

## Caravans & Kingdoms, Marco Polo's Silk Road

### The Stans! New AFS Small Group

Aug 14-25, 2026

 Check Availability

Price is located at the bottom of the daily itinerary

*Discover the Heart of the legendary Silk Road through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan with us in 10 unforgettable days. You've been asking for this. Get ready now to step back in time for a once-in-a-lifetime adventure deep into central Asia. This exclusive AFS journey promises meaningful connections and spectacular landscapes.*

*We curated this itinerary with the best expert guides to Escort you through these remote lands with seamless logistics, lovely hotels, delicious cuisines, and hidden gems that you know about each day.*

*It begins in the bustling Boulevards of **Tashkent**, to the cultural treasures of **Samarkand**, **Dushanbe**, and **Bukhara** to lively **Almaty**, where modern life blends with ancient cultures.*

*We travel by high-speed train, scenic roads, and an internal flight to trace the footsteps of ancient cultures in three diverse countries. Along the way, enjoy Colorful markets and minarets, explore UNESCO World Heritage sites, marvel at Tumarid architecture, photograph serene mountain scapes, and enjoy the buzz of vibrant capital cities. We connect you with friendly local artisans for cultural immersion to make it large fun. But it's also an education with daily tours, providing lessons in history of Asia's wonders.*

*This year, the Stans are so popular that they have finally made it easy for visitors. No visas for Kaz and Taj and an eazy-E visa for Uzb. Don't miss this ultimate new adventure of discovery. Spaces will fill quickly for with our AFS Travel Lovers who love collecting new countries in their passports.*



*For your bragging rights, you can say that you did the Stans in style! You'll love the Hilton and other great hotels, all at an excellent price with internal flight and bullet trains included. Your GTL Deanna is thrilled to lead this fun group after studying the regions over a year.*

*It's not just about masterpieces of art and architecture. You'll discover sacred sites that reveal the faith and devotion of the people who have thrived here for centuries, far off the tourist-trodden paths.*

*Echoes of the timeless Silk Road is all about awe-inspiring natural beauty and a celebration of vocation. This is one vacation that is an adventure worth taking and a memory maker to last you a lifetime!*

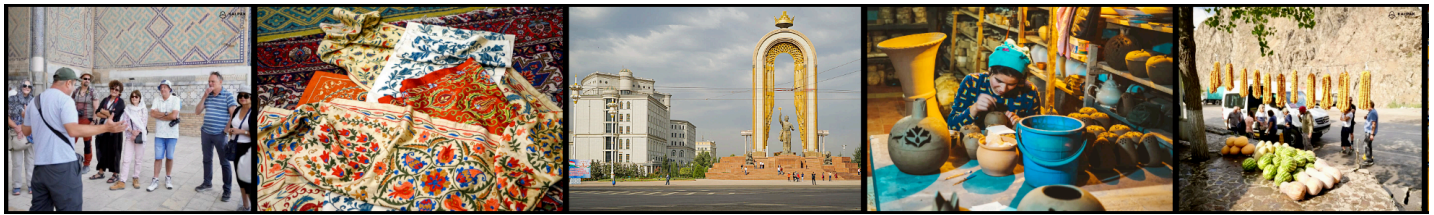
---

## Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

 Check Availability

⚠ Web content is continuously updated, whereas PDF versions may contain outdated details due to their static nature.

**August 14** - Depart USA to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. For the best airlines on best fares and routes, look no farther than Turkish, Qatar, or Emirates and non-stop Uzbekistan Airways. Some may want to go in a few days early for a lovely stopover in Istanbul, Doha, Dubai or add a stop post trip. Note that Land starts on August 16.



### August 16 - City of Contrasts: Tashkent Arrival and Unveiling the Capital

Welcome to Uzbekistan! Most flights arrive early in the morning. Transfer to the hotel and immediate check-in. You can have a rest after your long flight, take a shower, and have breakfast before meeting your group and guide at noon for the welcome briefing. After lunch at a local restaurant, we will set out on an orientation tour of Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan and the largest city in Central Asia with a population of around 3 million people. Tashkent is not only the biggest city in Central Asia, but also one of the oldest. Unfortunately, most of its historic buildings were destroyed in a catastrophic earthquake in 1966, after which Tashkent was rebuilt as a model Soviet city.

