



**Tibet & China Rail Discovery
From Urumqi to Lhasa by Private Train
2020**



Tibet & China Rail Discovery

From Urumqi to Lhasa on the Shangri-La Western Express Private Train

One departure in 2020 – Private Rail Journey – 13 Days

September 26–October 8

On this fascinating rail journey by comfortable private train, roll across Western China to discover the teeming Sunday Market in Kashgar; the ancient karez underground irrigation system in Turpan that caused the desert to bloom; and the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, where generations of pilgrims carved and painted images of the Buddha. Then hop the special high-altitude train, ascending from the Tibetan Plateau to Lhasa at 12,000 feet, passing the world's highest railroad station along the way. Explore the "City of the Sun," with its massive UNESCO-listed Potala Palace, sacred Jokhang Temple, and the lively Barkhor Market.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Saturday	Arrive Urumqi, China
Day 2, Sunday	Urumqi
Day 3, Monday	Kashgar
Day 4, Tuesday	Kashgar
Day 5, Wednesday	Turpan
Day 6, Thursday	Dunhuang
Day 7, Friday	Jiayuguan
Day 8, Saturday	Xining
Day 9, Sunday	Golmud
Day 10, Monday	Golmud • Lhasa
Day 11, Tuesday	Lhasa
Day 12, Wednesday	Lhasa
Day 13, Thursday	Depart Lhasa



Tour Features

- Pack and unpack your main baggage only at the beginning and the end of your epic journey (needing only overnight bags for off-train nights).
- Survey a series of fascinating cities along the rail line.
- Get a true picture of the scale and scope of the countries you are traversing.
- Join travelers from around the world to enjoy the casual and relaxed atmosphere aboard the private train, dining in luxury and chatting over drinks in the lounge.
- Relax deeply as you are carried into another land, a world away from home.

Tour Highlights

Urumqi	Xinjiang Regional Museum mummies exhibit
Kashgar	Old Town, Kashgar Sunday Market
Turpan	Views of the Flaming Mountains, Jiaohe Ancient City ruins, underground irrigation (karez) system
Dunhuang	Mogao Buddhist Caves, Crescent Lake, camel ride
Jiayuguan	Terminus of the Great Wall of China at Jiayuguan Fortress, Overhanging Great Wall
Xining	Ta'er Monastery, Shuijingxiang Market
Golmud	Terminus of high-altitude rail line
Lhasa	Norbulingka (Summer Palace), Jokhang Temple, Barkhor Market, Potala Palace, travel on high-altitude rail line across the Tibetan Plateau



Itinerary

Day One

Arrive Urumqi, China

Passengers are met on arrival and transferred to a four-star hotel for a one-night stay. Meet fellow passengers at a **welcome reception and dinner** this evening.

Meals: D – *Wanda Vista Hotel or similar*

Day Two

Urumqi

Urumqi, a Mongolian name meaning “Beautiful Pasture,” is seated at the foot of the soaring Tien Shan (Heavenly) Mountains, and is the capital of China’s Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province. Both its people and its landscapes are variegated and diverse. The slopes of 17,864-foot Bogdan Peak, bristling with spruce, give way to valleys lined with poplar that merge into the grasslands of the nomad, and finally transform themselves into desert. Nomads of Mongolian, Kazakh and Uighur extraction have roamed here for thousands of years, and Han Chinese people began moving here in the first century AD.

A tour of Urumqi includes a visit to the fascinating **Xinjiang Regional Museum**, housed since 2005 in a modern new building. The museum is divided into two sections, one dedicated to the 12 minority groups of Xinjiang, and the other to archeological findings from the Silk Road. The minority cultures hall displays costumes, cultural artifacts, life-size models of typical houses and yurts and items used in the daily lives of Western China’s minority peoples. The centerpiece of the Silk Road section is its collection of mummies and other preserved bodies discovered in area tombs, including the “Loulan Beauty,” the nearly 4,000-year-old body of a woman in fur sandals believed to be of Indo-European descent.

