MIR
CORPORATION

2019



Journeys to Legendary Destinations at the Crossroads of Europe & Asia

Russia ◆ Trans-Siberian Railway ◆ Mongolia ◆ China ◆ Tibet
Silk Route ◆ Central Asia ◆ Iran ◆ South Caucasus ◆ Turkey ◆ Baltics
Ukraine ◆ Belarus ◆ Moldova ◆ Balkans ◆ Central & East Europe



TO THE CROSSROADS OF EUROPE AND ASIA

Why We Go There

Why travel to places like the Republic of Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Russia? When we began more than 30 years ago, Cold War politics loomed large. Tourism infrastructure was virtually non-existent. It was the people and the little-known places on the map that drew us to the intersection of Europe and Asia.

And now, some of these "little-known places" have transformed dramatically. Where once in Tbilisi you could sip only commercially made wines produced to fulfill Soviet economic plans, today you can meet private winegrowers and taste their natural *qvevri* wines made according to an 8,000-year-old tradition. Where once the roads in Uzbekistan were so poor, and flights so unreliable that you probably wouldn't have ventured as far as the Silk Road gem of Bukhara, now you can ride a high-speed European-style train from Tashkent to Bukhara's Old Town in around four hours any day of the week. Where once Russian places as far afield as Yakutia and Kamchatka were restricted and off-limits, now those incomparably diverse and beautiful places can be reached by direct flight service from Alaska.

While today's infrastructure is unrecognizable compared to three decades past, some things, thankfully, never seem to change. You can still experience the genuine curiosity and hospitality of the warm-hearted people of these lands. Of course, politics reigns now, as it did then, yet people still yearn to connect with other people.

For more than 30 years at MIR, we have embodied a mission to help intrepid travelers discover more about this special corner of the world, and perhaps a bit more about themselves along the way. Meeting face-to-face with Georgians, Uzbeks, Russians, and hosts of others creates, in our opinion, a roadmap to better understanding today's world. We'll keep going there in 2019, and we hope you'll join us.

The monumental turquoise-domed Mir-i-Arab Madrassah sits across from the Kalon Mosque in Bukhara

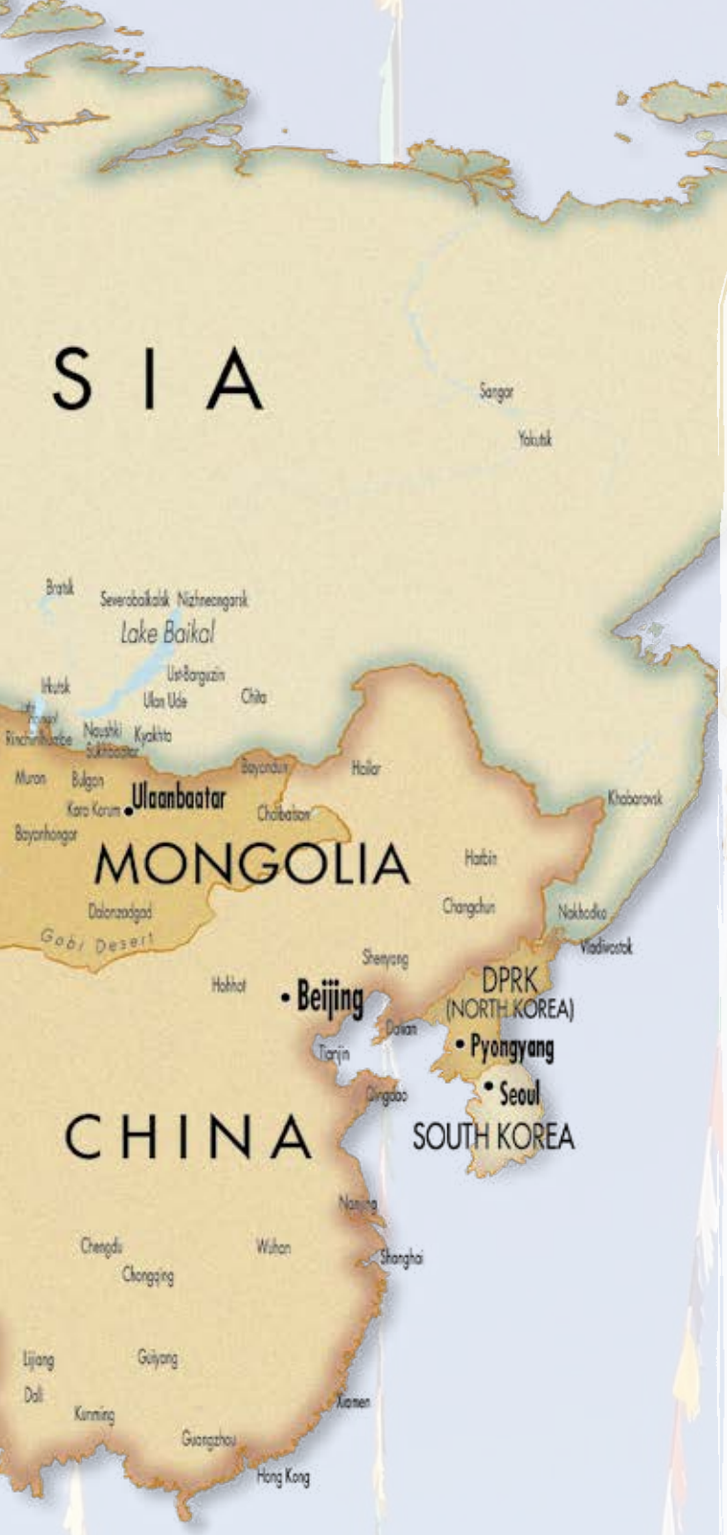
photo and cover photo: Jeremy Woodhouse

MIR's Destinations



Do you crave travel to under-explored places? So do we!

Experience freedom from the familiar and let MIR guide you to the crossroads of Europe and Asia. See where we can take you.



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MIR CORPORATION

2015 TRAVEL WEEKLY MAGELLAN AWARDS SILVER AWARD WINNER

2016 TRAVEL WEEKLY MAGELLAN AWARDS SILVER AWARD WINNER

2016 TRAVEL WEEKLY MAGELLAN AWARDS GOLD AWARD WINNER

2017 TRAVEL WEEKLY MAGELLAN AWARDS SILVER AWARD WINNER

2017 TRAVEL WEEKLY MAGELLAN AWARDS GOLD AWARD WINNER

Prayer flags wave over the sacred city of Shigatse, Tibet

photo: Martin Klimenta

PRIVATE JOURNEYS

Your Dream, Our Design

Thoughtfully Handcrafted
– or –
Researched & Ready

MIR has specialized in personalized, private journeys for more than 30 years. We love to take your ideas and weave them into a trip tailored especially for you. An original itinerary to the crossroads of Europe and Asia can be tailored to anyone, from individuals and family groups to special interest, alumni, and museum associations. Travel wherever, however, and with whomever you like, relying on our expert assistance.

THOUGHTFULLY HANDCRAFTED

THOUGHTFULLY HANDCRAFTED

At the Crossroads of Europe & Asia

This vast, varied, and under-explored region includes Siberia's Lake Baikal, the earth's deepest and oldest freshwater lake; the bazaars of Bukhara, piled with pomegranates and silvery grapes; and the ancient cultures, cuisines, and traditions of the South Caucasus. Our destination know-how and personal attention combine with knowledgeable local guides to create a memorable travel experience.

Consult

Tell us what your dream is for this trip: Your personal travel specialist will listen, ask questions, and make creative suggestions.

Create

In collaboration with you, we'll design a personalized itinerary matching your specifications of place, pace, duration, and date.

Coordinate

We'll distill the details of your dream, presenting you with a slim folder of well-organized documents, and you'll soon be on your way.

Commence!

Escape the everyday, and dive into your destination – with in-country transportation, lodging, knowledgeable local guides, and private drivers ready and waiting.

RESEARCHED & READY

FLEXIBLE ESSENTIAL

Prefer that we suggest an itinerary for you? No problem. Our series of pre-planned Flexible Essential Private Journeys are classic independent itineraries already researched and ready to book. There are lots of them to choose from, covering all our core destinations at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Contact us for descriptive itineraries, solo traveler pricing, and booking details.

A solo ride to a sacred peak on Olkhon Island in Lake Baikal

photo: Vladimir Kvashnin



"The guides and drivers were excellent. Wonderful trip — organized, with excellent accommodations. I will recommend to others. MIR knows what it is doing!"

H. Temkin

Portland, OR



"It was a superb trip...beautifully paced with a wide variety of experiences and lots of surprises along the way, like ice cream treats now and again, market stops en route, and a ballet in Tashkent. In fact, the entire country was a surprise at every turn. I can't speak highly enough of this trip and of every aspect of the itinerary. Uzbekistan is a nation to be admired for its positive outlook towards the future. This was one of the best tours I've been on. Would mark MIR as the best tour company I've ever travelled with, from start to finish."

Dianne G.
Toronto, ON

MIR SIGNATURE SMALL GROUP TOURS

At the Crossroads of Europe & Asia

Designed by Travelers for Travelers

Join a small and diverse group of world travelers for in-depth discoveries of both world-class sites and overlooked corners. We take you places you didn't even know you wanted to go – into a Moscow apartment for an intimate dinner party; over the threshold of a Mongolian *ger* to share tea with a nomad family; into a classroom of Georgian children who greet you in their best English.

Our line-up of Small Group Tours boasts creative itineraries, great value, and ingenious extras. Each is different from the next, but they all have these qualities in common:

Intimate

MIR Small Group Tours are intentionally small, with a firm upper limit of 16 participants (Explorer Series trips are capped at 12).

Experiential

Each tour embraces our "MIR Signature Experiences" – relevant, real, and sometimes surprising elements that are challenging to find on your own.

Distinctive

Choose from our Cultural Series, offering a wealth of uncommon experiences; Premier Series, adding best-in-class hotels and innovative cultural components; and Explorer Series, for more adventurous travelers.

Thoughtfully Led

MIR tour managers and talented guides are on hand to identify on-the-spot opportunities and focus on catering to the interests of the group.

Comprehensive

A dedicated MIR travel planner oversees the details of your all-inclusive land trip, providing customized trip extensions, visa guidance, and air tickets from our in-house agency, as desired.

On their way to the horse games in Chon-Kemin, Kyrgyzstan

photo: Jeremy Woodhouse



"Excellent. A really great first train experience by staff that know exactly how to manage a difficult area. Extremely well-managed and great service. A really nice way to see destinations otherwise inaccessible."

J. & R. Fejfar
Linden, VA

RAIL JOURNEYS BY PRIVATE TRAIN

An Exceptional Way to Travel

Traverse Legendary Routes in Convenient Comfort

Rail journeys by private train are in a class of their own, sweetening the dream of Old World rail travel with modern amenities – particularly pleasant on such epic routes as the Trans-Siberian and the Silk Road. A sampling of our journeys: Ride across the biggest country on earth, Russia; roll into Mongolia for the amazing Naadam Festival; or cross formerly forbidden frontiers into Iran.

Romantic

Nothing compares to train travel. Rocked to sleep by the rhythm of the rails, you wake in the heart of a celebrated city, dine with sophisticated travelers, and relax deeply as the world scrolls by your window.

Convenient

Waste no time packing and unpacking, sleep in your own comfy cabin (most of them with en suite facilities), and disembark for fascinating forays into irresistible communities for hand-picked highlights.

Comfortable

Travel in style aboard your choice of trains, ranging from the comfortable *Tsar's Gold* to the luxury *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express* and *Golden Eagle Danube Express*.

Epic

These uncommonly comprehensive itineraries allow you to catch all the highlights in dozens of countries across thousands of miles, in a way that only a well-planned rail journey can do.

Tailored

Your dedicated MIR travel specialist can handcraft a private extension, provide access to our in-house air expert, give you guidance on visas, and answer all your questions about the trains and destinations.

A classic steam locomotive hauls the Circumbaikal train along the lakeshore

photo: Bill Adams

WHAT SETS MIR APART?

We love it here in our chosen corner of the world – we have found it to be endlessly rewarding, both as travelers and as human beings. Our primary focus for more than 30 years and counting is on bringing people together to discover more about each other and, consequently, about themselves.

Passion

Exploring the countries at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and guiding fellow travelers here, has been our overriding passion since 1986 – it's all we do.

People

Our Seattle-based travel specialists, overseas affiliated team and international crew of tour managers are hand-picked professionals who share an unbridled enthusiasm for the destinations and a deep dedication to serving travelers.

Personalization

Our travelers don't just pass through; they tap into the culture through uncommon and inspired experiences. It is our greatest pleasure to personalize the journey – a pursuit of ours for the last three decades.

Peace – and Peace of Mind

MIR means "peace" and "world" in Russian; to travelers it means "peace of mind." Some travelers have told us MIR also means "**M**ake **I**t **R**emarkable."



"I enjoyed the well-managed tour, which seemed just about logistically perfect."

M. Leydic-Boyd
Davidson, NC



A volcano steams in uneasy splendor on the remote Kamchatka Peninsula

photo: Bill Adams

WHY TRAVEL WITH MIR?

Since 1986, our passion has been to guide travelers far from the familiar to the crossroads of Europe and Asia. We specialize in destinations that few people venture to, many of them considered obscure, remote, difficult, or controversial. If your travel dreams involve unfamiliar and unconventional places from Tibet to Tashkent to Tehran – or anyplace in between – we strive to make your travel dreams come true.

Reliability

As travelers ourselves, we share your urge to discover, connect with, and understand the world through travel, and we endeavor to produce extraordinary travel experiences for you.

Reputation

A company doesn't last more than 30 years in the travel business without a solid track record. Prestigious alumni associations travel with us, well-respected travel magazines have acclaimed us, and our trips and catalogs win awards.

Relationships

Over the last three decades, we have cultivated relationships with affiliate field offices on the ground in Western Russia, Siberia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, and partnerships that stretch far beyond.

Resourcefulness

We offer inventive itineraries designed by people who've been there, backed up by the dedication and determination to take on virtually any travel challenge.

"The trip offered many discoveries about a part of the world few people know much about. Fascinating history, exotic people — no two days were alike! Our guide always 'connected the dots' historically, and blended the history with current events and knowledge of people's lives and concerns."

C. Dobson
Scottsdale, AZ



Tracks in the snow lead to Russia's Golden Ring

photo: Jonathan Irish



RUSSIA

Russia, the largest country on earth, is quite simply larger than life; so big and diverse that each season produces an incomparable range of uniquely Russian experiences. Red Square in a light snowfall, St. Petersburg's glowing canals under a midnight sunset, reindeer on the Kamchatka Peninsula pawing the tundra for lichen, the almost tropical transparency of Lake Baikal's waters, the vastness of the *taiga* streaming by the windows of a Trans-Siberian train – these are just a few of Russia's treasures.

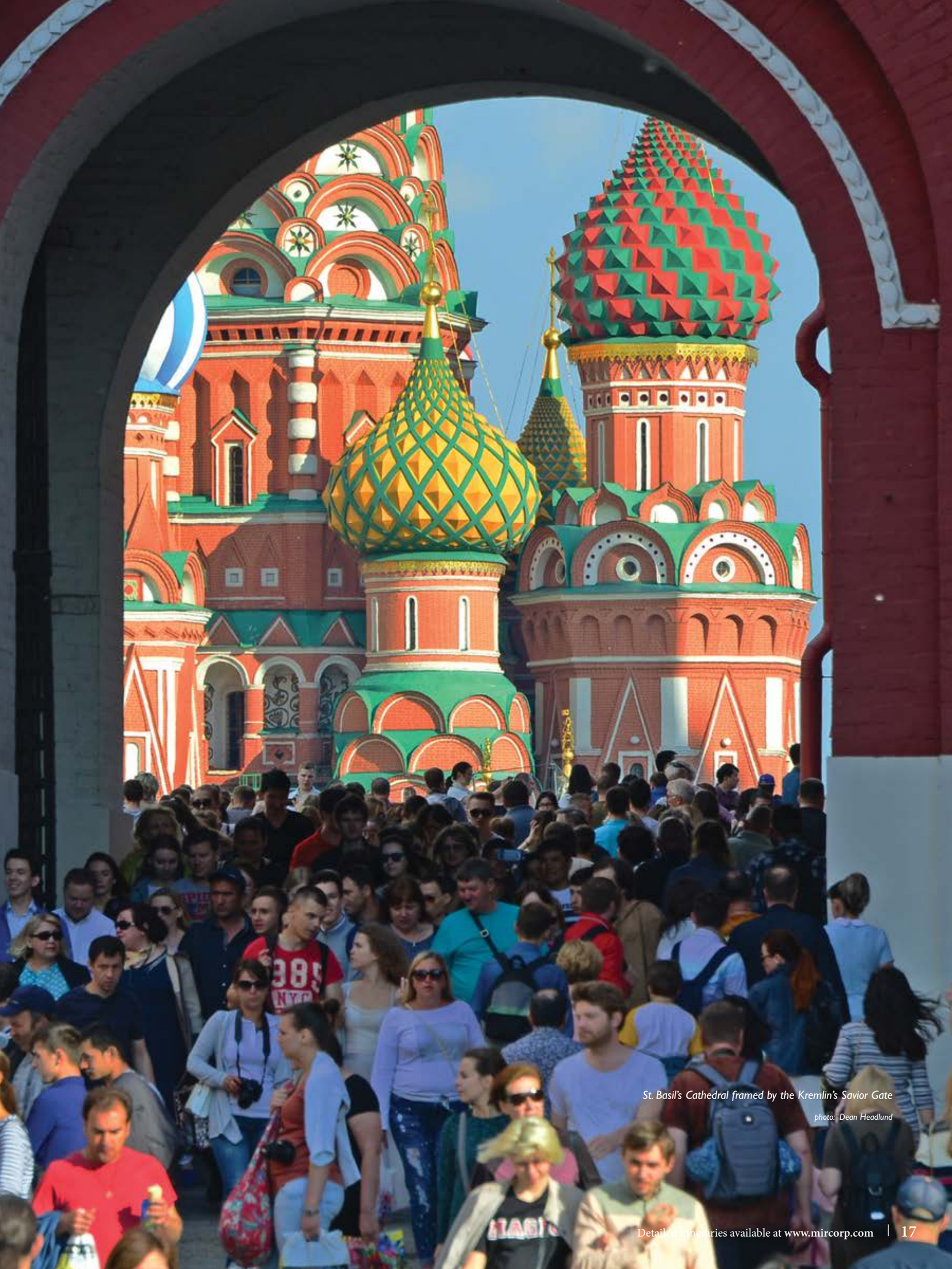
✣ WESTERN RUSSIA, SIBERIA AND RUSSIAN FAR EAST ✣

Choose from:

Small Group Tours
Custom & Private Trips
Rail Journeys by Private Train

"Truly exceptional. Learned a lot. Traveling on this tour upgraded our ideas. I was amazed by the culture, architecture, people, and art. Our Tour Manager was terrific! Tops! Fabulous in skill, knowledge, care, and info."

