.

As the evening draws to an end, board the Golden Eagle train to start your rail adventure.

Day 3: Lake Sevan & Dilijan

Taking the scenic route around the stunning Lake Sevan, the Golden Eagle will stop and allow you to indulge in a short walk along the shore where you can take lovely photos. Along with Lake Van and Lake Urmia, Sevan was considered one of the three great lakes of the historical Armenian Kingdom, known as the "Seas of Armenia."

Then you will continue to Dilijan, where you will visit the nearby Monastery of Haghpat which was built between the 10th and 14th centuries. Here

you will discover that the beautiful location, in a dense wood that lies between the gorges of two small mountain rivers, makes an impressive backdrop for St. Astvatsatsin Church, which is its most important building. Shortly afterwards you will enjoy an Armenian cognac reception at Avan Dzoraget Hotel, situated on the Debed River. Spend some time enjoying the scenery of the forest-covered hills and rocky slopes of the Caucasus Mountains.

Day 4: Tbilisi

Head into Georgia, where you will visit Tbilisi. Hemmed in by the Surami Range, the city occupies a prime position and extends for 17 miles (27 km) along the banks of the River Kura. Despite many wars and fires, which caused innumerable changes in the topography of Tbilisi, the old part of the city still retains much of its original layout. Here, you will find an abundance of historical sites. The first you will visit is the 13th century Metekhi church. This is a cross cupola church which now forms part of the Royal Residential complex. Then you will head to the Sioni Cathedral which was constructed in the 5th century and is the main church of Tbilisi.

Also included in the tour for the day is a visit to the Holy Trinity Cathedral which was recently built and is one of the largest Orthodox churches in the world. Then you will head out to indulge in a walking tour of the old town and Rustaveli Avenue. During this tour you can visit the Great Hall of the Georgian Philharmonia which was built in 1969-71, and is frequently acknowledged as one of the finest public buildings constructed since the Second World War. Then you can head to the Janashia Museum of Georgia which houses the treasures of the city.

Day 5: Telavi

Exploring the beautiful Kakheti region, you will find that it borders the Great Caucasus Mountain range, is the birthplace of Georgian viticulture and winemaking. As part of the daily tour you will go to the Tsinandali country estate of the Alexandre Chavchavadze family. In this 19th century estate, located near Telavi and a couple of hours' drive from Tbilisi, you will walk through a marvelous garden, house-museum, park and winery.

Day 6: Gori, Uplistsikhe Cave City & Mtskheta

Roaming through Gori, founded in the 7th century and one of the oldest cities in Georgia, you will learn about its most famous resident, Joseph Stalin. You can visit the small house where Stalin was born in 1879, which is now preserved under a canopy that lies outside the huge columned palace-like building of the Stalin Museum. Then, visit Stalin's private railway carriage parked at the side of the museum.

After a tour of the town of Gori, you will travel directly to Uplistsikhe where you will witness a private performance of traditional Georgian polyphonic singing. At this famous cave city, walk through sites that date from the 6th century BC. Carved into a rocky plateau, the place has striking ruins, and you can travel through huge echoing halls,

meandering corridors and streets, and chambers which were used for pagan worship. You will even get a chance to visit the remains of Georgia's oldest theater, which once had an auditorium, stage, and orchestra pit.

Late in the afternoon you will visit the city of Mtskheta which was Georgia's Old Capital. Here you will see how it has immense historical significance in the region and numerous ancient monuments, which led to Mtskheta becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994.

Day 7: Baku

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, lies on western shore of the Caspian Sea and is home to a substantial oil industry. As you ride into the city you will notice that it is at the southern side of the Apsheron Peninsula and is located around the wide curving sweep of the Bay of Baku. This bay, sheltered by the islands of the Baku Archipelago, provides the best harbor of the Caspian Sea, while the Apsheron Peninsula gives it protection from violent northerly winds. At the core of present-day Baku is the Old Town, or fortress, of Icheri-Shekher.

As you explore the walled old town you will find that it is picturesque, with a maze of narrow alleys and ancient buildings. These include the Palace of the Shirvan-Shahs, the oldest part of which dates from the 11th century and now functions as a museum. The city is littered with a number of historic buildings such as the Law Court (Divan-Khan), the Dzhuma-Mechet Minaret, and the mausoleum of the astronomer Seida Bakuvi. As your tour for the day ends you will spend the next two nights at the five-star rated Four Seasons Baku, or a similar hotel, while the Golden Eagle is loaded onto the ferry to cross the Caspian Sea.

Day 8: Baku

Today you have the option to take a *Freedom of Choice* tour to Boustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape, which is 64 km outside of Baku. This site contains more than 6,000 pre-historic rock engravings and the remains of inhabited caves, settlements, and burials. After touring these archaeological wonders, you can have lunch overlooking the Caspian Sea. Returning to Baku, you can explore the city at your leisure or go to the local theater, followed by a traditional dinner.

Please Note: Early this morning our train will be loaded into a cargo ferry to cross the Caspian Sea from Baku to Turkmenbashi (a 12-14 hour journey). On this day you can alternatively choose to travel on the ferry with the train, however there are limited passenger facilities (basic cabins and catering). With this option, you will arrive in Tuekmenbashi and travel overnight to Ashgabat. If you are interested in this option you must make your request when booking.

Day 9: Ashgabat

After breakfast in Baku, we fly to Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. Known as the "Las Vegas of Kara Kum," this city is a modern capital with an ancient history, and rises almost surprisingly from the barren landscape of the desert. In addition to its unique location on the former Silk Road, Ashgabat is also located between mountains and the Kara Kum Desert. During our tour we will visit the National Museum and Kipchak Mosque, the largest mosque in Central Asia. Stay overnight in Oguzken Sofitel hotel, or similar.