Transfer to the *Shangri-La Western Express* private train and get settled in to your comfortable cabin for the first overnight on the rails.

Meals: B, L, D – *Aboard the Shangri-La Western Express private train*

Day Three

Kashgar

Two-thousand-year-old **Kashgar** is unlike any other place in China. Its population is made up in great part by the Turkic Uighur people prevalent in western China rather than the majority Han Chinese. Both the northern and southern caravan routes around the Taklamakan Desert converged at the Kashgar oasis. This fabled city greeted Marco Polo in the 13th century as he entered the Middle Kingdom, and retains the exotic air and immense appeal of medieval Asia.. Kashgar is one of the most isolated cities in the world and boasts a huge Sunday market. It is also home to the largest mosque in China, and one of the only remaining statues of Mao Zedong.

Explore **Kashgar’s Old Town**, walking up ancient dirt lanes between mud-brick Uighur houses with ladders leading up to the roofs and the houses above. Sadly, in recent years, much of the Old Town has been demolished and replaced with more modern, tourist-friendly architecture. While lacking the history and authenticity of the original town structure, the “New” Old Town still manages to preserve plenty of the charm of old-time Kashgar.

Meals: B, L, D – *Radisson BLU hotel or similar*





Day Four Kashgar

During our extended stay we spend time at **Kashgar Sunday Bazaar** which, despite its name, is typically open daily. This bazaar with its brilliant blend of peoples and its chaotic bustle is without equal. It is possible to spend the majority of the day at the market where one can find traditional silks, musical instruments, hand-crafted knives, embroidered hats and an amazing variety of fruits, nuts and livestock. After a day of touring, reboard the train for dinner and an overnight stay. Meals: B, L, D – Aboard the Shangri-La Western Express private train

Day Five Turpan

Turpan, the hottest city in China, is located in what is known as the “Valley of Fruits.” The wine grapes that are cultivated here are irrigated with a 2,000-year-old gravity-fed system that brings water from the glaciers of the Tien Shan. Turpan was a welcome oasis on the northern Silk Road, its green fields surrounded by one of the deepest waterless depressions on earth. During the Han Dynasty, from 202 BC to 220 AD, its sister cities of Jiaohe and Gaochang were famous trade and defensive centers. Their ruins remain in the desert near Turpan.



Explore the **ruined city of Jiaohe**, built in the 2nd century and eventually abandoned after it was decimated by the Mongols in the 13th century. Located six miles west of Turpan, Jiaohe stands on an island surrounded by two small rivers. "Jiaohe" literally means confluence of two rivers.

Karez are the long-lived **underground wells** that collect and pass along the glacial meltwater from the Tien Shan Mountains that irrigates the fields around the Turpan area. Some of the *karez* are over two thousand years old.

Enjoy a meal of traditional favorites **with a local family**.

Meals: B, L, D – *Aboard the Shangri-La Western Express private train*



Day Six Dunhuang

The oasis town of **Dunhuang** was founded during the Han Dynasty in 111 BC. It was one of four Chinese garrisons meant to control the trade routes to the west. Situated at the western end of the Hexi Corridor, which snakes between North Mountain and Qilian Mountain, Dunhuang became one of the most important towns on the Silk Road. The road from Xi'an divided at Dunhuang into two routes around the Taklamakan Desert.

Ancient travelers, whether traders, pilgrims or ambassadors, had to pass through Dunhuang on their way to and from their destinations. Buddhist monks from China and Korea traveled this road, and Dunhuang became a repository of Buddhist wisdom and art through the thousand years of trade on the Silk Road. After the Tang Dynasty in the 8th century, trade was curtailed because of strife and danger along the route, and by the 15th century the new water routes had put an end to the importance of the Silk Road.