R. Kellen
Toronto, ON



St. Basil's Cathedral framed by the Kremlin's Savior Gate

photo: Dean Headlund



Private Journeys to Russia

Your Dream, Our Design

Thoughtfully Handcrafted
– or –
Researched & Ready

MIR has been specializing in personalized, private journeys for more than 30 years. We love crafting original itineraries to the crossroads of Europe and Asia that fit your travel preferences. Travel wherever, however, and with whomever you like, relying on our expert assistance.

Scarlet hallway at the Usupoff Palace in St. Petersburg

photo: Jonathan Irish

Thoughtfully Handcrafted

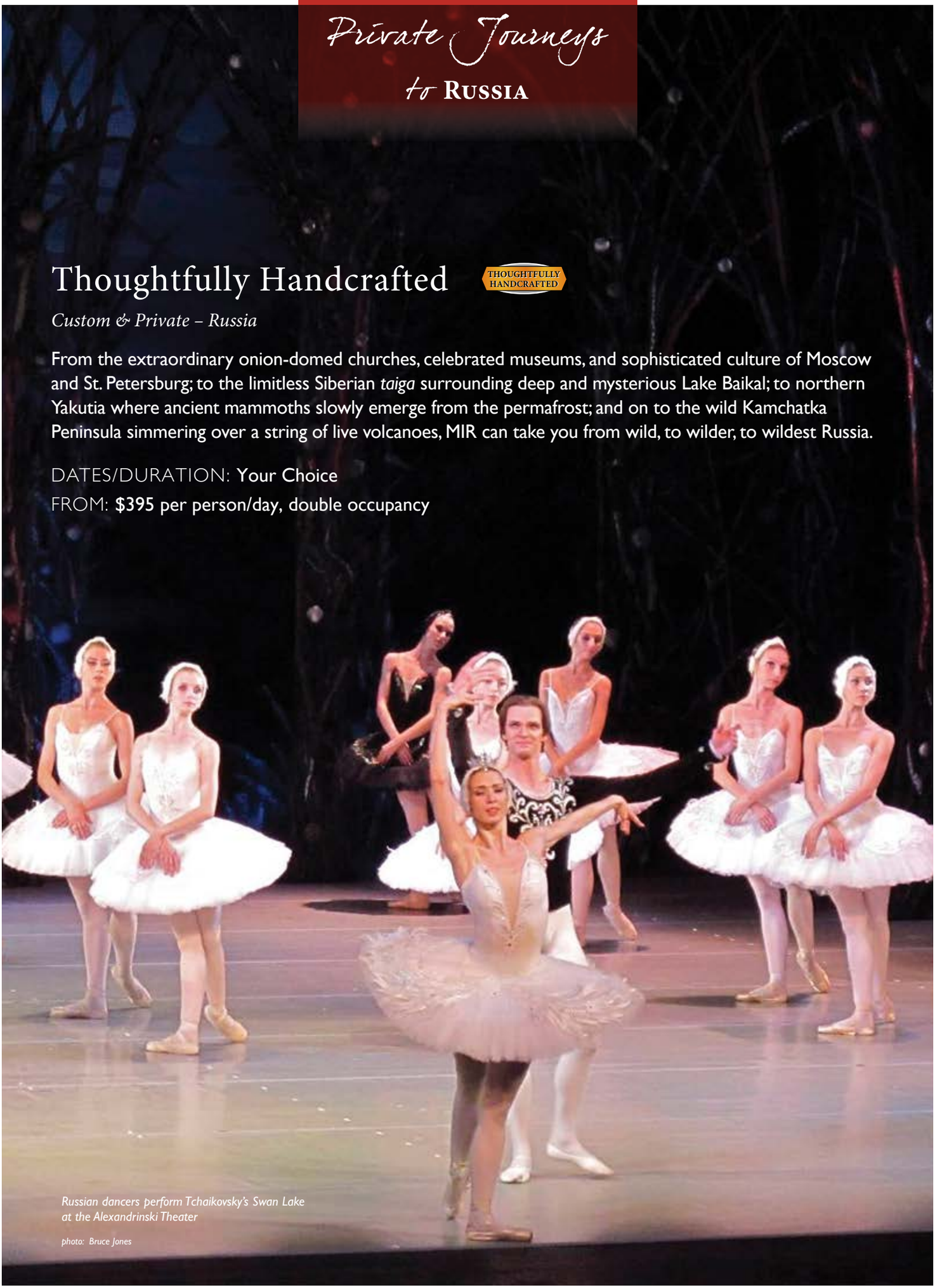
THOUGHTFULLY HANDCRAFTED

Custom & Private – Russia

From the extraordinary onion-domed churches, celebrated museums, and sophisticated culture of Moscow and St. Petersburg; to the limitless Siberian *taiga* surrounding deep and mysterious Lake Baikal; to northern Yakutia where ancient mammoths slowly emerge from the permafrost; and on to the wild Kamchatka Peninsula simmering over a string of live volcanoes, MIR can take you from wild, to wilder, to wildest Russia.

DATES/DURATION: **Your Choice**

FROM: **$395** per person/day, double occupancy



Russian dancers perform Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake at the Alexandrinski Theater

photo: Bruce Jones

Private Journeys to Russia













Researched & Ready

FLEXIBLE ESSENTIAL

Prefer that we suggest an itinerary for you? No problem. Our series of pre-planned Flexible Essential Private Journeys are classic independent itineraries already researched and ready to book. Contact us for a descriptive itinerary, solo traveler pricing, and booking details.

Essential Siberia

Rolling Steppe, Lakeshore, and Taiga

Near UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, survey the Mongolian, Cossack, Buryat, and Buddhist heritage of south Siberia, and admire its overwhelming natural beauty.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/7 Days

FROM: **$2,495** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Essential St. Petersburg

Imperial Splendors of the Czars

Visit St. Petersburg's imperial palaces, explore the Hermitage's brilliant art collection, and enjoy home-cooked traditional Russian cuisine in a private home.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/7 Days

FROM: **$3,495** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Private Journeys to Russia











photos: Jonathan Irish, Vladimir Kvashnin, Max Sjöblom, Jered Gorman, Douglas Grimes, Kevin Testa, Bill Adams

Essential Russia

Survey of Moscow and St. Petersburg

Explore world-class museums, three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, gilded palaces, and onion-domed churches on this illuminating exploration of Russia's quintessential cities.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/7 Days

FROM: **$2,995** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Essential Golden Ring

NEW!

Road Trip Through Russia's Heartland

Circle the enchanting towns and villages of Russia's historic Golden Ring, admiring ancient kremlins, wooden churches, amazing frescoes, and time-honored handicrafts.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/8 Days

FROM: **$4,495** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Inside the Russian Space Program

From Star City to the Baikonur Cosmodrome



photo: Douglas Grimes

Witness the power of a Soyuz launch, Baikonur Cosmodrome

SMALL GROUP TOUR

10 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$13,995*** per person, double occupancy
(*includes internal air, subject to change*)
Single supplement $1,095

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

****Cosmonaut training not included; call for prices*

Group Size 4-16 travelers

2019 Provisional Land Tour Dates
July 13-22✦

✦*Note: Launch dates can fluctuate*

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay with an optional post-tour to St. Petersburg or the Golden Ring. Contact us for details.

This electrifying exploration of the Russian Space Program is an incredibly close encounter with space flight – the manned launch of a Soyuz spacecraft. In Moscow, tour Star City, Russia's premier cosmonaut training facility, where you can choose to participate in optional cosmonaut training yourself. At Baikonur, the remote Russian launch facility on the Kazakh steppe, witness the rollout of the Soyuz and the Raising of the Rocket ceremony. Rub shoulders with top international space officials, space veterans, and family of the next space crew, and from a special viewing area, witness the heart-stirring launch of the Soyuz on its way to the International Space Station.

Days 1-2: Moscow Tour the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center (GCTC) in once-classified Star City, the premier training facility for Russian cosmonauts and foreign astronauts. Meet a Russian cosmonaut and hear first-hand accounts about life in space.

Day 3: Moscow, Optional Cosmonaut Training Day Those prepared for optional cosmonaut training, such as G-force training on the largest centrifuge, or Orlan space suit training, head for the GCTC today. The rest of the group will tour the Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics, and if timing permits the Energia Space Museum.

Days 4-7: Baikonur, Kazakhstan Board a flight to Baikonur Cosmodrome on the Kazakh steppe. Walk alongside the Soyuz rocket during its rollout to the launch pad, together with the press, military personnel, cosmonauts, and their relatives. Appreciate the pioneers of space along the Alley of Cosmonauts.

Experience compelling behind-the-scenes events, including the official Ready-To-Go Report, and visit the original Gagarin living quarters. From a special viewing area, witness the thrilling manned launch of the Soyuz to the International Space Station.

Days 8-10: Moscow Back in Moscow, visit UNESCO-listed Novodevichy Convent and Cemetery, where such luminaries as Chekhov, Khrushchev, and a number of cosmonauts are buried. Explore the Cold War Museum underground bunker before celebrating with a final farewell dinner.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Witness the heart-stirring launch of a Soyuz spacecraft on its way to the International Space Station
- Enjoy unparalleled access to VIP viewing areas and briefing sessions
- Rub shoulders with cosmodrome workers, space veterans, and officials at Baikonur



photo: Christopher Prentiss Michel

The international crew reporting for duty



Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages

Moscow, the Golden Ring, and St. Petersburg

SMALL GROUP TOUR

11 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$6,395 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $1,195

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 4-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
May 24-June 3 • July 26-August 5 •
August 30-September 9

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in St. Petersburg, or venture to Petrozavodsk and Kizhi Island. Contact us for details.



photo: Kevin Testa

St. Petersburg's Mikhailovsky Theater was built during the heyday of the czars for the production of French plays



photo: Richard Fejfar

Church of John the Baptist's Nativity in Sergiev Posad

MIR Signature Experiences

- Experience a warmhearted welcome at a meal in a Russian home
- Tour a Sergiev Posad workshop where nesting *matrioshka* dolls are painted by hand
- Observe craftspeople making lacquer miniature boxes in Fedoskino

Discover where Russian art, architecture, and culture began. In between the urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, experience the Russian countryside. The oldest and loveliest churches in Russia, Sergiev Posad's wooden crafts, and Fedoskino's glowing lacquer boxes all put a shine on Russia's Golden Ring.

Days 1-2: Moscow Begin in Moscow, the political and economic center of Russia. Explore the Kremlin, Red Square, St. Basil's Cathedral, the Armory Museum, and UNESCO-listed Novodevichy Convent with its famous cemetery.

Days 3-4: Vladimir, Suzdal, Plyos, Kostroma Set out through the Russian countryside, passing clusters of *dachas* and tiny villages. Stop at Vladimir and Suzdal to see the UNESCO-listed 12th and 13th century churches. Drive to Plyos and enjoy authentic Russian cuisine in a private home. In 12th century Kostroma, visit the Romanov family chambers.

Days 5-7: Yaroslavl, Rostov, Sergiev Posad, Fedoskino Visit historic Yaroslavl and admire the red brick churches decorated with ceramic tiles crafted by members of the town's renowned *posad*, or craft center. Stop in Rostov, a beautiful old city celebrated for its immense kremlin. Pause at Sergiev Posad to admire its 14th century monastery and learn about *matrioshka* doll-making. Visit the Museum of Lacquer Miniatures in Fedoskino, namesake of the hand-painted lacquer boxes made here. Return to Moscow and board the afternoon train to St. Petersburg.

Days 8-11: St. Petersburg Spend three exhilarating days in St. Petersburg, dipping into the riches of the Hermitage, touring St. Isaac's Cathedral, wandering the imperial estate of Peterhof with its gilded fountains, and admiring the expertly restored Amber Room inside Catherine's Palace.



Return to the North Caucasus

North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan


photo: Michel Behar

The necropolis of Dargavs in Vladikavkaz is sometimes called the "City of the Dead"

SMALL GROUP TOUR

14 Days
Explorer Series Land Tour
$6,395 per person, double occupancy
Partial single supplement $550 (see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 6-12 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
July 15-28

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with Village Traditions of the South Caucasus, page 80. Contact us for details.

Join an adventure to the fascinating North Caucasus region, today experiencing a revitalization of tourism. Discover the ravishing mountain landscapes, medley of cultures, and overflowing hospitality of North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan, where mountain tribes have lived in isolation for millennia.

Days 1-2: Mineralnye Vody, Pyatigorsk Transfer from Mineralnye Vody airport to Pyatigorsk, one of Russia's oldest health resorts, visiting the mud baths in nearby Essentuki.

Days 3-5: Tsey, Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia) Drive to the mountain resort of Tsey, admiring the craggy peaks, waterfalls, and medieval stone defense towers. Explore the necropolis of Dargavs, sometimes called the "City of the Dead." In Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia, enjoy a cooking class, and sit in on a rehearsal of a traditional dance ensemble.

Days 6-7: Ingushetia, Grozny (Chechnya), Lake Kezenoy-am Enter the gorgeous mountain region of Ingushetia. Next is Grozny, the ravaged but rebuilt capital of Chechnya, featuring a handsome new mosque, a renovated church, and a downtown filled with shops and restaurants. Admire alpine Lake Kezenoy-am, the largest lake in the North Caucasus.

Days 8-10: Gunib (Dagestan), Kubachi Drive into Dagestan, the biggest and most diverse of the North Caucasus republics, with more than 30 languages spoken. In a series of villages, visit pottery studios, a workshop where women make sheepskin robes for shepherds, and the homes of jewelry makers. Experience Dagestani hospitality in a rustic homestay in the village of Kubachi.

Days 11-14: Derbent, Makhachkala Derbent is the southernmost city in Russia, set on a narrow lowland along the Caspian Sea. The massive UNESCO-listed Naryn-Kala Fortress, constructed by the Sassanian Persians in the 5th century, dominates the old city. Continue to Makhachkala, capital of Dagestan, a modern town on the Caspian Sea with a lively beach scene.

Optional pre-tour: An optional 8-day pre-tour from Sochi to Pyatigorsk is available. Contact us for details.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Enjoy a thrilling demonstration of swordsmanship with the traditional Circassian saber, the *shashka*
- Explore the recently rebuilt capital of Chechnya, modern Grozny
- Discover one of Russia's least-visited UNESCO sites, the ancient Sassanian Persian fortress of Naryn-Kala in Derbent


photo: Michel Behar

Traditional crafts are alive in Dagestan



Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits & Nomads

The Gobi Desert, A Country Naadam Celebration, Lake Baikal

SMALL GROUP TOUR

16 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$8,995 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $600
(*economy class, subject to change*)
Single supplement $1,795

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
June 11-26

Stay a little longer... Come early to visit Kara Korum in Mongolia, or extend your stay and travel the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok. Contact us for details.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Cheer your favorite archer, wrestler, or jockey at an old-school local Naadam celebration
- Enjoy dinner and an evening concert with a family of Old Believers
- Experience a homestay with a rural family, and take a boat over beautiful Lake Baikal's clear waters



photo: Alla Shishkina

Gobi Desert cocktail party at the foot of the Flaming Cliffs

Beautiful and exotic, Siberia and Mongolia are worlds away from the traditional beaten path. Explore the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar, then fly to the red sands of the Gobi Desert. Celebrate a local Naadam Festival, far from the glitz and ruckus of the capital. In Siberia, take to the waters of great Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake on earth, and ride a section of the fabled Trans-Siberian Railway.

Days 1-3: Ulaanbaatar, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park Explore the museums and monasteries of Ulaanbaatar, where over half of Mongolia's people live. Time permitting, take a day trip from the capital to the grasslands of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, mingling with nomads along the way. From Ulaanbaatar, fly to the Gobi Desert, where the arid heat preserved troves of ancient dinosaur bones.

Days 4-6: Gobi Desert, Local Naadam, Ulaanbaatar Experience traditional *ger* living in the Gobi and walk in the footsteps of 20th century explorer Roy Chapman Andrews. Celebrate with local crowds at a regional Naadam Festival, which is to the Ulaanbaatar Naadam Festival like a county fair is to a giant state fair. Return to Ulaanbaatar.

Days 7-10: Irkutsk, Listvyanka Fly to Irkutsk, home to early political exiles, to admire the traditional wooden houses and attend a classical concert in the Decembrist House Museum. Board a private boat for a spectacular cruise on Lake Baikal tracing the old Circumbaikal Railway. Arrive in Listvyanka village and relax in a delightful Siberian lakeshore lodge.

Day 11: Aboard the Trans-Siberian Experience life aboard the legendary Trans-Siberian Railway on the day-long leg between Irkutsk and Ulan Ude.