We will then visit Independence Square, a symbol of freedom for the Uzbek people since they declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Next, we take a stroll on Tashkent's artists' corner, locally known as Broadway. At Amir Timur Square, we will then encounter Uzbekistan's national hero, Emperor Timur (Tamerlane). At the end of the day, we will enjoy our welcome dinner, celebrating the start of what promises to be a captivating adventure through Central Asia.

Accommodation: [Hotel Inspira](#) 4\*, incl. early check-in. (2nts) Enjoy next one the Spa, Pool and robots.

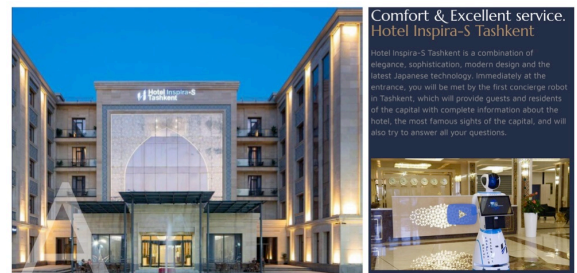
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### August 17 - Tashkent's Timeless Treasures: From Ancient Qurans to Artistic Metros

After breakfast, we visit the Old City area of Tashkent where you will find the Khast Imom Complex which contains the ancient holy Quran of Caliph Osman. We will then experience the bustling crowds of traders at Chor-Su Bazaar, the city's main market. We will also have the opportunity to experience a ride on the beautifully decorated Tashkent Metro. We complete the city tour of Tashkent with a visit to the Applied Arts Museum.

Accommodation: Hotel Inspira-4\*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### August 18 - Silk Road Echoes: Bukhara's Labyrinth Awaits



After breakfast, we will transfer to the train station to catch the high-speed train to Bukhara (8:00 am – 12:20 pm) and then drive to the town of Bukhara (c. 30 minutes) for lunch and then check in at the hotel. In the afternoon, we will have a walking tour of Bukhara, seemingly everyone's favorite and one of the most important trading hubs on the Silk Road, as well as a respected center of theology and scholarship. The Old City (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) has been well preserved and is crammed full of minarets, mosques, and madrassas. Your guide will show you Bukhara's unmissable sights, including the Poi Kalon complex, the bazaars inside Bukhara's unique trading domes, and the Lyabi Hauz area. As you wander the labyrinthine streets you will soak up the city's atmosphere.

Accommodation: Hotel Paradise Plaza 4\*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### August 19 - Bukhara's Living History & Evening Dash to Samarkand

Today we have some more time to explore Bukhara. We will visit Ark Fortress, Bolo Hauz Mosque, the Ayub Mausoleum and spring. There is also time for shopping or visiting workshops of local masters of different handicrafts, if you like. In the afternoon, transfer to the train station (30 min) and take the bullet train to Samarkand. Dinner at the restaurant next to our hotel. After dinner, who likes, may visit illuminated Registan Square.

Accommodation: [Hotel Zarafshon Parkside](#) 4\* (2nts)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### August 20 - Timur's Legacy: The Blue Majesty of Samarkand



Bibi-Khanym Mosque in Samarkand.

Sublime Samarkand was the capital of the Timurid Empire; Timur was one of history's greatest conquerors. His vast empire rivaled any, stretching across the Eurasian steppe. He ruled his kingdom with an iron fist, whilst at the same time patronizing the arts and literature. Much of the architectural heritage from this period has been preserved, allowing us to see how the city might have been at the peak of Timur's power.

We will start the city tour with a visit to Gur-e-Amir, the gilded mausoleum where Timur is buried. We will hear stories from his life and how he began the construction of Samarkand.