Crescent Moon Lake, bubbling up in the midst of desert sand dunes, is fed by an underground spring, and maintains its shape in spite of the shifting sands. The lake sits at the foot of Mingsha (Echoing Sands) Mountain, so called because of the ringing sound the sand makes. At the foot of the sand dunes you will take a short camel ride.

Visit the **Mogao Caves**. Fifteen miles southeast of Dunhuang is a sandstone ridge peppered with caves. Traditionally it is believed that a Buddhist monk on a pilgrimage to India in the 4th century carved the first one at the place where he had a vision of a thousand Buddhas. Until the 14th century other travelers, pilgrims and artists carved more caves, decorating them with frescoes and painted statues. The resulting 500 or so grottoes present a thousand-year study in the development of Buddhist art in China.





The earliest carvings and frescoes are reminiscent of Indian art, while later dynasties' artists used different techniques and portrayed figures of their Chinese contemporaries. The caves became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

The caves were lost to memory from the 14th to the 19th centuries, when a Daoist monk rediscovered them and guarded them carefully. Upon hearing the story of these magnificent caves, the explorer Sir Aurel Stein went to see them, and was successful in talking the monk into parting with many of the frescoes, which he cut from the walls and shipped back to England. Stein also discovered a hidden chamber filled with Buddhist scrolls, including the Diamond

Sutra, now on display in the British Museum.
Meals: B, L, D – Aboard the Shangri-La Western Express private train

Day Seven Jiayuguan

Jiayuguan, sometimes translated as “Nice Valley,” was a strategic fort along the Silk Road. The city is located in the middle of the Hexi Corridor, the narrow desert valley that funneled caravans from X’ian through to Dunhuang. The corridor was also natural protection from the northern tribes. The **westernmost fortress of the Great Wall** was built here, as well as the wall’s oldest signal tower. Today the city is a western manufacturing center.

The Jiayuguan Fortress was built at the narrowest point of the western Hexi Corridor. It guards the westernmost pass through the Great Wall, called “The First and Greatest Pass under Heaven.” (Not to be confused with the “First Pass under Heaven” at the eastern end of the wall.) Built in 1372, the fortress walls are 30 feet high, and over the two gates - the Gate of Enlightenment and the Gate of Conciliation - stand 50-foot towers.

Jiayuguan is the location of the only remnants of the Great Wall built during the Ming Dynasty. Work on the Overhanging Great



Wall was begun in 1539, and extended from Jiayuguang Pass, or fortress. Here the wall climbs up from the valley floor to block the summit of Black Mountain.

Meals: B, L, D – Aboard the Shangri-La Western Express private train

Day Eight

Xining

Xining is the capital of Qinghai Province, formerly the Tibetan province of Amdo. High on the Tibetan Plateau, with an average altitude of 7,000 feet, Xining has been an important trading center since the 16th century. Visit the **Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Ta'er Si** in the southwest section of the city, and stop at the 600-year-old Dongguan Mosque. This beautifully painted mosque combines Chinese and Islamic architectural features.

The bright golds, blues and reds of Ta'er Monastery's facade provide a rich contrast to Qinghai Province's surrounding green hills. The massive complex has stood on these 36 acres for over 400 years and has thousands of rooms and over 40 halls, the most impressive of which is the Great Hall of the Golden Roof, constructed from tiles with embedded precious gems, making the room sparkle. Still a working monastery, Ta'er Monastery draws visitors to see the unique sculptures of figures and landscapes made from yak butter and to honor the place where Tsongkhapa, founder of the "Yellow Hat" sect of Tibetan Buddhism, is thought to have been born in 1357.

Also visit **Shuijingxiang Market** while here, prior to returning to the train for overnight en route.

Meals: B, L, D – Aboard the Shangri-La Western Express private train





Day Nine Golmud

Arrive in **Golmud**, a city named for the Mongolian word for river and the third largest city in the Tibetan Plateau. You will disembark the *Shangri-La Western Express train* and be transferred to your hotel. Today is left free for rest or independent exploration.