Days 12-16: Ulan Ude, Ust-Barguzin, Lake Baikal, Olkhon Island, Irkutsk Tour Ulan Ude's important Buddhist monastery, and visit a village of Old Believers, descendants of 17th century Orthodox Christians exiled by Catherine the Great. Wind your way through the remote Barguzin Valley to homestays in rural Ust-Barguzin, and boat across Lake Baikal to search for freshwater seals around the Ushkaniye Islands. Spend the night on Olkhon Island before a festive farewell dinner in Irkutsk.



photo: Helge Pedersen

Singing the old songs in Siberia



Siberian Odyssey: Legends of Lake Baikal & Tuva

From Olkhon Island to the Valley of the Czars



photo: Vladimir Kvashnin

Olkhon Island shaman ready to perform a ritual

SMALL GROUP TOUR

13 Days
Explorer Series Land Tour
$6,895 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $600
(*economy class, subject to change*)
Partial single supplement $795 (see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 4-12 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
July 28-August 9

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay and explore more of Moscow, or come early for a visit to Mongolia. Contact us for details.

Explore South Siberia, a remote and atmospheric land where mounted Scythians thundered across the steppe long ago. Meet the Buryats of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal and the Tuvan and Khakass people, whose Mongolian neighbors imbued them with Buddhism, shamanism, and *khoomei*, or throat-singing.

Days 1-4: Irkutsk, Listvyanka, Lake Baikal, Olkhon Island
Arrive in Irkutsk, and the next day drive to Listvyanka village on the shore of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal. Take a ferry ride to forested Olkhon Island, where indigenous Buryats believe the lake's gods live. Enjoy a short hike in beautiful Pribaikalsky National Park and meet an Olkhon shaman.

Days 5-6: Irkutsk Attend a private concert in the Decembrist Museum in Irkutsk, and time permitting, climb to the belltower of the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross to enjoy a concert of chimes by a master bell ringer. Fly to Kyzyl, capital of the Republic of Tuva.

Days 7-9: Tuva, Shushenskoye Explore remote and beautiful Tuva, whose people have adopted many of the cultural traditions of Mongolia. Attend a shamanist ceremony and discover Tuvan throat-singing, an eerie-sounding musical form in which one person produces several sounds simultaneously. Visit the village of Samagaltai, Tuva's former capital, to visit with a nomadic steppe family. Here, learn the art of making Tuvan cheese and get a private throat-singing lesson. Venture to the famous Arzhan II excavations in Turan, in a place known as the "Valley of the Czars," where ancient Scythian horsemen buried their royalty in rich *kurgan*, and continue to Shushenskoye, an obscure Siberian village where Lenin was exiled.

Days 10-13: Abakan, Moscow Travel overland through the mountains and valleys of southwestern Siberia to Abakan, capital of Khakassia, a small republic established by Turkic-speaking tribes in the 8th century. Enjoy a Khakassian folk performance before flying to Moscow for one last night.



photo: Alla Shishkina

Family ger in Samagaltai, former capital of Tuva

MIR Signature Experiences

- Explore sacred Olkhon Island, sampling local *ukha* – Baikal fish soup
- Experience a traditional shaman ceremony in remote Tuva
- Discover the other-worldly sounds of throat-singing at a traditional performance



Remote Russia: Yakutia & Kamchatka

Lands of Frost & Fire

SMALL GROUP TOUR



photo: Max Sjöblom

In the Kingdom of Permafrost, Yakutsk

14 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$7,695 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal helicopter flight $1,400
(subject to change)
Single supplement $875

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
August 6-19

Stay a little longer... Explore Siberia's Lake Baikal before your tour, or add a post-tour to Vladivostok and the Amur Tiger Rehabilitation Center outside the city. Contact us for details.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Take a day trip from Yakutsk to UNESCO-listed Lena Pillars Nature Park to admire the 650-foot stone columns towering over the river
- Break bread with an indigenous Yakut family in their village
- Helicopter over smoking volcanoes on your way to the Valley of the Geysers in some of the world's wildest landscapes



photo: Bill Adams

Young indigenous dancers on the Kamchatka Peninsula



Explore the remote corners of Russia, including Yakutia, a challenging northern frontier known for ancient mammoths and diamonds, and the wild Kamchatka Peninsula, uneasily perched on the Pacific Ring of Fire.

Days 1-3: Yakutsk Arrive in Yakutsk, capital of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), where more than 40% of the land sits above the Arctic Circle. Survey the fantastic ice sculptures of the Kingdom of Permafrost, and tour the Permafrost Research Institute, a 66-foot shaft in the frozen ground. Visit the factory of one of Russia's largest producers of finished diamonds, mined here in Yakutia. Admire the Treasury of Yakutia exhibition, and sit in on a performance featuring traditional instruments at the Music and Folklore Museum of the Peoples of Yakutia.

Days 4-6: Yakutsk, Lena Pillars, Tyokhtyur village Cruise along the Lena River to UNESCO-listed Lena Pillars Nature Park, where limestone columns up to 650 feet high tower over the river. Explore the Orto Doidu Ethnographic Park and the Yakut village of Tyokhtyur, enjoying lunch in the home of a local Yakut family. Tour the Mammoth Museum, focusing on the wild mammoths that roamed the area over 40,000 years ago.

Days 7-8: Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Valley of the Geysers Fly to the wild Kamchatka Peninsula, landing at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, surrounded by three imposing volcanoes. Board a helicopter for the trip to the UNESCO-listed Valley of the Geysers, where geysers, mud pots, thermal springs, and steam vents erupt from the valley floor. During the flight, observe the Uzon Caldera, formed over 225,000 years ago.

Days 9-11: Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Esso Board a boat to cruise on Avacha Bay, one of the largest in the world. Drive through wild landscapes to the village of Esso to spend some time visiting with the two major indigenous peoples of Kamchatka, the Koryak and the Even. Visit the Koryak and Even ethnographic museum and art gallery, and enjoy a folk performance of traditional song and dance.

Days 12-14: Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Avacha Volcano Hop aboard a six-wheel truck for the drive to the foot of Avacha on a rugged track that climbs 15 miles upward to the base camp. If you choose, set off for a walk to the top of 3,780-foot Camel Mountain. Gather back in town for a festive dinner to toast the conclusion of the adventure.

Russian Winter Wonderland

New Year's in St. Petersburg with Moscow and Suzdal

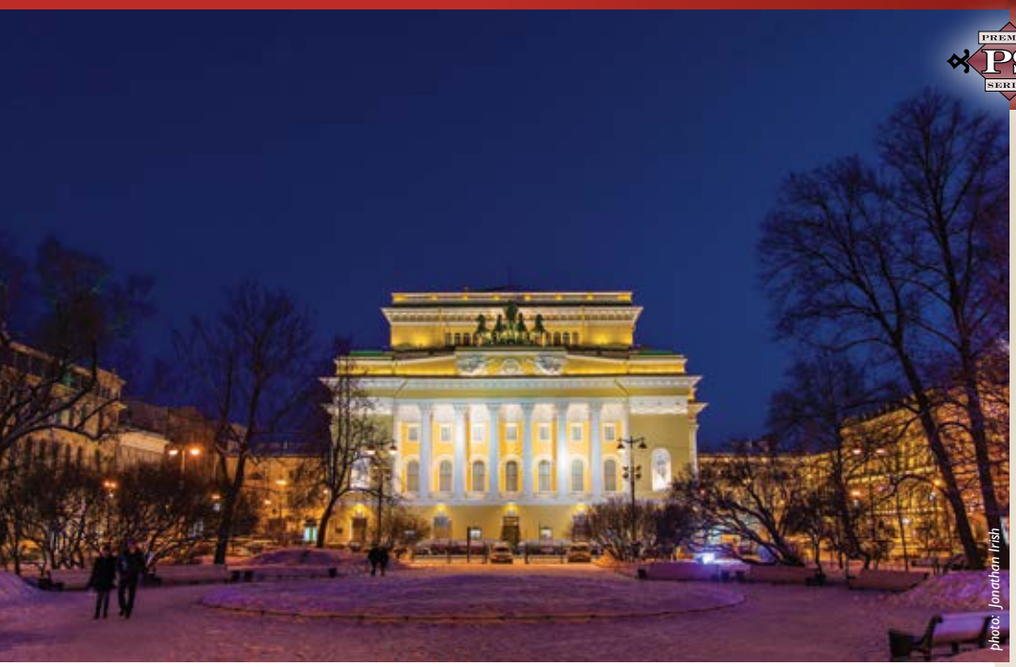


photo: Jonathon Irish

A winter's night at St. Petersburg's Pushkin Theater

SMALL GROUP TOUR

10 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$5,695 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 4-16 travelers

2019 & 2020 Land Tour Dates
December 29, 2018-January 7, 2019 •
December 29, 2019-January 7, 2020

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in St. Petersburg or Moscow. Contact us for details.


photo: Meaghan Samuels

Winter is high season for the ballet and opera in Russia

Nobody loves New Year's Eve like the Russians do – it's the most festive holiday of the year, with parties, presents, and champagne toasts. This celebratory tour revolves around New Year's in glorious St. Petersburg, with Moscow merrymaking and a visit to 12th century Suzdal to round out the festivities.

Days 1-5: St. Petersburg, New Year's Celebrations An elegant champagne reception greets you in St. Petersburg. Then for four days, explore this 300-year-old imperial capital envisioned by Peter the Great, visiting the Gold and Malachite Rooms at the Winter Palace, majestic St. Isaac's Cathedral, and the Usupoff Palace. Join a backstage tour at one of St. Petersburg's premier theaters before enjoying an evening ballet or opera performance.

Ring in the New Year at a late-night dinner in a Russian home, feasting, raising toasts, and singing songs. After a day to rest and explore, board the afternoon express train to Moscow.

Day 6: Moscow Experience Moscow as few travelers have, at its most graceful and serene, resting beneath a blanket of fresh snow. Survey the cemetery at UNESCO-listed Novodevichy Convent, where some of Russia's luminaries are buried, and perhaps take an evening walk on Red Square. Tour the medieval Kremlin, including the Armory Museum, where Russia's treasures are guarded.

Days 7-10: Vladimir, Suzdal, Moscow Visit the 12th century Cathedral of the Assumption in Vladimir, where street traffic still passes under the Golden Gate, rebuilt by Catherine the Great. Drive to little Suzdal, once the grand capital of several medieval principalities. Admire its 16th century churches, their vaulted ceilings lit by flickering candles, with the unearthly beauty of Russian hymns filling the air. Return to Moscow to visit the splendid Tretyakov Gallery, encompassing Russian art from the 11th century to the present.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Ring in the New Year at an intimate St. Petersburg party
- Experience an exhilarating horse-drawn sleigh ride
- Bear witness to Russia's early heritage in the UNESCO-listed churches of Vladimir and Suzdal



Arctic Explorer by Private Train

Quest for the Northern Lights

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

12 Days
5 nights hotels, 6 nights aboard the *Golden Eagle* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour
Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share	$12,595
Silver Class, single	$17,795
Gold Class, twin share	$14,695
Gold Class, single	$20,995
Imperial Suite, twin share	$24,495

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 & 2020 Land Tour Dates
February 1-12, 2019 • December 29, 2019-January 9, 2020 • February 1-12, 2020++

++Lock in 2019 prices for 2020 trips: Book 2020 trips by December 31, 2018!

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in Moscow or St. Petersburg. Contact us for details.

More options... A rail journey by luxury private train that travels across the Arctic Circle – catching the "White Nights" of summer – is also available. Contact us for pricing and details.



The journey begins with champagne





Northern Lights magic above the Arctic Circle

Join a band of rail voyagers venturing above the Arctic Circle on a winter hunt for the spectacular Northern Lights. Head north from beautiful St. Petersburg to the frosty twilight of the polar region, in the warmth and comfort of a deluxe private train.

Days 1-3: St. Petersburg Explore Russia's cultural capital, with visits to the Hermitage, Catherine's Palace, the famed Amber Room, majestic St. Isaac's Cathedral, and cosmopolitan Nevsky Prospekt. Board the private train and enjoy a signature caviar dinner as you head north.

Days 4-7: Arctic Circle, Kirkenes, search for Northern Lights Cross the Arctic Circle and learn more about the Northern Lights from a guest astronomer. Enter Norway by bus, arriving in the polar town of Kirkenes. Take a tour of the Snow Hotel, whose igloo-like rooms glow blue in the night. Search for the Northern Lights across the *Aurora Borealis* Zone on two consecutive evenings in the comfort of a cozy coach. Ride a dogsled behind a team of huskies and introduce yourself to a herd of reindeer. Re-board the train, keeping a continued lookout for an appearance of the Northern Lights.

Day 8: Murmansk, search for Northern Lights Arrive in the port city of Murmansk, headquarters of Russia's Northern Fleet; the warm waters of the Gulf Stream keep it ice-free for most of the winter. Board the world's first nuclear-powered icebreaker, the *Lenin*. As the train rolls back south, there is still a chance to observe the Northern Lights.

Day 9: Petrozavodsk Make a stop in Petrozavodsk on Lake Onega.

Day 10-12: Moscow, Vladimir, Suzdal In the capital, explore Red Square and the Kremlin, touring the Armory Museum where Russia's historic treasures are on display. In two of Russia's UNESCO-listed Golden Ring towns, Vladimir and Suzdal, discover some of the oldest and most beautiful churches in Russia.

North Pole: Top of the World

Cruise on the I/B *50 Years of Victory*



photo: Dietmar Denger

Dropping anchor at 90°N

Join MIR on a once-in-a-lifetime voyage to the very top of the earth, experiencing life at its most remote and mysterious at the North Pole. Retrace the path of early polar explorers as you cruise aboard the world's largest icebreaker, keeping a lookout for the astonishing array of wildlife in the Arctic and enjoying fantastic views of an endless, frozen icescape.

Days 1-2: Moscow Gather in Moscow, capital city of Russia. Admire Red Square, the Kremlin, and the incredible treasures inside the Armory Museum, then descend more than 200 feet underground into Bunker 42, Stalin's secret Cold War-era communications center.

Days 3-4: Murmansk Fly to Murmansk, the largest city above the Arctic Circle. Get an introduction to the history of Arctic exploration at the Regional History Museum, and peruse the inner corridors of the world's first nuclear-powered icebreaker, the *Lenin.*

Days 5-9: Voyage to the North Pole Embark aboard the expedition ship, the icebreaker *50 Years of Victory*, specially built to navigate the challenging northern reaches of the Arctic Ocean. Cruise north across the Barents Sea, keeping an eye out for ice-dependent marine mammals such as the bowhead whale, Arctic seal, and polar bear. Enjoy lectures and discussions by the expedition crew, and board the ship's helicopter for a thrilling aerial view of the Arctic's icy polar expanse.

Day 10: 90°N Disembark today at the North Pole, celebrating with a champagne toast and an unconventional barbecue on the frozen landscape. The surface of the pole is covered by a floating sheet of ice, which averages between 2 and 3 meters thick. Choose to take an optional polar plunge into the chilly waters surrounding the pole, or float high above the frigid ice on a tethered hot-air balloon ride.

Days 11-13: Franz Josef Land The ship continues to Franz Josef Land, a glaciated archipelago and nature sanctuary that's been part of the Russian Arctic National Park since 2012. In the 24-hour daylight of the Arctic summer, trace the shores by helicopter and Zodiac in search of walrus and remote migratory seabird colonies, and land at various islands to explore the remnants of historic polar expeditions.



photo: Lauren Farmer

Abandoned dwellings on the islands of Franz Josef Land



photo: Dietmar Denger

The 50 Years of Victory slices through sea ice

SPECIAL TOUR

NEW!

16 Days

4 nights hotels, 11 nights aboard the *50 Years of Victory* ship

Special Land Tour

Per Person:

Standard, twin share	$29,995
Standard, single	$50,990
Mini Suite, twin share	$33,495
Mini Suite, single	$66,990
Junior Suite, twin share	$40,495
Junior Suite, single	$80,990
Grand Suite, twin share	$41,495
Grand Suite, single	$82,990
Victory Suite, twin share	$44,495
Victory Suite, single	$88,990
Arkitka Suite, twin share	$45,495
Arkitka Suite, single	$90,990

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2020 Provisional Land Tour Dates

June 2020*

**Exact dates to be announced*

Stay a little longer... Consider an optional post-tour to St. Petersburg. Contact us for details.

Days 14-16: Across the Barents Sea, Murmansk Cross back across the Barents Sea, enjoying Arctic landscapes and wildlife sightings from the ship's panoramic open decks. Disembark back in Murmansk as the extraordinary voyage comes to an end.

NOTE: Itinerary, landings, and all other activities during the cruise depend strongly on ice and weather conditions, and are subject to the decisions of the Expedition Leader and the captain of the vessel. Encounters with any mentioned wildlife cannot be guaranteed.

Optional post-tour: Extend your Arctic adventure with an optional post-tour to St. Petersburg. Visit the renowned Hermitage Museum, admire the glistening marble and granite fountains at Peter the Great's summer palace, Peterhof, and explore lavish Catherine's Palace.