Day 10: Darvaza

Today, your train makes a stop at Ichoguz, with the option of disembarking and taking a short trip to Darvaza. This small town of around 350 residents is home to a famous 70m wide gas crater in the Kara Kum Desert. Referred to as the "Door to Hell," this crater is a miraculous site (particularly at night), and has been burning for 40 years.

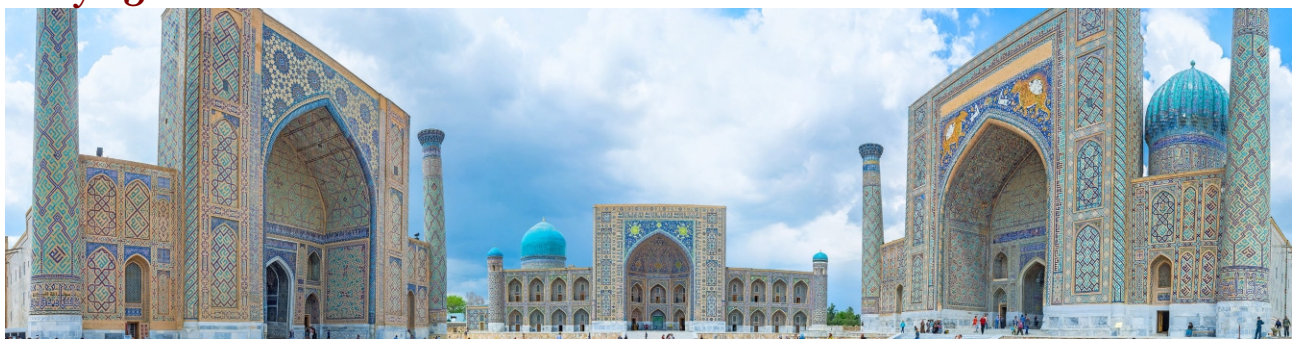
Day 11: Khiva

Today we travel to the Uzbekistani city of Khiva. This ancient city was founded 2,500 years ago and was an important trading post on the Silk Road, located between Mongolia, Russia, China, and Persia. Khiva is a World Heritage Site filled with impressive architecture, and gives the appearance of an oasis in the desert. Surrounded by ancient city walls, we will visit the mosques, bazaars, and minarets of this unique city.

Day 12: Bukhara

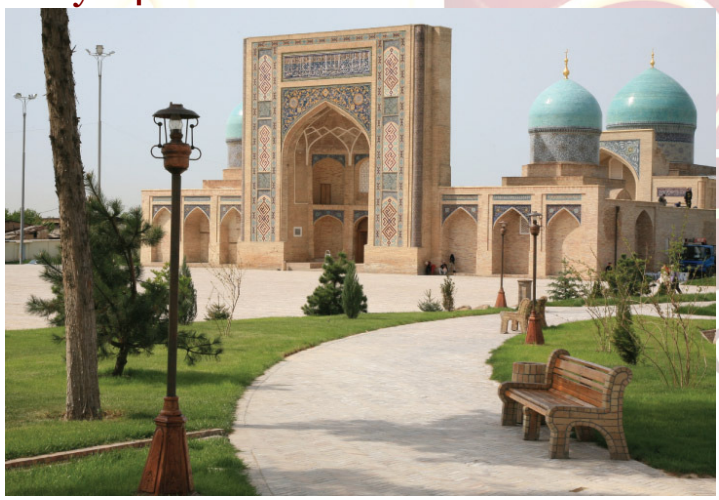
Another World Heritage Site, Bukhara is an ancient city filled with culture and history. This city is home to approximately 140 architectural monuments, and was known throughout history as a center for scholarship. Here you will visit The Ark, the former residence of the Emirs of Bukhara, who ruled the city until the Soviet era. We will also venture outside of the city to see the Emir's "Palace of the Moon and Stars," a beautiful and historic site.

Day 13: Samarkand



A prominent stop on the Silk Road, one of the most important cities of Asia, and the fabled capital of the Mongol Empire, Samarkand is truly "A Crossroads of Cultures," (as referred to by UNESCO). Throughout history, this city was ruled by various ethnic groups, resulting in a beautiful blend of architecture. On our tour, we will visit Registan Square, a key public area and Islamic site, and Bibi Khanum Mosque, built in the 15th century. We also go to the Ulugh Beg Observatory, constructed in 1428 and one of the earliest Islamic astronomical observatories. In the evening, we will re-visit Registan Square in order to see it illuminated, followed by dinner.

Day 14: Tashkent



Today we visit the capital of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, a modern Soviet-style city rebuilt after an earthquake in 1966. Despite its modernity, Tashkent has an old and varied history, and a multi-ethnic population. We have the privilege of seeing the world's oldest Koran, and visit the Old City. Afterwards, we will visit the Railway Museum and Museum of Applied Arts. Tonight we enjoy a farewell dinner aboard the Golden Eagle, and head overnight to Almaty.

Day 15: Almaty

This morning your train arrives into Almaty, our final destination. After saying goodbye to the Golden Eagle, we will tour this Kazakh city. Visit Panfilov Park and the Zenkov Cathedral, a wooden Russian Orthodox Church. Overnight stay in the InterContinental hotel (or similar).

Day 16: Almaty

Today is the last day of our fascinating journey through Central Asia. After breakfast, you will be transferred to Almaty Airport for your onward flight.

If you would like to extend your stay to explore more of this city, contact Palace Tours.