Golmud, in Qinghai Province, is the starting point of the rail line that climbs up the Tibetan Plateau on a fifteen-hour journey to the holy city of Lhasa. At an altitude of about one and three quarters miles, Golmud is the place where rail workers would stay to acclimate to the

altitude before beginning work on the line.

The town is not very old, having sprung up when workers began construction on the Qinghai Highway to Lhasa in 1954. Seated between the Qaidam Basin and the Tibetan Plateau, the area is surrounded by extremely saline lakes, and has become China's biggest supplier of salt products - of lithium, magnesium, potassium and sodium. The area is also rich with oil and natural gas, making its growth certain.

Please note, subject to timings we may obtain high-altitude train tickets to Lhasa for departure today, therefore we will forego the overnight stay in Golmud and have an additional acclimatization day in Lhasa. Meals: B,L,D – Doubletree by Hilton Hotel

Day Ten Golmud • Lhasa

Get an early start in **Golmud** to transfer to the high-altitude train for the ride to Lhasa on the world's highest railway line. Reserved seats in the seated car await, with views available out the large picture windows. Not only a feat of modern engineering, the high-altitude rail also provides spectacular views of the 12,000-foot Tibetan plateau. Watch the landscapes change outside the window with the passage of the day. See pristine lakes and glaciated peaks from the comfort of the train.

This high-altitude train was created specifically for regularly scheduled trips on the unique rail line. The specialized train cars come equipped with on-demand oxygen as well as a universally oxygen-enriched atmosphere to ease the transition between the widely divergent altitudes.

Pass by **Tangula Station**, the **world's highest railroad station**, less than a mile from the highest spot on 16,600-foot Tangula Pass. Opened in 2006, the unstaffed station was selected specifically for the view from the platform. This region is uninhabited and passengers are required to remain on the train.

Meals are taken in the dining car, which is also a great place to gaze out the window at the spacious vistas of the Tibetan Plateau. **Please note:** this train is the only option along the high-altitude rail line connecting Tibet and the rest of China. Though the train is fully staffed and features comfortable seats and some western-style WCs along with amenities such as a dining car, the train is not a luxurious



experience. Travelers will have the opportunity to meet other Chinese, Tibetan and foreign travelers as they make their way between Lhasa and Golmud, and the train is in many cases quite full. **Please be prepared** for close quarters, shared WC facilities, and the occasional inconvenience of adventurous rail travel. This ride is expected to take all day today before arrival in Lhasa.

On arrival this evening check into the five-star St. Regis Hotel
Meals: B, L, D – *Shangri-La Hotel or similar*



Day Eleven Lhasa

The huge Tibetan Plateau, with an average elevation of 2.5 miles, has been home to humans for at least 11,000 years. Its people were originally nomadic herders, following their goats and yaks from the summer pastures in the high hidden valleys to the wind-combed grasslands of the steppe in winter. Gradually the nomads settled in the “City of the Sun,” Lhasa, building the massive Potala Palace on an outcropping above the city. Embracing Buddhism’s guiding principle of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, the Tibetans tried to protect their lands from contact with the rest of the world, but were finally unable to do so.

Stroll through the gardens of the 18th century **Norbulingka** or Jeweled Garden, known today as the People's Park. This was the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas, and was used by the young Dalai Lamas until they were 18, when they moved to the Potala Palace. Begun in 1740, the parks around the palace are beautiful and extensive. Norbulingka was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List as an extension of the Potala Palace.
Meals: B, L, D – *Shangri-La Hotel or similar*



Day Twelve Depart Lhasa, China

The **Jokhang Temple** has been the most sacred site in Tibet since the 7th century. It is the place that shelters the *Jowo Sakyamuni*, a 6th century statue of the Buddha at the age of 12 brought from China by the new wife of King Songtsen Gampo. Buddhist pilgrims come from



everywhere to circumambulate the temple, some prostrating themselves at every step. Yak butter candles sputter in the entranceway and murals and gilded carvings adorn the shrines.