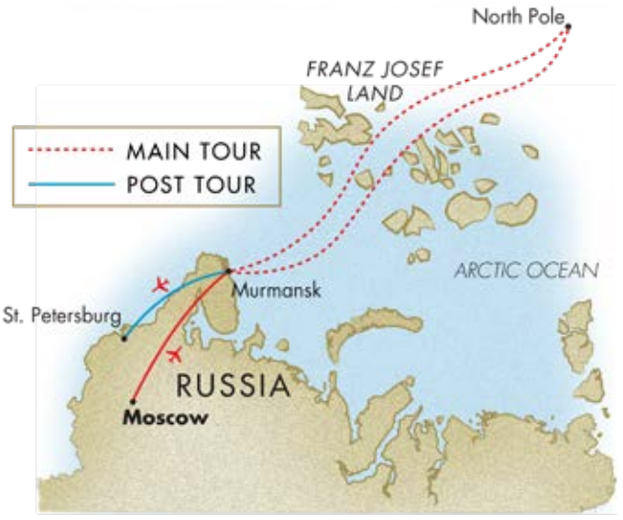
photo: Anthony Smith

Curious polar bears



photo: Lauren Farmer

Flying high over the icebergs



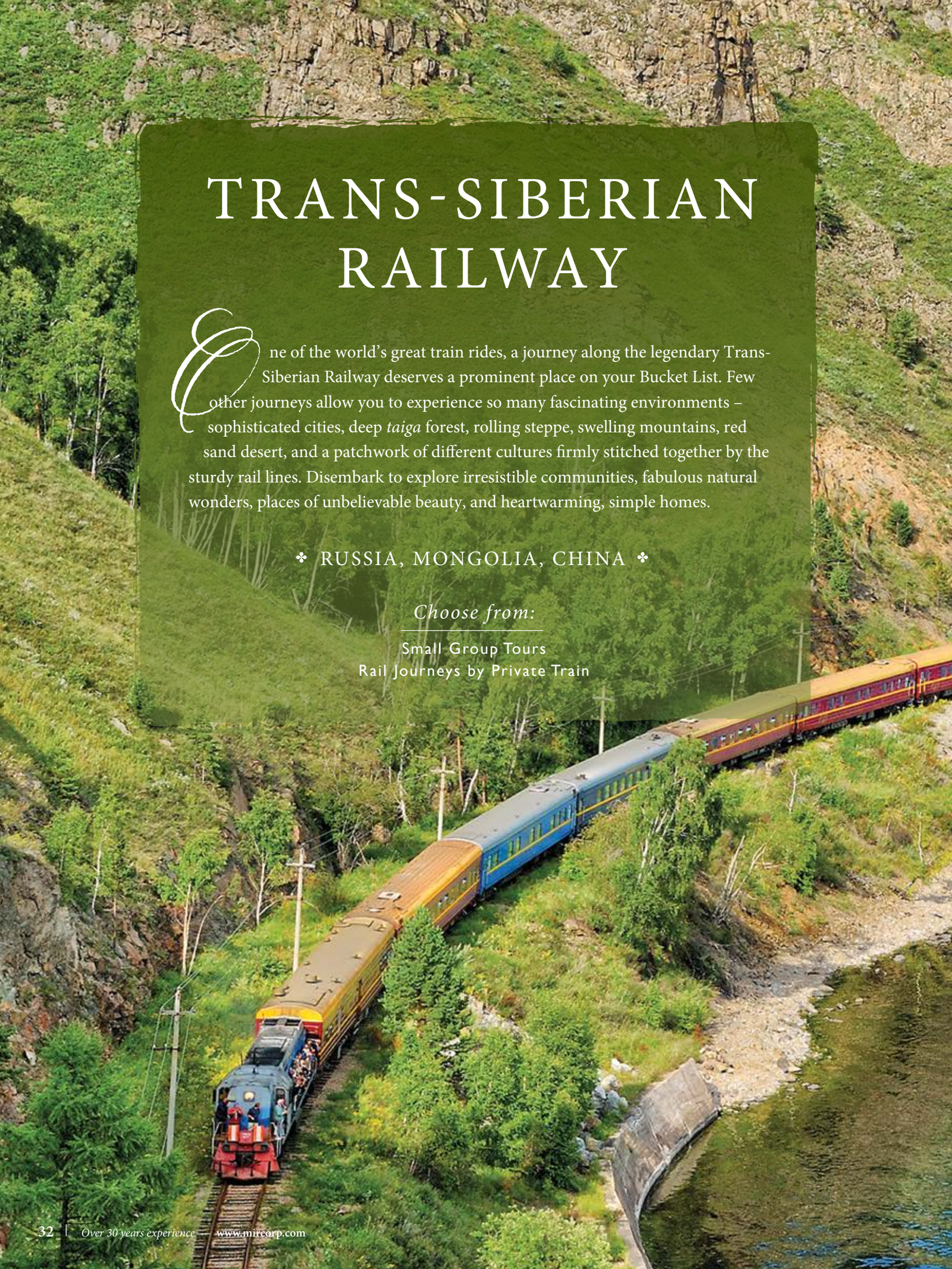
TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

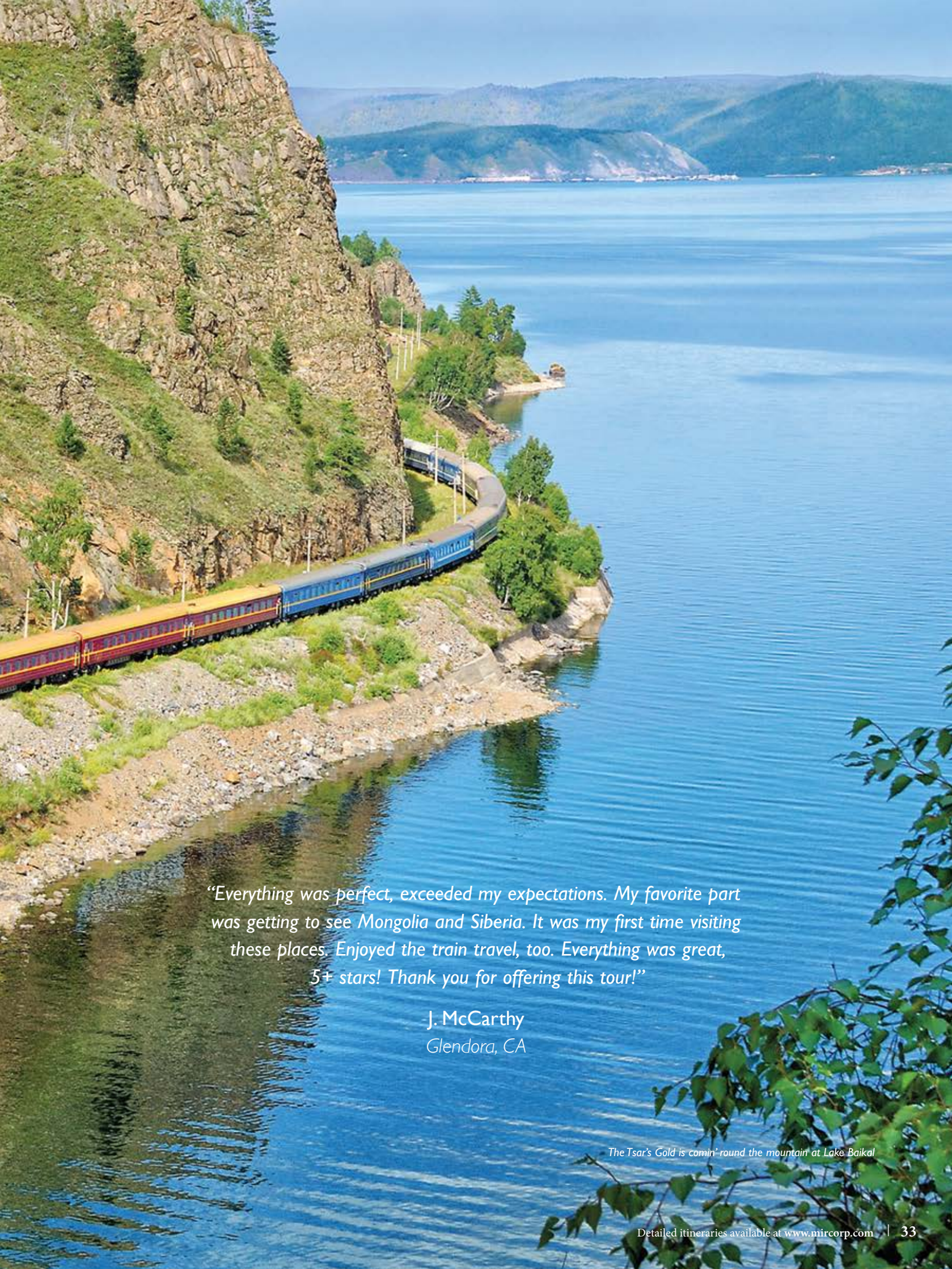
One of the world's great train rides, a journey along the legendary Trans-Siberian Railway deserves a prominent place on your Bucket List. Few other journeys allow you to experience so many fascinating environments – sophisticated cities, deep *taiga* forest, rolling steppe, swelling mountains, red sand desert, and a patchwork of different cultures firmly stitched together by the sturdy rail lines. Disembark to explore irresistible communities, fabulous natural wonders, places of unbelievable beauty, and heartwarming, simple homes.

✣ RUSSIA, MONGOLIA, CHINA ✣

Choose from:

Small Group Tours
Rail Journeys by Private Train





"Everything was perfect, exceeded my expectations. My favorite part was getting to see Mongolia and Siberia. It was my first time visiting these places. Enjoyed the train travel, too. Everything was great, 5+ stars! Thank you for offering this tour!"

J. McCarthy
Glendora, CA

The Tsar's Gold is comin' round the mountain at Lake Baikal

Mongolia to Moscow: A Trans-Siberian Railway Adventure

Landscapes and Cultures of Mongolia, Siberia, and Western Russia



photo: Meaghan Samuels

East meets West at the Ivolginsk Buddhist Datsan in Ulan Ude, Siberia

Travel on regularly scheduled Trans-Siberian trains over a dramatic and variegated route that offers limitless opportunities to meet the diverse local people – Mongol, Buryat, and Russian. Experience the rolling green hills and nomadic traditions of Mongolia, Siberia's UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, and endless *taiga* forest on your way to the booming capital, Moscow. The July departure features Mongolia's Naadam Festival.

Days 1-4: Ulaanbaatar, Gorkhi-Terelj Arriving in the capital of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, visit the Gandan Monastery and explore the National History Museum. Drive to nearby Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, meet a nomadic family living on the steppe, and overnight in an authentic *ger*, with the option of an afternoon horseback ride. The July trip includes time at Mongolia's distinctive **Naadam Festival** back in Ulaanbaatar. The September trip includes a visit outside the capital to Aryapala Meditation Temple, created in 1998 as a center for Buddhist retreat and meditation, and graced with majestic views and profound quiet. Board the overnight Trans-Siberian train heading for Siberia.

Days 5-6: Ulan Ude Arriving at the Russian border, undergo border formalities and continue to Ulan Ude, capital of the Buryat Republic. In the afternoon, drive out to Hargana, a lovely little Buryat village, to visit the flourishing local school and meet its teachers and students.

Tour the most interesting sites in and around Ulan Ude, including the Ivolginsk Datsan, the center of Buddhism in Russia. Pay a visit to a village of Old Believers – members of an Orthodox sect who refused changes to their rituals in the 17th century and were sent to Siberia – and enjoy dinner here.

Days 7-10: Irkutsk, Lake Baikal Take the day train from Ulan Ude to Irkutsk and enjoy a tour of the city, including the old wooden houses with their carved fretwork. Trace the route of the Old Circumbaikal Railway by boat, Siberian-style. Spend a night in Listvyanka village on the shores of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal. En route to Irkutsk, stop to see the outdoor Wooden Architecture Museum, a collection of authentic houses and community buildings from the 17th century on.



photo: Max Sjöblom

Placid Lake Baikal, the "Sacred Sea"

SMALL GROUP TOUR

photo: Devin Connolly



Young riders urge on their mounts at Ulaanbaatar's Naadam Festival

16 Days

Cultural Series Land Tour
$7,795 per person, double occupancy
Partial Single Supplement $995 (see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

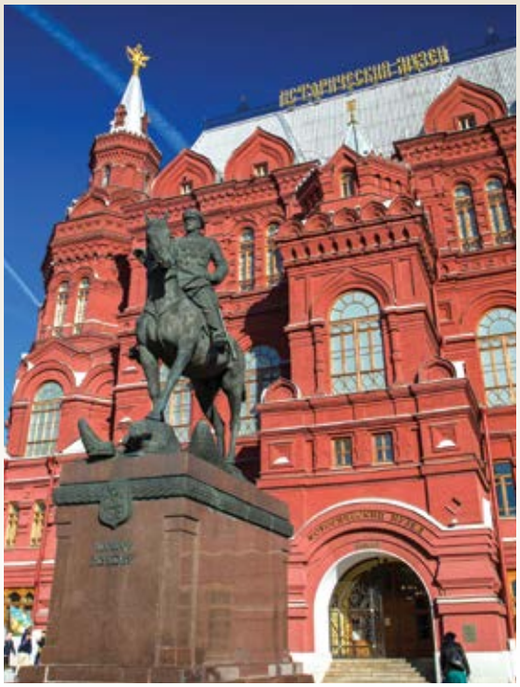
See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 4-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
July 10-25 (with Naadam Festival) • September 4-19

Stay a little longer... Extensions to Beijing, Vladivostok, the Gobi, Kara Korum, St. Petersburg, or Seoul are available. Call for details.

photo: Richard Fejfar



Marshall Zhukov rides to victory outside Red Square's State Historical Museum

Enjoy a home-cooked meal with a local family. Back in Irkutsk, visit the Decembrist House Museum.

Days 11-13: Aboard the Trans-Siberian, Ekaterinburg Relax for two days as the train rolls through Siberia's vast *taiga* forest to Ekaterinburg. Explore the city, including the Church on the Blood, standing over the spot where the last czar and his family were executed.

Days 14-16: Moscow Explore Moscow's classic sites, including Red Square, the Armory Museum, and the Kremlin. Tour the Moscow Metro: The stations in the city center are showpieces of socialist art. Commemorate the journey from Mongolia to Moscow on the Trans-Siberian with a farewell celebratory toast.



Trans-Siberian Express Between Beijing & Moscow

China, Mongolia, and Russia Aboard the *Tsar's Gold*

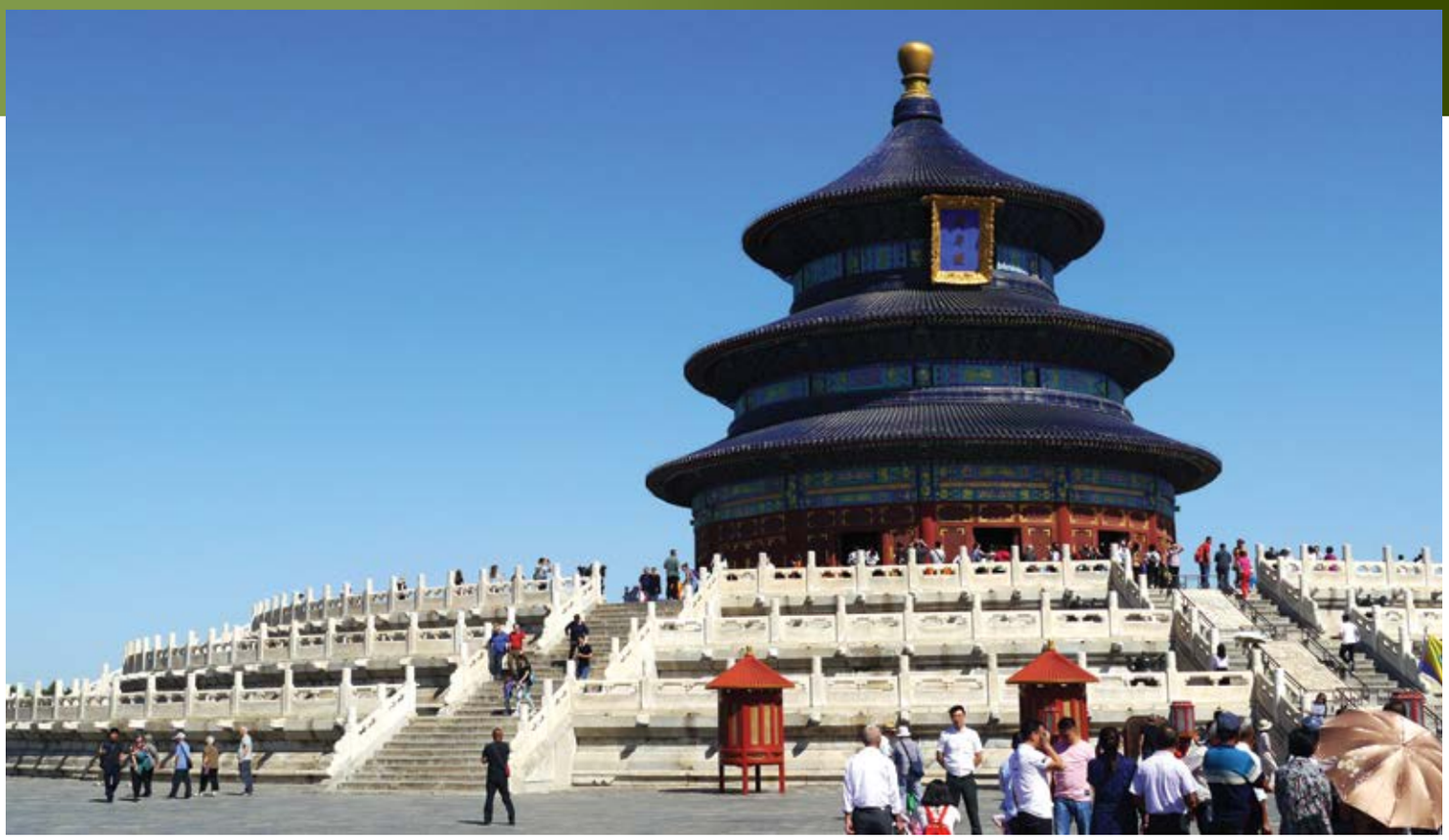


photo: Martin Klimenta

Beijing's Temple of Heaven, where the Ming emperors spoke to the gods

Starting in Beijing, where the remnants of imperial China sit shoulder-to-shoulder with thriving businesses and five star hotels, roll along a railway that ties together two of the world's biggest countries, China and Russia. Traverse Mongolia from the Gobi Desert across the endless steppe, where Genghis Khan's armies once galloped, to the modern capital, Ulaanbaatar. Continue up to the steep shores of ancient Lake Baikal, and on to the gleaming golden cupolas of Moscow. Eastbound Moscow to Beijing departures are also available.