We will then visit Registan Square, the most famous landmark in all of Uzbekistan. This square was the focal point of medieval Samarkand and is framed by three beautiful madrassas (religious schools), Ulugbek, Sherdor, and Tillya Kori. We will end the city tour with a visit to Shah-i Zinda, a magnificent tiled necropolis.

Accommodation: Hotel Zarafshon Parkside 4\*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



### August 21 - Across the Fann Mountains: Iskander Kul's Serenity to Dushanbe's Lights

After breakfast, it is time to say goodbye to the marvelous cities of Uzbekistan and transfer to the border crossing with Tajikistan. Today's scenic drive is long, but the stunning landscapes and stuff at Kul make it truly unforgettable. We will pass through both border checkpoints on foot, complete all necessary formalities, and meet our Tajik guide and driver on the other side. We will then continue on a very scenic driving day through the Zarafshan Mountains to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.



The Alloudin Lakes are a group of reservoirs upstream in the Pasrud valley in Fann Mtns.

On the way, we will visit Iskander Kul, a picturesque mountain lake located 30 km off the main road. The lake, named after Alexander the Great ("Iskander" is the Persian form of Alexander), is triangular in shape and considered one of the most exquisitely beautiful lakes in all of the former Soviet Union. It's nestled in the Fann Mountains at an altitude of 2,200m. We will have lunch on the shore of the lake.

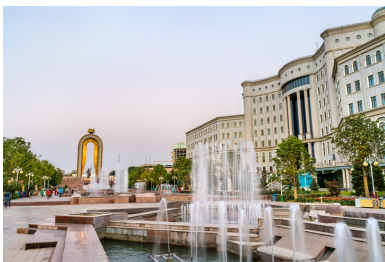
Those who like, can then take a short hike to a nearby waterfall. Be prepared for colder weather in the mountains. In the afternoon, we will depart from Iskander Kul and finish driving to Dushanbe.

After an ascent to the Anzob Tunnel, our route is along the Vazob River down to the Varzob Gorge, a popular weekend getaway for locals from Dushanbe. We will reach Dushanbe in the evening, check in at the hotel, and have dinner.

Accommodation: [Hotel Hilton](#) 5\*. (2nts). From the Hilton, you can take in Tajikistan's history at the National Museum of Tajikistan and Ismoil Somoni Monument on the edge of Rudaki Park, all within four kilometers. Enjoy our full-service spa, indoor heated pool, and fitness center.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### August 22 - Dushanbe: Monday Markets and Mosaic Marvels



Fountain and the National Library in Dushanbe, the Capital of Tajikistan. Central Asia

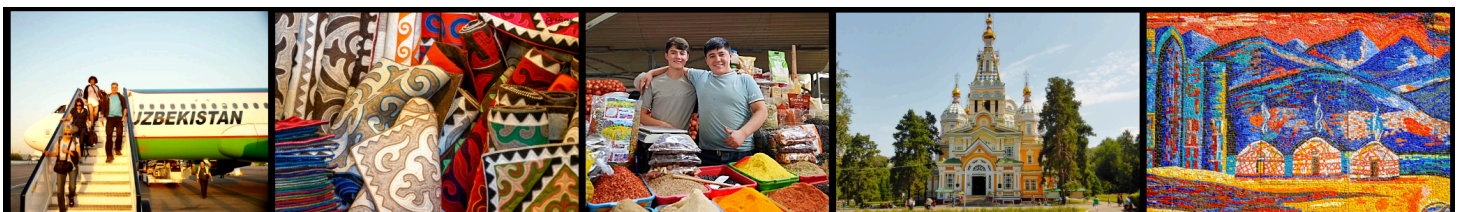
Originally, Dushanbe was a small village centered on a market that took place every Monday. The Persian word Dushanbe means "Monday", so this is how the city got its name. It was during the Soviet Union that Dushanbe became the industrial center of Tajikistan and the capital city it is today.