Encircling the Jokhang Monastery is **Barkhor**, the old market of Lhasa. A visit affords a wonderful opportunity to interact with Tibetan people and bargain for turquoise jewelry, carpets, yak wool boots and Tibetan fur hats trimmed with brocade.

The Potala Palace, the "Sacred Place" of Buddhism, rises in red, white and gold splendor high above Lhasa, dominating the landscape and watching over every aspect of local life.

Although it was built in the 8th century, the majority of the present structure dates from the 17th century, during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama.

A massive structure made of stone, wood and earth, this World Heritage Site rises 13 stories toward the sky and runs nearly 1,150 feet across the hillside from east to west. A maze of over a thousand rooms and thousands of altars and statues, the Potala is made up of two main buildings. The eastern section served as the Dalai Lama's residence and administrative center, and the Red Palace, the main sacred section, includes numerous chapels, shrines, *stupas*, tombs and libraries.

Meals: B, L, D – *Shangri-La Hotel or similar*



Day Thirteen

Depart Lhasa, China

Breakfast in the hotel before transfers to the airport for international flight departures.

Meals: B



About The Shangri-La Western Express Train

Train Accommodations

Two styles of accommodation are available on board the comfortable *Shangri-La Western Express*: Diamond Class with en suite facilities, and Heritage Class. Diamond Class cabins feature a large lower bed, while Heritage Class cabins are furnished with two lower twin berths.

Diamond Class

Diamond Class cabins are the more comfortable and spacious cabins available onboard the *Shangri-La Western Express*. Measuring 75 sq ft (7 sq meters), they are furnished with a large queen style bed, and private en suite facilities with shower. Individual air-conditioning, wardrobe and large window make the cabin a pleasant retreat. Limited availability.

Diamond Class Cabins:

- 75 sq ft (7 sq meters)
- Sleeps 2 in queen size bed
- Centrally controlled air-conditioning
- Recessed lighting and wardrobe
- Table and stool
- Private en suite bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin
- Bathrobes, slippers and toiletries
- Towels and linens changed daily
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water available at all times
- Drinks from the Bar Car included

Note: cabin configurations and decor may vary from samples depicted



Heritage Class

Heritage cabins offer comfortable accommodation with twin-berth compartments featuring two lower berths. Beds convert to comfortable sofas for daytime travel and there is storage space under the berths and above the door in each cabin. AWC is found at each end of the car and each car has a shower compartment at one end.

Heritage Class Cabins:

36 sq ft (3.4 sq meters)

- Sleeps 2 in two lower standard berths
- Centrally controlled air-conditioning
- Recessed lighting
- Towels and linens changed regularly
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water in cabin
- Shared shower cabin in each car, see image below



Dates for 2020 – Private Rail Journey

The land itinerary is scheduled to operate on the following dates. Please note that you need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to the tour start date, due to airline flight schedules.

September 26-October 8, 2020

2020 Package Prices

Land Tour Cost – Per Person:

Heritage Class, twin share \$11,295

Heritage Class, single \$16,395

Diamond Class, twin share \$14,895

Diamond Class, single \$21,495

Private Train Tour Deposits – Per person:

Heritage Class deposit \$2,000

Diamond Class deposit \$3,000

A non-refundable deposit and completed reservation form/signed release are required to hold space.

Land Tour Includes

- Accommodation aboard the *Shangri-La Western Express* private train.
- Hotel accommodation per the itinerary (3 nights Lhasa, 1 night Kashgar, 1 night Golmud, 1 night Urumqi).
- All meals starting with dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on final tour day, including a generous, though not unlimited, allowance of wine or local beer, soft drinks and water with all lunches and dinners.
- Arrival/departure transfers, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates and in the tour start/end cities.
- All guided off-train tours per itinerary.
- The services of an experienced Train Tour Manager, with local guides for scheduled off-train touring.
- Complimentary tea, coffee and mineral water round the clock from your car attendant while on board the train.
- All gratuities.
- Baggage handling.