Days 1-3: Beijing Explore the classic sites of Beijing, including the Temple of Heaven, Tiananmen Square, and the Forbidden City, where 14 Ming and 10 Qing emperors ruled China. Travel outside the city to visit the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs. Enjoy a special dinner of Peking Duck before boarding the Chinese charter train for the one-night ride to the Mongolian border.

Days 4-6: Gobi Desert, Ulaanbaatar Transfer to the *Tsar's Gold* private train at the Mongolian border, continuing through the great Gobi Desert and on to the open steppe of Mongolia. Spend a night at a hotel in Ulaanbaatar, discover the imposing Gandan Monastery, and attend a performance of Mongolian throat-singing. A picnic lunch in a rural *ger* is followed by a display of Mongolian horsemanship and Mongolian-style wrestling.

Days 7-9: Ulan Ude, Lake Baikal, Irkutsk Reboard the train and continue into Russia. Spend some time in Ulan Ude, founded in 1666 by Cossacks as a winter encampment on the Selenga River. Take a short boat ride on UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, the deepest and oldest lake on Earth, and skirt its shore on the old Circumbaikal Railway, the original line used by the Trans-Siberian Railway before the present-day route was completed. Transfer to a hotel for a night in Irkutsk, and get to know this important Siberian way station for expeditions and exiles. Wander the open-air Museum of Wooden Architecture, a collection of authentic Russian and native Buryat, Evenki, and Tafalar houses and community buildings dating from the 17th to the early 20th century.



A perfect day for ger camping

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

photo: Ross Hillier



Mongolian musician and his horse-head fiddle

Days 10-13: Aboard Train, Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg, Kazan In Novosibirsk, travelers are met with a traditional Russian bread and salt welcome, and regaled with *balalaika* music. In Ekaterinburg, visit the Church on the Blood, built on the spot where the czar and his family were killed in 1918. A tour of Kazan includes its UNESCO-listed kremlin, originally a fortress of the Golden Horde.

Days 14-15: Moscow Transfer to a centrally located hotel and begin an exploration of Moscow, including a tour of the dignified Kremlin. An after-dinner walk through Red Square and a descent into some of the city's opulent subway stations bring this epic journey to an end.

15 Days Westbound
16 Days Eastbound

5 or 6 nights hotels, 8 nights aboard the *Tsar's Gold* private train, 1 night aboard Chinese train between Beijing and Mongolian border

Rail Journey Land Tour

Per Person (Eastbound):

Classic Class, twin share	$9,495
Classic Class, single	$13,295
Superior Class, twin share	$9,995
Superior Class, single	$14,245
Superior Plus Class, twin share	$10,695
Superior Plus Class, single	$14,945
Nostalgic Comfort Class, twin share	$12,795
Nostalgic Comfort Class, single	$19,295
Bolshoi Class, twin share	$16,395
Bolshoi Class, single	$24,645
Bolshoi Platinum Class, twin share	$19,395
Bolshoi Platinum Class, single	$28,945

Note: Special pricing available for Westbound journeys

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates

Westbound: From Beijing to Moscow
May 12-26* • June 9-23 • July 5-19 • July 28-August 11 • August 23-September 6 • September 15-29

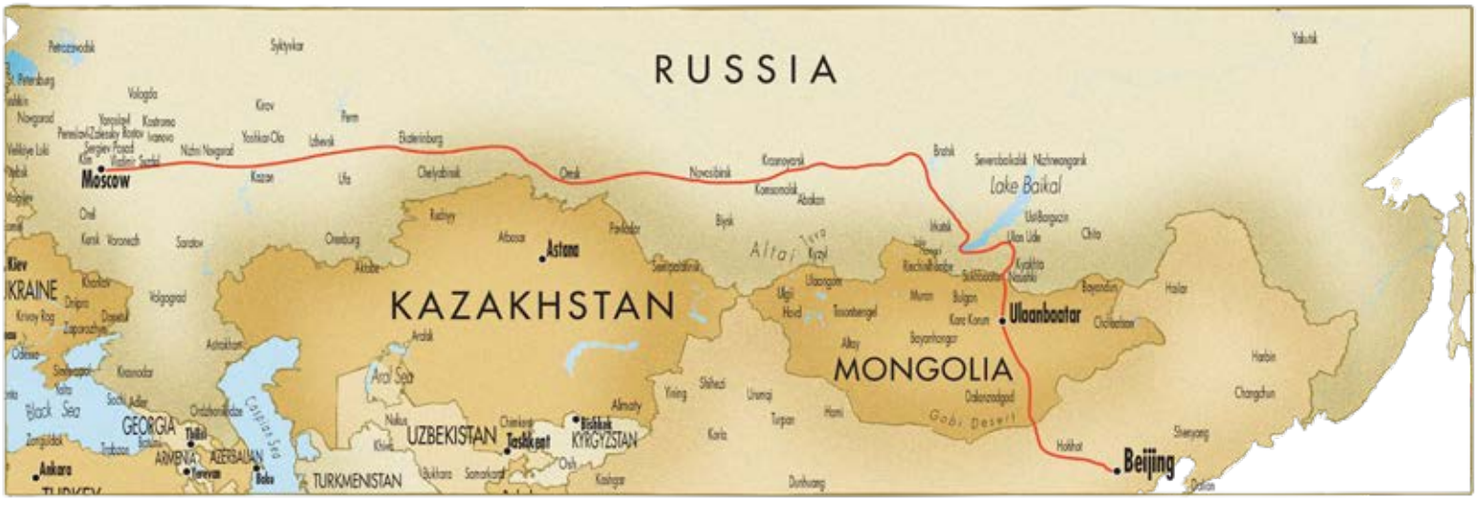
Eastbound: From Moscow to Beijing
May 4-19* • June 1-16 • June 27-July 12 • July 20-August 4 • August 15-30 • September 7-22

**Special pricing available for May 2019 departures*

photo: Felix Willeke



The views of Lake Baikal are spectacular on the Old Railway



Trans-Siberian Classic Route

Between Moscow and Vladivostok Aboard the *Golden Eagle*



photo: Bill Adams

Siberian wildflowers echo the colors of the Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian train

The Classic Route operates from Moscow to Vladivostok and in reverse. Spanning almost 6,000 miles of track connecting these two cities, the Classic Route takes in the southern tip of Lake Baikal and the charming Siberian cities of Irkutsk and Ulan Ude, and travels along the Chinese border. Watch from the comfort of the deluxe private train as the cities and industrial centers give way to little villages and miles of wilderness.

Days 1-2: Moscow Enjoy a one-night stay at a five star hotel in Moscow. Tour the classic sights of this 870-year-old capital city, including expansive Red Square and the venerable Kremlin, or opt for a tour of the Tretyakov Gallery instead. In the evening, depart aboard the luxury *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express* private train.

Days 3-4: Kazan, Ekaterinburg Make a stop in Kazan, the beautiful capital of Tatarstan on the Volga, where a kremlin wall surrounds the old town, and both minarets and Orthodox churches are found. Cross from Europe into Asia at Ekaterinburg. Visit the site where the last czar, Nicholas II, and his family were held under house arrest for months before the Bolsheviks executed them in July of 1918.

Day 5: Novosibirsk Stop in Novosibirsk, a Siberian town that grew into a city due to its position on the Trans-Siberian line. Visit the massive Opera House, Lenin Square, and the mighty Ob River, flowing 2,300 miles from its source to the Arctic.

Days 6-7: Aboard Train, Irkutsk Arrive in Irkutsk, the "capital" of Siberia. The tour includes the major sights of this cultured little city, including examples of the classic wooden architecture for which the area is known.

Day 8: Lake Baikal A spectacular part of the journey today is spent winding through tunnels and around cliffs along the shoreline of Lake Baikal, the world's deepest and oldest freshwater lake. Stop en route for a barbecue at the lake's edge and continue to the village of Listvyanka. Visit the Baikal Museum, which explains the fascinating ecosystem of the lake.

Day 9: Ulan Ude Today, stop in Ulan Ude, capital of the Buryat Republic and the Buddhist region of Russia. Visit a village of Old Believers for a concert featuring local singers and musicians.



photo: Bill Adams

Bird's-eye view of Red Square

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN



photo: Richard Fejfar

Kazan's rebuilt Qol Sharif Mosque, a symbol of Tatarstan, Russia

Day 10: Ulaanbaatar Dipping down onto the steppe of Mongolia, the train makes a stop in Ulaanbaatar, the country's capital. Tour the Gandan Monastery, experience Mongolian cuisine in a nomadic *ger,* and enjoy a cultural performance.

Days 11-13: Aboard Train Siberia at its most remote and mysterious unfolds before you as the train follows the Shilka and Amur Rivers and passes through Khabarovsk.

Days 14-15: Vladivostok Arriving in Vladivostok, enjoy a city tour that includes the principal attractions of this once off-limits Russian city. Transfer to a four star hotel for a one-night stay and enjoy a farewell dinner.

15 Days

2 nights hotels, 12 nights aboard the *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express*

Rail Journey Land Tour

Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share	$17,795
Silver Class, single	$26,195
Gold Class, twin share	$21,595
Gold Class, single	$32,495
Imperial Suite, twin share	$37,395

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates

Eastbound: From Moscow to Vladivostok
May 5-19* • June 2-16* • July 22-August 5 • August 18-September 1

Westbound: From Vladivostok to Moscow
May 18-June 1* • June 15-29* • August 4-18 • August 31-September 14

**Special pricing available for the May and June 2019 departures*

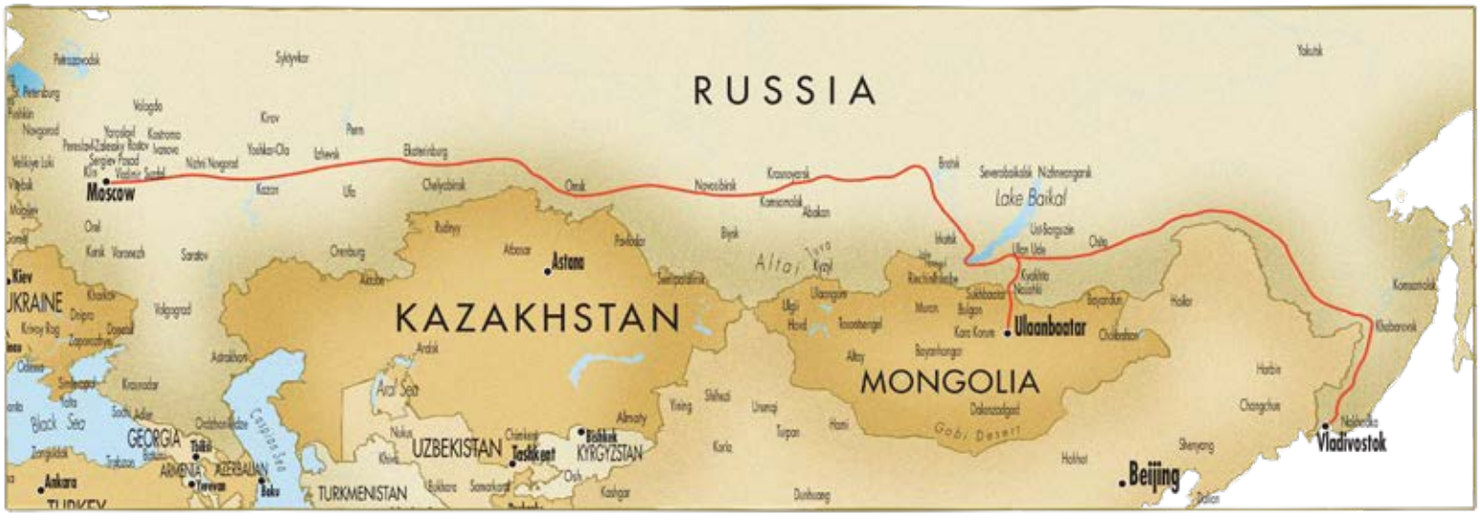
Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in either Western or Eastern Russia, or both. Contact us for details.

Other options... The 9-day Baikal Express trip takes you from Moscow to UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, and the 11-day Ulaanbaatar Express trip takes you from Moscow to Ulaanbaatar. Itineraries available for select dates. Call for details.



photo: Bill Adams

Orthodox Old Believers celebrate with song and artful adornment in Siberia



Trans-Siberian Mongolian Route with Naadam Festival

Between Ulaanbaatar and Moscow Aboard the *Golden Eagle*



photo: Meaghan Samuels

Horses are highly prized in Mongolia; here they parade with their warrior riders at the Naadam Festival

From the Mongolian steppe to the Siberian *taiga* to the Moscow Kremlin, this rail journey by private train celebrates three different cultures – that of the Mongolian nomad, drawn to the capital, Ulaanbaatar, for the celebrated Naadam Festival; the Baikal Siberian, proud heir of Cossacks, indigenous Buryats, and czarist political exiles; and the modern Muscovite, hailing a taxi in front of an 800-year-old palace. Visit four UNESCO World Heritage Sites along the rail line, and join the crowd in Ulaanbaatar singing the praises of the country's best in wrestling, archery, and horse racing.

Days 1-4: Ulaanbaatar Arrive in the capital of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, and gather for a reception and welcome dinner. Attend the celebrated **Naadam Festival**, including the opening ceremony, archery, and wrestling competitions. Discover the imposing Gandan Monastery, and explore the excellent National History Museum. Board the *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express* luxury private train for departure.

Day 5: Ulan Ude Arrive in Ulan Ude, capital of the Buryat Autonomous Republic. Visit a village of Old Believers, a sect of Orthodox Christians who fled the czar's repressions many years ago.

Day 6: Lake Baikal A spectacular part of the journey today is spent winding your way through tunnels and cliffs along the edge of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, the world's deepest freshwater lake. Stop en route for a barbecue at the lake's edge, and continue to the lakeside village of Listvyanka.

Day 7: Irkutsk Morning arrival in Irkutsk, the "capital" of Siberia. A tour includes examples of the classic wooden architecture for which Siberian towns are known and a visit to the Decembrist House Museum.

Days 8-9: Aboard Train, Novosibirsk Enjoy the relaxed pace onboard the train heading west through the Sayan Mountains. Stop in Novosibirsk to visit the enormous Opera House, Lenin Square, and the mighty Ob River, which flows 2,300 miles from its source to the Arctic.



photo: Richard Feijfar

Patience and concentration for the win at the Naadam archery competition



photo: Helge Pedersen

In the Ulaanbaatar city center, Mongolian hero Sukhbaatar leads the revolt against Chinese occupation

Days 10-11: Ekaterinburg, Kazan The train crosses from Asia into Europe just past Ekaterinburg. This is the place where in 1918, Bolsheviks executed the last czar, Nicholas II, along with his wife and children. During the last full day aboard the train, stop in Kazan, the beautiful capital of the Republic of Tatarstan on the Volga River.

Days 12-13: Moscow After a late morning arrival in Moscow, explore the 870-year-old Kremlin and spacious Red Square with its St. Basil's Cathedral, the brilliantly decorated onion-domed Orthodox church. Gather at a five star hotel to celebrate the journey with a farewell dinner.

ABOARD THE LUXURY *GOLDEN EAGLE TRANS-SIBERIAN EXPRESS*

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TRAIN, SEE PAGES 98-99

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

13 Days

4 nights hotels, 8 nights aboard the *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express*

Rail Journey Land Tour

Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share	$16,695
Silver Class, single	$24,695
Gold Class, twin share	$20,595
Gold Class, single	$29,995
Imperial Suite, twin share	$33,995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Eastbound: From Moscow to Ulaanbaatar
July 1-13

Westbound: From Ulaanbaatar to Moscow
July 10-22

Stay a little longer... Extensions to the Gobi, Moscow, and St. Petersburg are available. Contact us for details.



photo: Martin Klimenta

Baikal whistle-stop



Trans-Siberian Winter Wonderland Route

Between Moscow and Vladivostok in Winter Aboard the *Golden Eagle*



photo: Vladimir Kvashnin

Siberian Huskies at work on the thick ice of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal

Russia is fantastic in the winter. The country is at its most beautiful, the crackling air burnished by a fresh snowfall. Across Siberia, the faraway lights of the Trans-Siberian shine through the darkness like a moving beacon. Join us on this remarkable winter route.

Days 1-2: Moscow Spend a night in a five star Moscow hotel and tour iconic Red Square and the Kremlin, or opt for a tour of the Tretyakov Gallery, before boarding the distinctive private train on its way across seven time zones.

Day 3: Kazan Make a stop in Kazan, the beautiful capital of Tatarstan on the Volga. Explore its UNESCO-listed kremlin, once a fortress of the Golden Horde, with magnificent mosques, minarets, and Orthodox churches, and sit in on a private performance of selections from the repertoire of Fyodor Shalyapin, Kazan's legendary opera singer.

Days 4-6: Ekaterinburg, Novosibirsk Cross the Europe/Asia divide just outside of Ekaterinburg, and tour the site where the last czar, Nicholas II, and his family were held prisoner and then executed by the Bolsheviks. In Novosibirsk, Siberia's most important city, explore the country's biggest opera and ballet theater.

Days 7-8: Irkutsk, Lake Baikal Tour cultured Irkutsk, including a neighborhood of classic Siberian wooden architecture, and enjoy a private concert by accomplished classical musicians at the 19th century Decembrist House Museum. Take an opportunity to experience an authentic Russian *banya*, or steam bath, at a forest resort. Later, the train winds along the majestic frozen shores of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, where the ice is often transparent. Board a hovercraft that crosses the lake to a spot where you can join in with locals ice-fishing, riding snowmobiles, and running dogsleds.