We will tour the marvelous modern Navruz Palace. Today we will also have a chance to visit a famous stone mosaics master, whose works are also on display in Navruz Palace. Touring today also includes the Museum of Musical Instruments and Folklore. Badakhshani actor Gurminj Zavkybekov began this small but fascinating museum. Displaying a fine collection of beautifully crafted antique and modern instruments from Afghanistan, the Pamirs, Turkey, and China, the museum is often the scene of exuberant performances and

demonstrations. After, we will visit the statue of Ismail Somoni whose mausoleum you saw in Bukhara. This large monument commemorates the 1,100th anniversary of the Samanid State, a Golden Age of the Tajik nation when science and arts flourished. From there, we will walk up to Rudaki Park, dedicated to the great Persian poet Rudaki, who also lived during the Samanid period, in the 10th century AD.

Accommodation: Hotel Hilton 5\*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner





## August 23 - From Dushanbe to the Steppes: Almaty, Kazakhstan Welcomes You

After breakfast, check-out from the hotel. We will visit today the main market of Dushanbe. In the early afternoon, transfer to the airport to catch Air Astana flight to Almaty. Upon arrival at Almaty Airport, meet your local guide and transfer to the city center. Kazakh welcome dinner in a local restaurant.

Accommodation: [Hotel Novotel](#) 4\* (2nts) Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.



Novotel Hotel

The hotel offers high-speed wifi, a fitness center, a pool & sauna, a restaurant with a bar & outdoor terrace, and parking facilities. Novotel Almaty City Center is located in the very center of Almaty and its cultural. Stroll down Dostyk Avenue with lots of cafes & restaurants, or have a walk along the canal or parks. Enjoy the Cable Car for Kok Tobe Hill, activities around & central location to most of the interesting places, such as parks or shopping.

## August 24 - Kazakh Rhythms: Ethno-Village Traditions and Almaty Farewell

Today you will immerse yourself in Kazakh culture, learning about traditions and rituals in the Huns ethno-village, about an hour's drive from Almaty. On arrival, you'll be welcomed by hostesses greeting you with a national ritual called Shashu. It involves showering guests with sweets, as Kazakhs do during wedding ceremonies. The sweets must be picked up and kept, as Kazakhs believe they will bring good luck in the future. At Huns, you will learn how to bake puffy Kazakh bread, see the construction of a Kazakh yurt, and be a spectator at a performance of national horse games. The games include Jigitovka (horseback riding with acrobatic elements), Atpen audaryspak (jostling and pushing a rival whilst on horseback) and Kyz kuu, where a boy chases a girl on horseback. If he catches her he will be rewarded with a kiss; but if he fails, she can lash him! We will also taste a traditional Kazakh meal there. Return to Almaty and visit Panfilov Park to see the most famous sight of Almaty, Zenkov Cathedral. In the same Park is the impressive Soviet Glory Memorial, a tribute to 28 men who, as the narrative goes, repulsed 50 German tanks from the outskirts of Moscow during World War Two.



A young Mongolian boy in traditional Mongolian dress holding his falcon on horseback.

Tonight we enjoy a farewell dinner and toast each other to a journey well done at a nice local restaurant.

Accommodation: Hotel Novotel 4\*

## August 25 - Homeward Bound: Departure from the Silk Road

Transfer to the airport and fly back home.

Meals: Breakfast

---

 Check Availability

**Deposit: \$500**

**LAND PRICE: \$3998 per person twin share**

Price based on min of 22 participants

**Single room supplement** +\$895 and limited to just a few

**Price includes**

- All transfers, including airport pick-up and drop-off
- Accommodation is based on two people sharing a double/twin room; breakfasts included
- Lunches and dinners (full board)
- Local guides in each city/ country plus Central Asian tour manager and AFS GTL for the entire trip
- All entry fees as per the itinerary
- All cultural activities and special arrangements
- Bullet train tickets
- Flight from Dushanbe to Almaty

Not Included: Gratuities (these will be added to the invoice as a separate item for easier distribution), international airfare, and travel insurance.

**Have you read the Trip Tips yet? Scroll to the top of the page and click the link.**

[/vc\_column\_text][[/vc\_column]][/vc\_row]