Not Included

- International airfare or surface transport to the point of joining/leaving the tour. MIR is able to arrange your air itinerary in economy or business class. If you wish to obtain an air quote, please contact us for details.
- Items of a purely personal nature (laundry, telephone, bar account, photography at museums, etc.)
- Optional pre- or post-tour extensions.
- Drinks in the Bar Car and outside of meal times.
- Visa fees, any excess baggage charges, airport departure taxes, vaccination or medical costs.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.
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Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1.877.709.5596.



Start Planning Next Year Now

Dates for 2021 – Rail Journey by Private Train

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Next year's dates are shown below – please call if you're ready to book now.

April 1-13, 2021

Package Prices – 2021

Please call for prices

Rail Journey by Private Train

Private Train tours are in a class of their own, offering the opportunity to experience remote destinations in unparalleled style. These all-inclusive, overview tours aboard the fully-chartered *Shangri-La Western* express comfortable private train bring together passengers from around the world. Group sizes are flexible and can be more than 100 passengers.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

- While this program is designed to be comfortable for travel in this region, it is an adventuresome tour. It is rated as **rigorous touring** due to the elevation, the daily walking involved, the length of some rides and rough terrain and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. The elevation in Tibet is over 10,000 feet. The altitudes can cause difficulty even in healthy travelers, and potential problems can include headaches, shortness of breath and other more serious complications. Many streets are unevenly paved, and some attractions are accessible only by staircases with tall or uneven steps; the Potala Palace in Lhasa is a prime example. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least two miles a day, keeping up with fellow travelers. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.
- This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets and sidewalks are uneven, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases. Museums generally do not have elevators.
- On the train, restaurant and Bar Car may be some distance from your sleeping car. Although portage is provided where possible, you may have to carry your baggage for short distances.
- Passengers may encounter problems getting on and off trains; there may be low platforms, steep steps and/or gaps between the platform and the train.
- In true expedition style, some delays or changes in the itinerary are likely.

PLEASE NOTE: This tour travels at high elevations in Tibet and those with a history of medical problems, particularly cardiac or respiratory, must consult a doctor before considering this trip.



Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Please read the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory on travel to China here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/china-travel-advisory.html>

Weather

China has a long travel season in general, with hot summers and mild springs and autumns. Tibet's climate is arid year round, with the exception of the rainy summer months. Because of the elevation, winter weather can be bitterly cold and windy, but rarely snowy. In the summer months of June-August the temperature gets warm but not too hot, with the average temperature in the 60s-70s during the day, and down to the 40s at night. Winter (December-February) temperatures stay around freezing. Spring and fall are still cool, with daytime temperatures ranging from 40-65 degrees Fahrenheit, and still quite cold – from the 20s to 30s – at night. Please note, July and August tend to be rainy in Lhasa, and rainstorms can be intense, though often quite short in duration.

The weather of Urumqi, Kashgar and Turpan in Western China can be extreme, with incredibly hot summers (hot days, but the cold nights typical of the arid terrain) and incredibly cold winters. In Urumqi, average winter temperatures are 5-10 degrees Fahrenheit. Spring is a bit warmer, with temperatures ranging from 50-66 degrees Fahrenheit. Summer is hot, with temperatures of 85+. The temperatures in the highlands, foothills and mountains, especially on the Chinese/Kyrgyz border will generally be cooler than those in the central desert areas.

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from weatherbase.com and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region of China you will be visiting.

International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Air China, Hainan Airlines, United Airlines, Korean Air and Asiana Airlines as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to China. **Please note** that due to the schedules of Chinese domestic flights out of Urumqi, it is **quite possible it will be necessary to overnight** in Beijing on the return, depending on your final destination and airline schedules.

Please call us at 800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.