Day 9: Ulan Ude Stop in Ulan Ude, capital of the Buryat Republic, a small city with a multiethnic background. Spend some time visiting with Orthodox Old Believers at a nearby village. Savor a home-cooked meal, and hear their marvelous chants, lyric songs, and folk prayers, passed down intact from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Days 10-13: Ulaanbaatar, Aboard Train Fly down to the Mongolian steppe, and make a day-long visit to the capital, Ulaanbaatar. Investigate its National History Museum, providing a look into the steppe nomads' history and culture, ranging from the dawn of



photo: Bill Adams

Old Believers sing their 17th century songs near Ulan Ude, Siberia

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

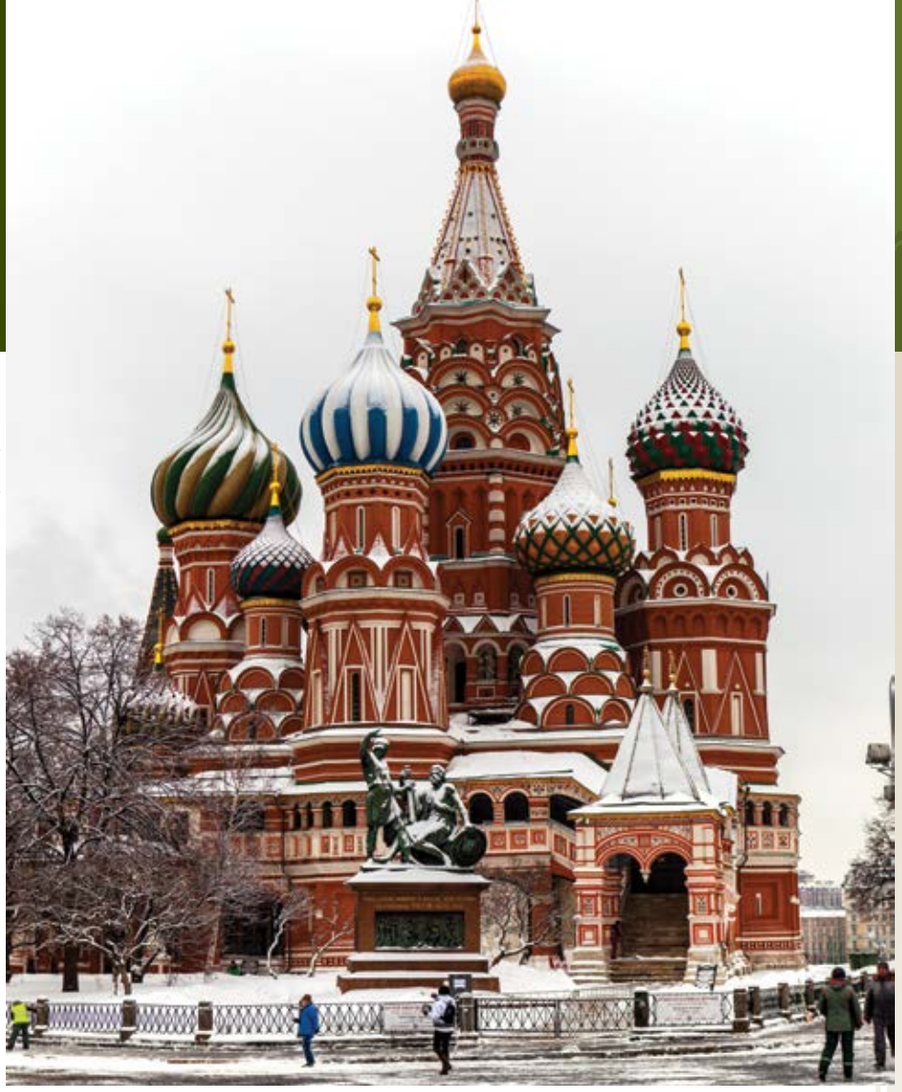


photo: Jonathan Irish

Snow-capped peaks of St. Basil's in Red Square

humanity through the incredible empire of Genghis Khan and on to the present day. Return to Irkutsk by private charter flight, and relax back onboard the comfortable train as it barrels east across the mighty Amur River. For those on a westbound departure, skip Ulaanbaatar and make a stop in Khabarovsk for a short city tour.

Days 14-15: Vladivostok At the end of this momentous journey, explore the Pacific Rim naval port of Vladivostok, including a tour of a restored submarine, before transferring to a four star hotel for a final night and a festive farewell dinner.

15 Days

2 nights hotels, 12 nights aboard the *Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express*

Rail Journey Land Tour

Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share	$17,795
Silver Class, single	$26,195
Gold Class, twin share	$21,595
Gold Class, single	$32,495
Imperial Suite, twin share	$37,395

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 & 2020 Land Tour Dates

Eastbound: From Moscow to Vladivostok
February 12-26 2019 • February 13-27, 2020++

Westbound: From Vladivostok to Moscow
February 24-March 10, 2019 • February 25-March 11, 2020++

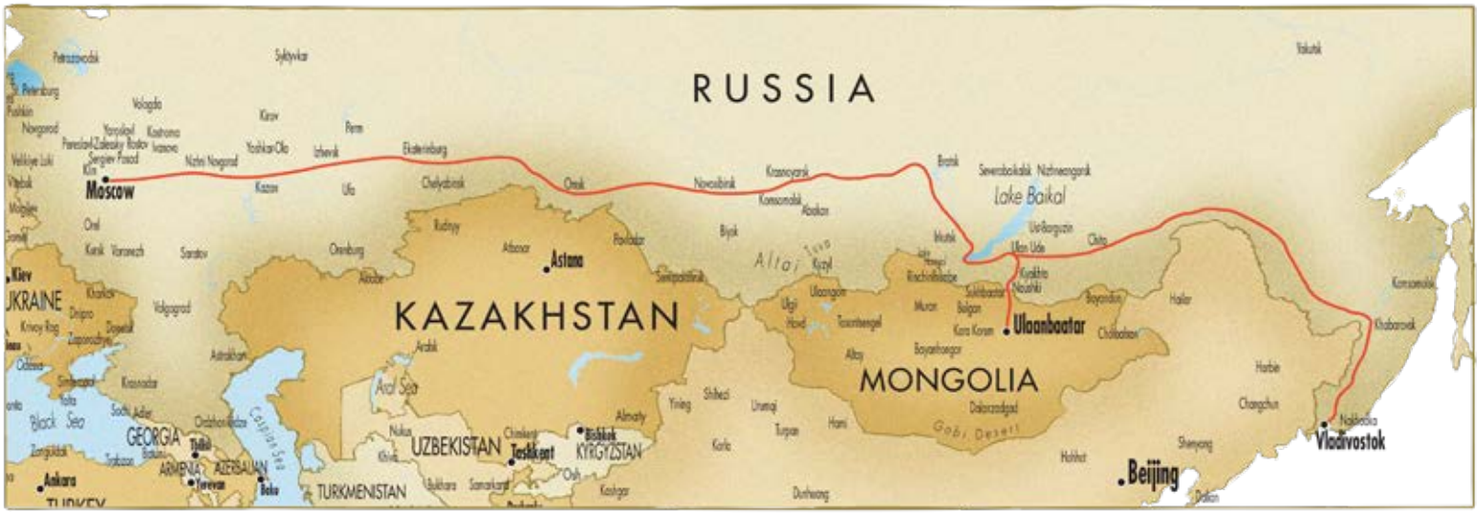
++Lock in 2019 prices for 2020 trips: Book 2020 trips by December 31, 2018!

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in either Western or Eastern Russia, or both. Contact us for details.



photo: Douglas Grimes

Ivolginsk Datsan, an important Siberian Buddhist monastery



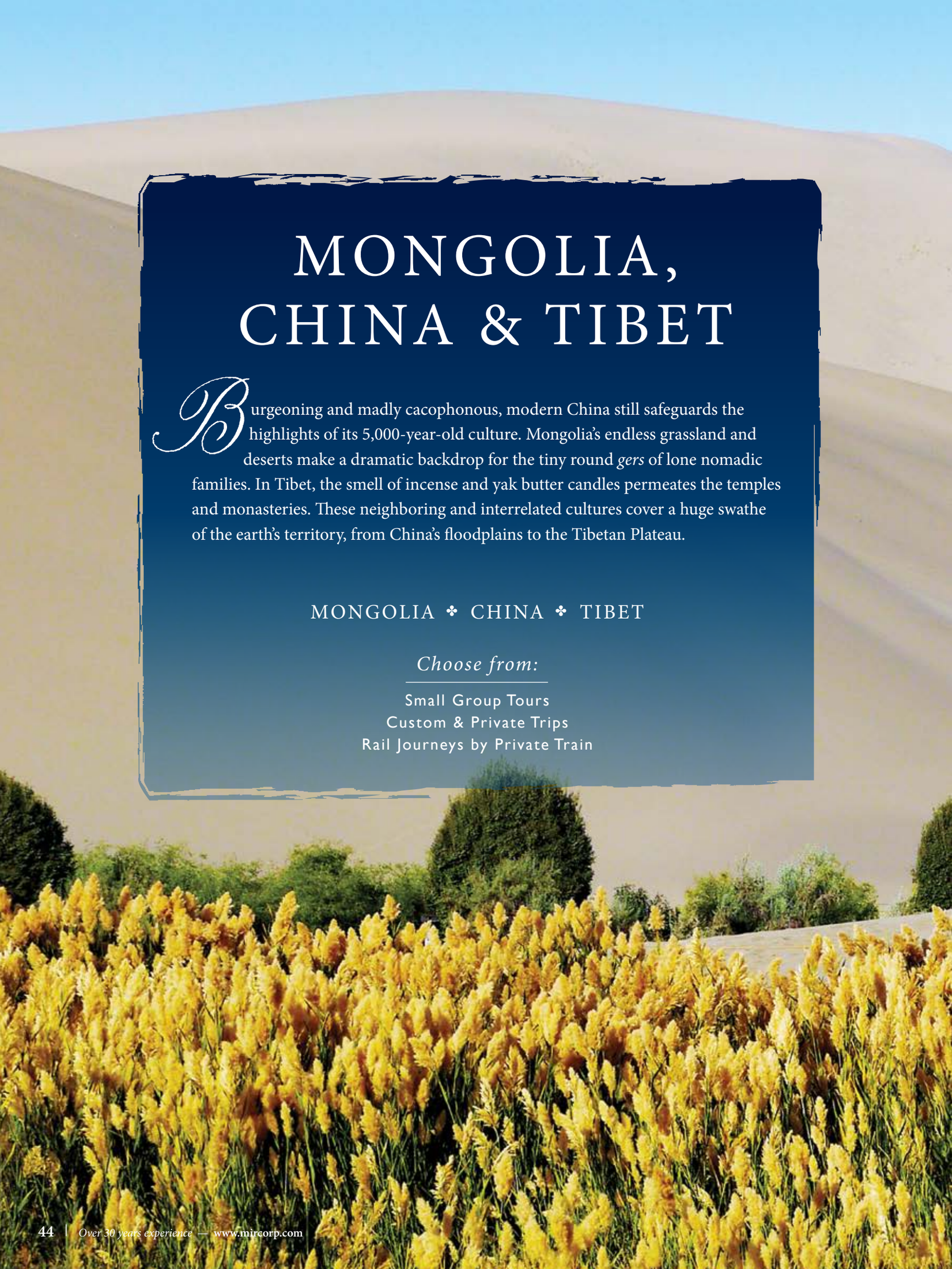
MONGOLIA, CHINA & TIBET

Burgeoning and madly cacophonous, modern China still safeguards the highlights of its 5,000-year-old culture. Mongolia's endless grassland and deserts make a dramatic backdrop for the tiny round *gers* of lone nomadic families. In Tibet, the smell of incense and yak butter candles permeates the temples and monasteries. These neighboring and interrelated cultures cover a huge swathe of the earth's territory, from China's floodplains to the Tibetan Plateau.

MONGOLIA ✣ CHINA ✣ TIBET

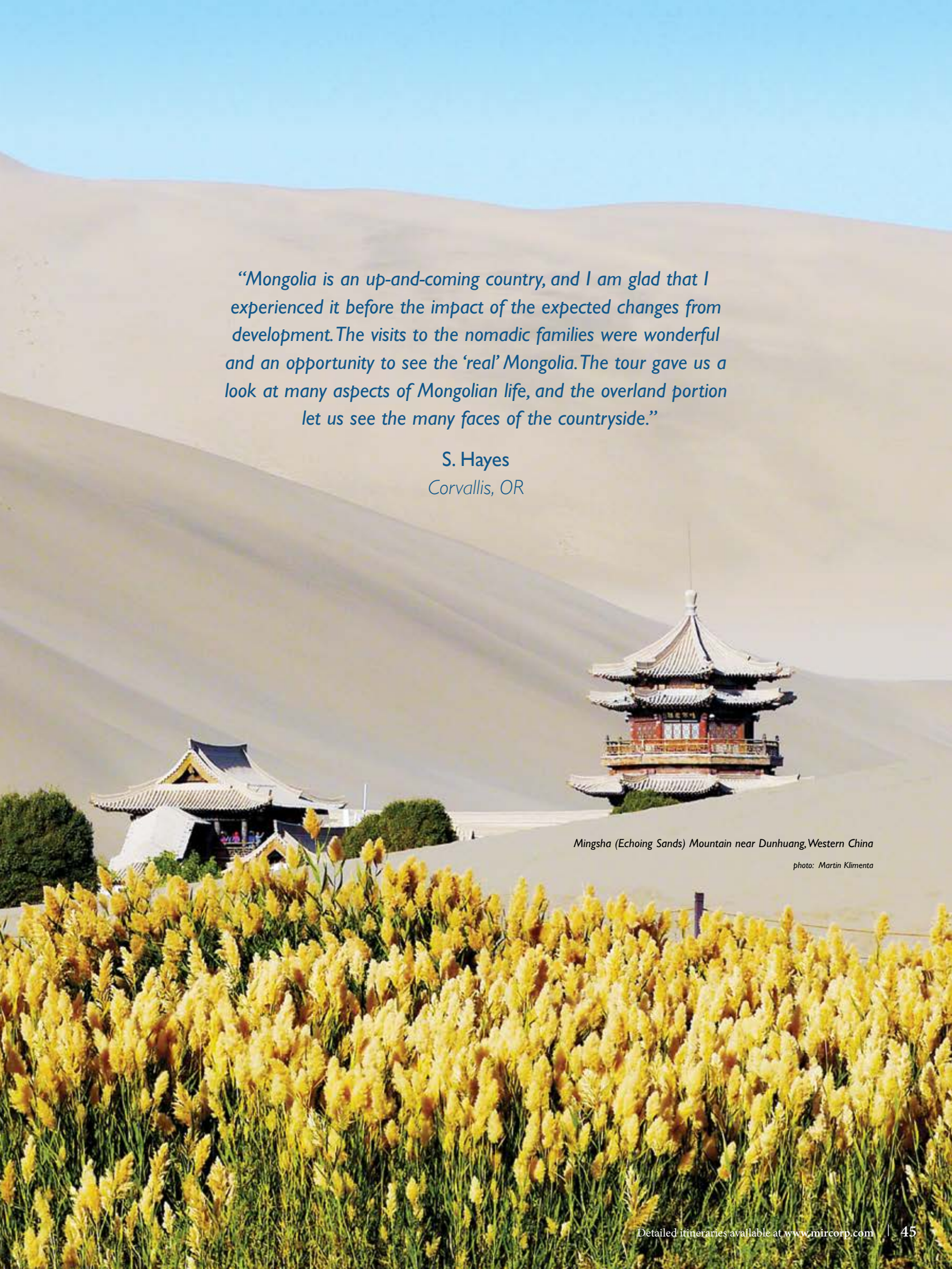
Choose from:

Small Group Tours
Custom & Private Trips
Rail Journeys by Private Train



"Mongolia is an up-and-coming country, and I am glad that I experienced it before the impact of the expected changes from development. The visits to the nomadic families were wonderful and an opportunity to see the 'real' Mongolia. The tour gave us a look at many aspects of Mongolian life, and the overland portion let us see the many faces of the countryside."

S. Hayes
Corvallis, OR



Mingsha (Echoing Sands) Mountain near Dunhuang, Western China

photo: Martin Klimenta

Private Journeys
to **Mongolia, China & Tibet**

Your Dream, Our Design

Thoughtfully Handcrafted
– or –
Researched & Ready

MIR has been specializing in personalized, private journeys for more than 30 years. We love crafting original itineraries to the crossroads of Europe and Asia that fit your travel preferences. Travel wherever, however, and with whomever you like, relying on our expert assistance.

Researched & Ready

FLEXIBLE ESSENTIAL

Prefer that we suggest an itinerary for you? No problem. Our series of pre-planned Flexible Essential Private Journeys are classic independent itineraries already researched and ready to book. Contact us for a descriptive itinerary, solo traveler pricing, and booking details.

Essential Tibet

Tibet Sampler

Admire the Buddhist treasures, temples, and monasteries in the holy city of Lhasa, as well as the remote towns of Tsetang, Gyantse, and Shigatse.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/8 Days

FROM: **$3,595** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Essential Mongolia

Journey Through the Land of Genghis Khan

Explore breathtaking landscapes, visit nomadic families, and venture deep into the vast expanse of the Gobi as you discover the ancient culture and traditions of Mongolia.