Visas

At the time of writing, U.S. passport holders require one visa for this tour: Chinese. You may also need a visa for any additional country you fly via to join the tour.

An estimate of current visa costs for U.S. passport holders, based on standard processing time, is \$279. Your exact visa fees may differ as visa costs can depend on a number of factors, such as state of residence, processing time, and return shipping. Visa fees are always subject to change.

Standard processing in the Chinese visa section is expected to take five to ten business days. Travelers should prepare to be without their passports for that amount of time. If you plan to travel extensively in the time leading up to your MIR tour, you may need to obtain a second valid passport or use expedited processing, depending on your plans. Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding the timeline for visa processing.

Extensive pre-tour paperwork is necessary to apply for this visa. A valid passport with six months validity from the end of the tour is also required.

In the past some travelers have made their own visa arrangements instead of using MIR's preferred provider for their visa processing; either using their own visas service or attempting to process directly with the embassies/consulates. We strongly recommend you discuss it with us before choosing an alternate visa processing method, to help avoid difficulties and visa problems. **In the event that you plan to process visas without going through MIR's preferred provider, please contact us first so we can pass you detailed instructions with critical trip-specific information.**

Pre and Post-Tour Extensions

MIR can arrange for a pre- or post-tour extension in Beijing or elsewhere in China, or a post-tour stay in Siberia or Eastern Russia. MIR can book hotels, make train reservations, etc. Call us for more details.

Contact us for pricing and more details.

Also Nearby...

For more tours to this region, you may want to check out:

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Essential Tajikistan, 8 days. Rarely-visited Tajikistan is wreathed in spectacular mountains and colored with the influence of Persia, the Islamic world and Russia. Meet local people at Fergana Valley markets, explore the ruins of ancient Penjikent and share a meal in a warm Tajik home. Visit the country's capital, Dushanbe, where an airy, light-filled space is home to the modern National Museum of Tajikistan.

Essential Kazakhstan, 7 days. Begin in the new city of Astana, capital of Kazakhstan only since 1997. Fly to Chimkent and discover the historic city of Turkistan with its UNESCO-listed mausoleum of a revered Sufi sheikh. Fly to Almaty and explore spectacular Charyn Canyon, with its strange rock formations and colorful strata.

Essential Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, 13 days. Explore the markets, mosques and minarets of oasis towns on the fringes of the Kyzyl Kum and Kara Kum deserts. Here spiritual beliefs



were the greatest commodities to flow along trade routes, and civilizations blossomed amidst austere natural beauty.

Essential Uzbekistan, 10 days. Roam the great Silk Road oases of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, all of them UNESCO Sites. Admire their mosques, *madrassahs* and minarets clad in ceramic tiles the color of the desert sky.

Small Group Tours

Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans, 22 days. More than 2,000 years ago, the great trade routes that linked Europe and China opened Central Asia to foreign cultures, customs and religions. Join a modern-day caravan on an epic journey to five of these exotic countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Silk Route Odyssey: Caravan Across Uzbekistan, 15 days. The center of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is home to three of the most renowned of the Silk Road oases – Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Journey through these UNESCO Sites and the lush Fergana Valley, where Central Asia's silk production began with two cocoons hidden in the headdress of a royal Chinese bride.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Please note that no partial refunds are available for any missed days of a tour or any whole or part of a tour; accommodation, meal or any other service not utilized by the participant during the tour. The quoted price represents a package price for the services offered and an itemization of individual component costs will not be provided. Please understand there will be no exceptions to our cancellation policies regardless of your situation. Should you need to cancel your travel plans, please notify us in writing immediately. At the time we receive written notification of cancellation, the following charges apply:

Scheduled Rail Journeys by Private Train:

121 or more days prior to departure-----deposit due or paid in full of \$2,000 or \$3,000

65-120 days prior to departure-----50% of the land tour cost

64 days prior to departure or after trip departure----no refund

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...



Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.

Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books like *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.




More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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