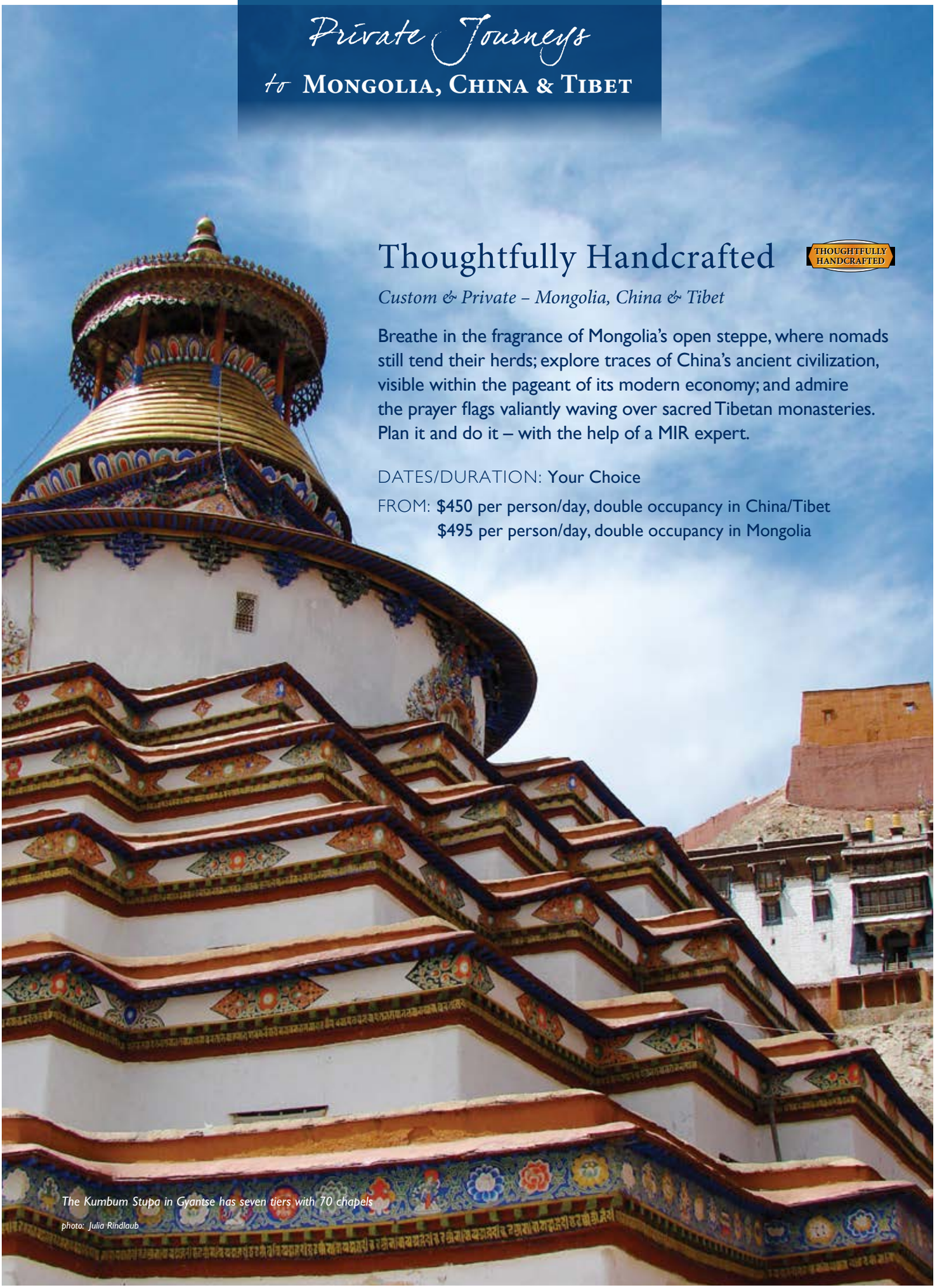
DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/7 Days

FROM: **$4,295** per person, + $325 internal air
based on 2 travelers

Yamdrok Lake, one of three sacred lakes in Tibet

photo: Martin Klimenta

Private Journeys to Mongolia, China & Tibet



Thoughtfully Handcrafted

THOUGHTFULLY HANDCRAFTED

Custom & Private – Mongolia, China & Tibet

Breathe in the fragrance of Mongolia's open steppe, where nomads still tend their herds; explore traces of China's ancient civilization, visible within the pageant of its modern economy; and admire the prayer flags valiantly waving over sacred Tibetan monasteries. Plan it and do it – with the help of a MIR expert.

DATES/DURATION: **Your Choice**

FROM: **$450** per person/day, double occupancy in China/Tibet
$495 per person/day, double occupancy in Mongolia

The Kumbum Stupa in Gyantse has seven tiers with 70 chapels

photo: Julia Rindlaub

Mongolia's Golden Eagle Festival

Nomadic Traditions of the Steppe & Gobi



photo: Jeremy Woodhouse

Kazakh eagle hunters parade in full regalia at the Golden Eagle Festival

SMALL GROUP TOUR

12 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$7,595 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $1,150
(economy class, subject to change)
Single supplement $1,725
Partial single supplement $1,275 (see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
September 28-October 9

Stay a little longer... Come early to visit Kara Korum in Mongolia; or extend your stay and explore Siberia's Lake Baikal. Contact us for details.

On the rocky ridges overlooking Mongolia's remote, westernmost province, Bayan-Ulgii, a dwindling number of ethnic Kazakhs carry on a 6,000-year-old tradition — hunting with magnificent golden eagles, one of the world's largest predatory birds. Attend the annual Golden Eagle Festival, where the eagle hunters display their birds' speed, skill, and training, as well as the deep bond that forms between bird and human.

Days 1-2: Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia Begin in Ulaanbaatar, capital of Mongolia, where the centuries-old Buddhist heritage is still vital. Pay a visit to the Gandan Monastery, the "Great Place of Complete Joy," and explore the National History Museum.

Days 3-5: South Gobi Fly to the remote South Gobi Desert to discover the Flaming Cliffs and the green Yolyn Am Canyon, and to climb the sand dunes at Moltsog Els. Explore the habitat of the *lammergeier,* the huge bearded vulture. Along the way, encounter the nomads who call this formidable environment home.

Days 6-9: Ulaanbaatar, Ulgii Golden Eagle Festival Fly from Ulaanbaatar to Bayan-Ulgii, westernmost province of Mongolia and remote home of Kazakh nomads who hunt with golden eagles. Attend the opening ceremony of the Golden Eagle Festival, when participants parade on horseback with their eagles, displaying their elaborate hunting outfits and accessories. During competitions, the birds are evaluated for their agility, skill at hitting a target, diving speed, and gripping technique. Visit with Kazakh families around Tolbo (Frog) Lake, hearing about their way of life in the Mongolian outback.

Days 10-12: Ulaanbaatar, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park Fly back to the capital and enjoy a performance of Mongolian throat-singing, the eerie-sounding musical tradition of Mongolia. Take a day trip to beautiful alpine Gorkhi-Terelj National Park to get a feel for the huge distances and enormous sky that nomads have contended with for eons. Return to Ulaanbaatar for a festive farewell dinner to toast your adventure on the high steppe of Mongolia.



photo: Andrew Barron

Three Camel Lodge in the Gobi Desert harmonizes with its surroundings

MIR Signature Experiences

- Sip tea in a traditional nomadic *ger* as you watch the sun set over the vast expanse of the Gobi
- Cheer as Eagle Festival participants parade onto the field on horseback, wearing their handcrafted hunting outfits and carrying their hooded birds
- Listen to the eerie, otherworldly sound of Mongolian throat-singing



China's Silk Road & Tibet: Route of Monks & Merchants

An Expedition from Kashgar to Lhasa

SMALL GROUP TOUR

18 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$6,795 per person, double occupancy
Partial single supplement $1,195 (see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
May 10-27 • October 12-29

Stay a little longer... Combine this trip with additional time in Tibet, or a visit to Shanghai or Xi'an. Contact us for details.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Explore the Kashgar Sunday Animal Market, where sheep and camels add their voices to the cacophony
- Admire the UNESCO-listed Mogao Caves, presenting a thousand-year study in the development of Buddhist art in China
- Drive from Lhasa through the Tibetan highlands to sacred Yamdrok Lake, said to be the incarnation of a goddess



photo: Martin Klimenta

Passing down the traditions in Western China

Trace the path of ancient traders and adventurers on this overland journey across Western China and into Tibet. Experience the Kashgar Sunday Animal Market, where merchants sell everything from ducks to sheep. Visit Turpan's lush Grape Valley, and Dunhuang's UNESCO-listed Mogao Caves. Ride the high-altitude train from Xining to the Tibetan Plateau, exploring the sacred cities of Gyantse, Shigatse, and Lhasa, "City of the Sun."

Days 1-5: Kashgar, Turpan Begin in 2,000-year-old Kashgar, the fabled city that greeted Marco Polo as he entered the Middle Kingdom. Browse its Sunday Animal Market, then board an overnight train to Turpan, a welcome oasis on the northern Silk Road. Explore the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves, begun in 366 AD, and investigate the underground tombs of Astana.

Days 6-8: Liu Yuan, Dunhuang Depart by fast day train to the city of Liu Yuan, the gateway to Dunhuang, where the Mogao Buddhist Caves were created. Marvel at the incredible frescoes and painted statues of this UNESCO-listed wonder, and take a short camel ride at the foot of Echoing Sands Mountain.

Days 9-11: Xining, high-altitude railway Catch the train to Xining, located high on the Tibetan Plateau in remote Qinghai Province. Admire the brilliant blues, golds, and reds of Ta'er Monastery, and browse the grand Tibetan Medicine and Culture Museum. Board the high-altitude train to Lhasa, passing by the world's highest railroad station, Tangula.

Days 12-18: Lhasa, Yamdrok Lake, Gyantse, Shigatse Spend a night in Lhasa before continuing to Gyantse's celebrated Kumbum Stupa and turquoise Yamdrok Lake, said to be a goddess incarnate. In Shigatse, discover gold-roofed Tashilhunpo Monastery, founded by the first Dalai Lama in 1447. Back in Lhasa, visit the massive UNESCO-listed Potala Palace, rising in splendor above the city, and Jokhang Temple, Tibet's most sacred site. Wander Barkhor Market, venture into the valley where Chupsang Nunnery is hidden, and celebrate the journey's end with a farewell dinner.



photo: Martin Klimenta

Climbing into the sky at Lhasa's Potala Palace



Tibet & China Rail Discovery

From Urumqi to Lhasa by Private Train

Aboard the
Shangri-La Western Express

To Learn More About the Train,
see www.mircorp.com



Sunrise on Tibet's sacred place, the Potala Palace

Roll across Western China to discover the teeming Sunday Market in exotic Kashgar; the ancient *karez* underground irrigation system in Turpan; and the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang. Then hop the special high-altitude train, ascending from the Tibetan Plateau to Lhasa at 12,000 feet. Explore the "City of the Sun," with its massive UNESCO-listed Potala Palace, sacred Jokhang Temple, and the lively Barkhor Market.

Days 1-2: Urumqi A tour of Urumqi includes a visit to the fascinating Xinjiang Regional Museum, with its collection of local mummies, including the "Loulan Beauty," the nearly 4,000-year-old body of a woman in fur sandals.

Days 3-4: Kashgar 2,000-year-old Kashgar is unlike any other place in China, retaining the immense appeal of medieval Asia. Explore its Old Town and browse its cacophonous Sunday Market.

Days 5-7: Turpan, Dunhuang, Jiayuguan Near Turpan, learn about the ancient *karez* water system that made the desert bloom. Take a short camel ride at Crescent Moon Lake, and visit the UNESCO-listed Mogao Caves, begun in the 4th century by a Buddhist monk. Admire the only remnants of the Ming Dynasty Great Wall in Jiayuguan.

Days 8-9: Xining, Golmud Visit Xining's Tibetan Buddhist monastery, Ta'er Si, and stop at the 600-year-old Dongguan Mosque. Board the special high-altitude train running from Golmud to Lhasa.

Days 10-12: Lhasa Stroll through the gardens of 18th century Norbulingka, the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas. Light a yak butter candle in Lhasa's UNESCO-listed Potala Palace, and wander the traditional Barkhor Market.

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

12 Days

5 nights hotels, 6 nights aboard the *Shangri-La Western Express* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour

Per Person:

Heritage Class, twin share	$10,995
Heritage Class, single	$15,995
Diamond Class, twin share	$14,595
Diamond Class, single	$20,995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates

April 11-22

Stay a little longer... MIR can arrange for a pre- or post-tour extension in Beijing or elsewhere in China. Call us for more details.



photo: Martin Klimenta

Celebrating the sweetest grapes in Turpan



Mongolian Explorer: The Gobi & Beyond with Naadam Festival

Overland Expedition Across the Land of Nomads

SMALL GROUP TOUR

14 Days
Explorer Series Land Tour
$8,195 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $600
(economy class, subject to change)
Single supplement $1,895

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 6-12 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
June 30-July 13

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay with a train ride over the border into Siberia to explore Lake Baikal. Contact us for details.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Meet Tsaatan reindeer herders at their summer pastures near Mongolia's deepest lake, ancient Hovsgol
- Attend the unforgettable Naadam Festival, a celebration of the skills of the steppe – archery, horseracing, and wrestling
- Visit with a nomadic family in the fabled Gobi Desert



Ready for the races at the Naadam Festival



photo: Peter Guttman

Brilliant colors in a Buddhist temple

Mongolia: The name conjures up images of vast grasslands, wind-swept steppe, and endless sky. Here, an empire built on horseback galloped across two continents, leaving behind the names Genghis and Kublai Khan. Follow their lead, using the horsepower of modern vehicles to cover the incredible distances at the heart of Mongolia. End in the capital, where the ancient skills of that nomadic army are preserved at the extraordinary Naadam Festival.

Days 1-4: Ulaanbaatar, Lake Hovsgol Start in Ulaanbaatar, where the centuries-old Buddhist heritage is still vital. Tour some of the city's treasures before flying north to alpine Lake Hovsgol, sacred to Mongolians. Sleep in traditional *gers*, and explore the summer pastureland of reindeer and yak on foot and horseback. Return to Ulaanbaatar.

Days 5-6: Hustai Nuruu, Khogna Khan, Kara Korum Set off overland to Kara Korum, the site of Genghis Khan's all-but-vanished capital city. On the drive out to the former capital, stop at Hustai Nuruu National Park, home to the Przewalski horse, and sleep in a *ger* in the mountains of Khogna Khan. Visit the splendid UNESCO-listed Erdene Zuu Monastery, built with stones salvaged from the ruins of Kara Korum.

Days 7-11: Gobi Desert Continue on an adventurous overland route through the Mongolian outback to the Gobi, stopping en route at lost monasteries and remote *ger* camps. During the epic journey, discover the Flaming Cliffs and the green Yolyn Am Canyon, and mount a camel for a short ride. Along the way, encounter the nomads who call this formidable environment home.
Fly back to Ulaanbaatar.

Days 12-14: Ulaanbaatar Experience the pageantry of the fascinating **Naadam Festival**, a celebration of Mongolia's ageless traditions, and finish with a remarkable performance of Mongolian throat-singing.



CENTRAL ASIA & IRAN

The Five 'Stans of Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – are laced together with traces of the old Silk Road. The audacious horse games of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan's marble monuments, Uzbekistan's elegant blue-tiled oases, the falcon hunters of Kazakhstan, and the rugged mountain people of Tajikistan make up a rich medley of landscapes and cultures. Iran, once the seat of the mighty Persian Empire, is a complex place of dazzling beauty with a culture that prizes hospitality above all.

IRAN ❖ KAZAKHSTAN ❖ KYRGYZSTAN
TAJIKISTAN ❖ TURKMENISTAN ❖ UZBEKISTAN

Choose from:

Small Group Tours
Custom & Private Trips
Rail Journeys by Private Train

"We were overwhelmed by the positive reaction of people in all three countries (Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) to us as Americans. I have never been to a place where we have been so well received. The tour was a wonderful introduction to both the current state of the countries and the history."

M. & E. Wood
Newport Beach, CA



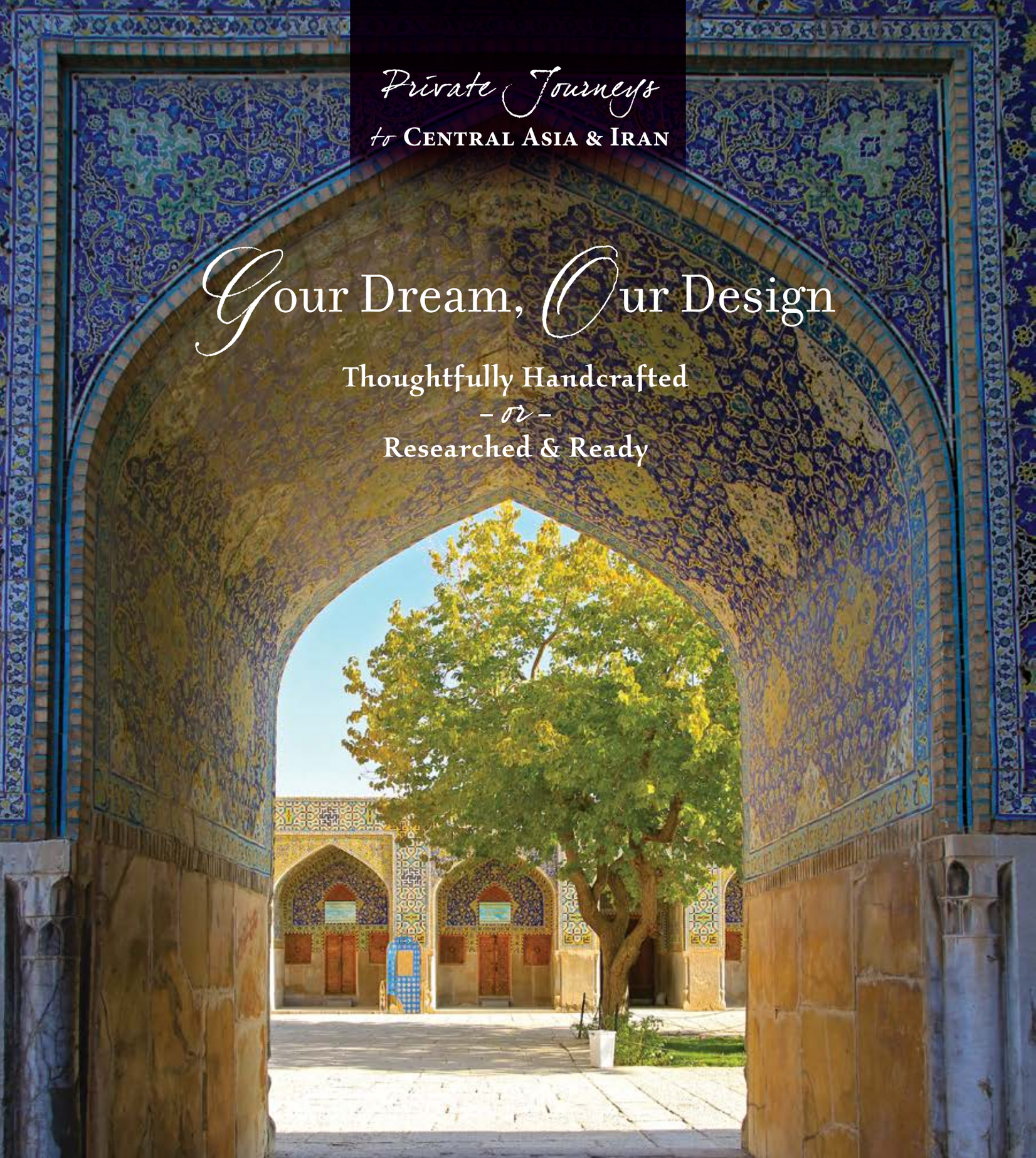
Local women seem as dignified as the blue-tiled madrassah they pass

photo: Abdu Samadov

Private Journeys
to **Central Asia & Iran**

Your Dream, Our Design

Thoughtfully Handcrafted
– or –
Researched & Ready

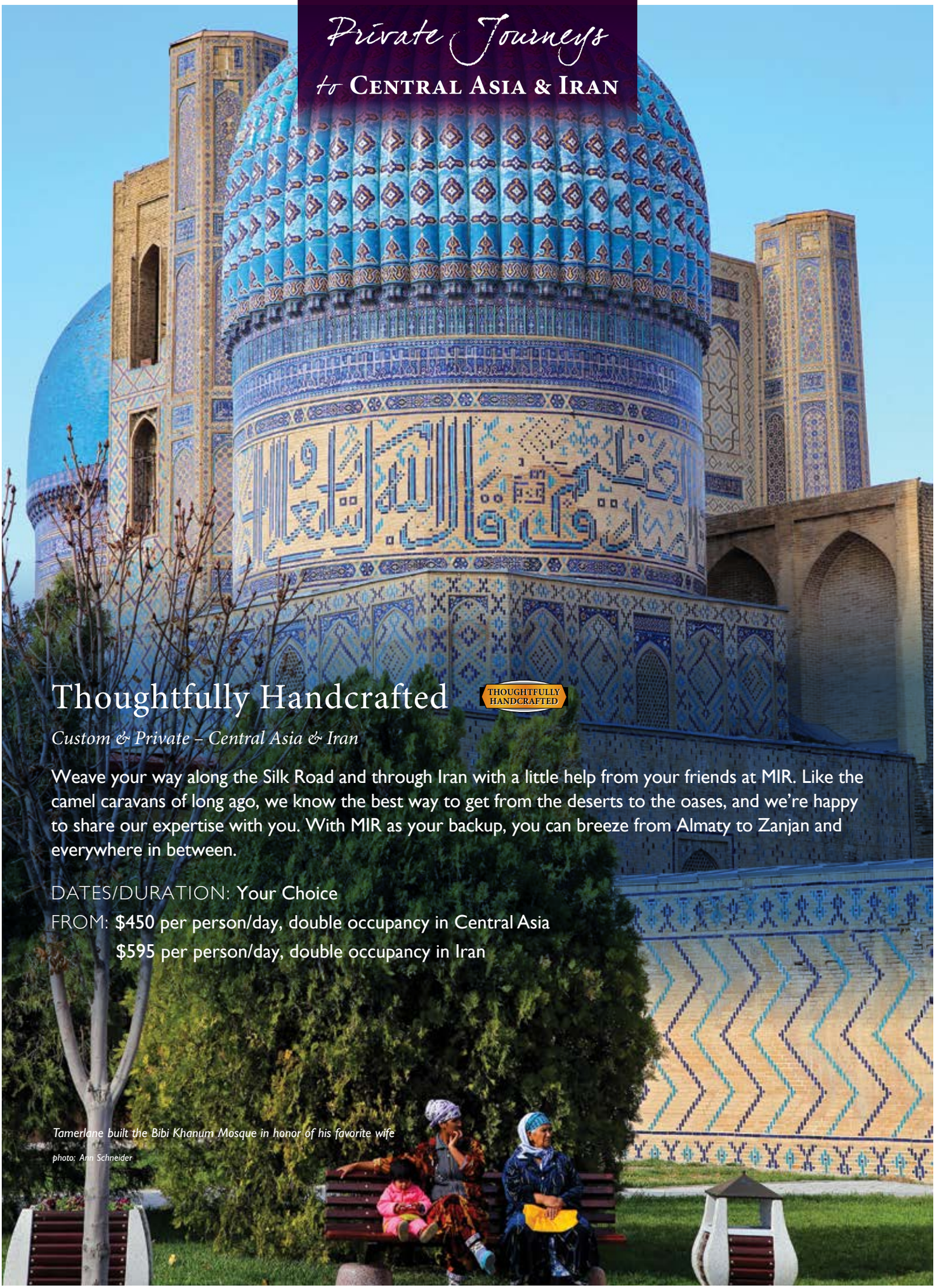


MIR has been specializing in personalized, private journeys for more than 30 years. We love crafting original itineraries to the crossroads of Europe and Asia that fit your travel preferences. Travel wherever, however, and with whomever you like, relying on our expert assistance.

Olive tree sheltering a Persian courtyard

photo: Ann Schneider

Private Journeys to Central Asia & Iran



Thoughtfully Handcrafted

THOUGHTFULLY HANDCRAFTED

Custom & Private – Central Asia & Iran

Weave your way along the Silk Road and through Iran with a little help from your friends at MIR. Like the camel caravans of long ago, we know the best way to get from the deserts to the oases, and we're happy to share our expertise with you. With MIR as your backup, you can breeze from Almaty to Zanjan and everywhere in between.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice

FROM: $450 per person/day, double occupancy in Central Asia

$595 per person/day, double occupancy in Iran

Tamerlane built the Bibi Khanum Mosque in honor of his favorite wife

photo: Ann Schneider

Private Journeys to Central Asia & Iran













Researched & Ready

FLEXIBLE ESSENTIAL

Prefer that we suggest an itinerary for you? No problem. Our series of pre-planned Flexible Essential Private Journeys are classic independent itineraries already researched and ready to book. Contact us for a descriptive itinerary, solo traveler pricing, and booking details.

Essential Iran

Persian Odyssey to Shiraz, Isfahan, and Tehran

Visit a trio of Iran's finest cities to discover Persian treasures and modern life. See spirited Tehran, romantic Shiraz, and beautiful Isfahan.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/10 Days

FROM: **$5,195** per person + internal air $125, based on 2 travelers

Essential Iran Enhanced

Path to Persia: Tehran, Kerman, Yazd, Shiraz, and Isfahan

Spend 12 days sampling Iran's cities, walking through history, discovering Zoroastrian life, studying archaeological sites, and admiring gorgeous Islamic architecture.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/12 Days

FROM: **$6,595** per person + internal air $130, based on 2 travelers

Private Journeys to Central Asia & Iran











photos: Devin Connolly, Lindsay Fincher, Jan & Allen Gerstenberger, Jake Smith, Megan Gilboy, Michel Behar, Bill Fletcher, David Parker

Essential Central Asia

Markets and Minarets of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan

Explore the markets, mosques, and minarets of oasis towns on the fringes of the desert, where civilizations blossomed amidst austere natural beauty.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/13 Days

FROM: **$4,295** per person +
internal air $100, based on 2 travelers

Essential Uzbekistan

Uzbek Oases of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva

Roam the striking UNESCO-listed Silk Road oases of Uzbekistan, their graceful mosques and *madrassahs* clad in ceramic tiles the color of the desert sky.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/10 Days

FROM: **$2,795** per person +
internal air $95, based on 2 travelers

Private Journeys to Central Asia & Iran

Researched & Ready

FLEXIBLE ESSENTIAL













Essential Kyrgyzstan

Nomadic Traditions and Village Culture

Journey through the Kyrgyz outback, spending a night with a village family, visiting with an eagle hunter, and admiring dramatic sandstone formations.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/8 Days

FROM: **$2,595** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Essential Kazakhstan

From the New Capital to the Old

From Astana, Kazakhstan's purpose-built capital on the northern steppe, down to Almaty, the country's business center, survey a hand-picked selection of highlights.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/7 Days

FROM: **$3,095** per person +
internal air $260, based on 2 travelers

Private Journeys to Central Asia & Iran











photos: Michel Behar, Vlad Ushakov, Max Sjöblom, Donna Collins, Russ Gnolik, Ellen Gnolik

Essential Turkmenistan

From the Capital to the Caspian

Crisscross rarely visited Turkmenistan, visiting tribal villages, admiring UNESCO-listed ruins, and camping at the "Door to Hell," the burning Darvaza Gas Crater.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/12 Days

FROM: **$3,595** per person +
internal air $275, based on 2 travelers

Essential Tajikistan

Mountains & Markets

From the country's capital, Dushanbe, to storied Khujand in the Fergana Valley, discover Tajikistan's hospitable people, famed archaeological sites, and enduring culture.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/8 Days

FROM: **$3,295** per person +
internal air $100, based on 2 travelers

Silk Road Backroads & Byways

Deserts & Diversions in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan & Turkmenistan


photo: Jeremy Woodhouse

Humans set Turkmenstan's Darvaza Gas Crater alight in the 1970s

SMALL GROUP TOUR

NEW!

19 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$7,195 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $125
(economy class, subject to change)
Partial single supplement $995
(see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
August 22-September 9

Stay a little longer... Consider a pre-tour extension to Astana, Kazakhstan, or combine this tour with From the Heavenly Tien Shan to the High Pamirs, page 61.

The fascinating countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan encompass some of the most spectacular hidden corners of Central Asia. Explore their distinct cultural identities, discovering ancient desert citadels, dramatic Silk Road fortresses, and surprising Soviet-era remnants on a journey into the region's unique and multi-layered history.

Days 1-3: Dushanbe, Penjikent In Tajikistan's capital, visit the Gurminj Museum of Musical Instruments from Afghanistan, the Pamirs, Turkey, and China. Next, travel overland to explore the site of an archaeological dig at Old Penjikent.

Days 4-5: Samarkand Traverse a recently re-opened border crossing en route to the Silk Road oasis of Samarkand. Admire UNESCO-listed Registan Square, Ulug Bek's medieval observatory and a silk carpet factory and share dinner in a family home.

Days 6-7: Bukhara Learn about the art of embroidered *suzani*-making at a cooperative workshop. Stroll Lyabi-Hauz Plaza and explore the Ark Citadel, the original fortress of Bukhara. Enjoy a concert of traditional folk music at a *madrassah*.

Days 8-11: Khiva, desert citadels, Nukus, Muynak Spend a day in UNESCO-listed Khiva, then stop at several desert citadels, including Toprak Kala, the 2,000-year-old royal citadel where the rulers of Khorezm lived. In Nukus, tour the wonderful Savitsky Art Museum, filled with Soviet-banned avant-garde Russian art. Observe the stranded boats in Muynak, on the former shore of the shrunken Aral Sea.

Day 12: Kunya-Urgench, Dashoguz, Darvaza In Turkmenistan, visit the UNESCO ruins of Kunya-Urgench and then drive through the Kara Kum Desert to a tent camp near the burning gas crater at Darvaza.

Days 13-14: Ashgabat, Nohur, Serdar Continue to Ashgabat, the Turkmen capital, with its monumental white marble buildings. In the desert, visit the isolated tribal Nohur people, who have held on to their culture and traditions.

Days 15-19: Yangykala, Turkmenbashi, Ashgabat Discover gorgeous Yangykala Canyon before stopping in Turkmenistan's only seaport, Turkmenbashi, and cruise along the Caspian Sea shore. Fly back to Ashgabat to spend time at the bustling Sunday market.


photo: Jan & Allen Gerstenberger

A discussion in Bukhara's Shah-i-Zinda mausoleum complex

MIR Signature Experiences

- Contemplate Muynak, formerly the Aral Sea's biggest fishing port, now a ghost town scattered with the hulks of rusted fishing boats and freighters
- Discover the burning Darvaza Gas Crater, aka the "Door to Hell," one of Turkmenistan's most unusual sights
- Admire the striped and striated limestone cliffs of Yangykala Canyon, a bizarre yet beautiful desert landscape



From the Heavenly Tien Shan to the High Pamirs

Majestic Mountains of Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan

SMALL GROUP TOUR



photo: Jared Gorman

An old Russian Lada is dwarfed by the mountains along the Pamir Highway

NEW!

18 Days
Explorer Series Land Tour
$7,995 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $80
(economy class, subject to change)
Partial single supplement $795
(see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 5-12 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
August 5-22

Stay a little longer... Consider a pre-tour extension to Astana, Kazakhstan, or combine this tour with Silk Road Backroads & Byways, page 60.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Glimpse the lives of Kyrgyz nomads, observing the age-old art of milking mares and attending an exhilarating match of *kok-boru*, a traditional Kyrgyz horse game
- Spend the night in a nomadic yurt camp near beautiful alpine Son Kul Lake
- Meet with a special guest speaker from a Tajik NGO to hear about his experiences of living and working in Tajikistan



photo: Max Sjöblom

Riding with a golden eagle in Kyrgyzstan



Join an adventurous journey through two of Central Asia's most remote and rarely explored countries – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Experience the proud traditions of Kyrgyz nomads in the highlands, visit local Tajiks in their timeless mountain villages, and take in hauntingly beautiful landscapes along one of the world's most scenic drives, the Pamir Highway.

Days 1-4: Bishkek, Chon-Kemin, Son Kul Explore Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, then drive to the traditional village of Chon-Kemin to experience everyday life in the countryside. Spend a night in a yurt near alpine Son Kul Lake, visit with nomadic shepherd families, and witness an exciting match of the Kyrgyz horse game *kok-boru*.

Days 5-7: Naryn, Tash Rabat, Kochkor, Bishkek Meet with a village community of recently resettled Afghan Pamiris and then learn about traditional felting methods. Visit the 15th century stone caravanserai in Tash Rabat, a former highland outpost on the Silk Road. Enjoy lunch with a local family in the little village of Kochkor.

Days 8-9: Osh, Sary Tash, Murghab Fly to Osh, and browse the lively 2,000-year-old Jayma Bazaar, one of Central Asia's largest outdoor bazaars. Depart on the stunning drive along the Pamir Highway, climbing up over dramatic 14,000-foot Kyzyl Art Pass into Tajikistan and down to Murghab. Enjoy commanding views of the Pamirs, and stop for a picnic lunch at gorgeous Karakul Lake.

Days 10-13: Langar, Yamg, Yamchun, Khorog Continue through the Wakhan Corridor, pausing to meet with local villagers and to admire Buddhist stupas and fortress ruins. In Khorog, capital of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, sit in on an evening service at an Ismaili Muslim prayer house, and chat with a representative from a local Tajik NGO.

Days 14-18: Kalaikhumb, Dushanbe Follow the Panj River to the mountain village of Kalaikhumb, once the home of a great Silk Road fortress. In Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, visit the fascinating Museum of Antiquities and the nearby 18th century Hissar Fortress.

Backstreets & Bazaars of Uzbekistan

A Cultural & Culinary Navruz Adventure

National Geographic Traveler pick

"19 MUST-TAKE TOURS THROUGHOUT ASIA"

SMALL GROUP TOUR



photo: Michel Behar

Navruz finery in Samarkand

10 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$3,895 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $100
(economy class, subject to change)
Single supplement $595

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 4-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
March 16-25

Stay a little longer... Consider a post-tour extension to Tajikistan, or private tours of any of the other four 'Stans. Call for details.

Join a festive journey through Uzbekistan during the Uzbek New Year, Navruz. Discover the exciting cuisine and gorgeous architecture of three Silk Road oases – Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand – and the modern capital, Tashkent. Celebrate Navruz with locals in their homes and communities, and enjoy the abundant Uzbek hospitality.

Days 1-2: Tashkent Browse Tashkent's lively Chorsu Bazaar, highlighting the textile section and the bakery. Enjoy a meeting and lunch with a renowned local chef, and watch as he demonstrates how to make a selection of Uzbek specialties.

Days 3-4: Khiva, Kyzyl Kum Desert Explore the ancient city of Khiva, imbued with the spirit of the old Silk Road. Wander the winding alleys of the UNESCO-listed Old Town, filled with minarets, mosques, and the beautifully preserved Kunya Ark. Drive through the vast Kyzyl Kum Desert to Bukhara.

Days 5-6: Bukhara In UNESCO-listed Bukhara, spend a day celebrating Navruz, the ancient Zoroastrian festival welcoming the arrival of spring. Participate in a traditional Uzbek Navruz ceremony, and enjoy a memorable Navruz dinner, learning about the traditional foods served, including *sumalak*, a favorite holiday sweet.

Days 7-8: Gijduvan, Samarkand Tour the renowned Narzulaev family's ceramics workshop in Gijduvan. Experience the glory of fabled Samarkand with visits to Ulug Bek's incredible observatory and majestic Registan Square. Learn how to make traditional bread at a local family bakery, and enjoy a master class in making *plov*, Uzbekistan's signature dish. Visit an international fashion designer's studio for an elegant presentation.

Days 9-10: Urgut, Tashkent Browse the authentic crafts section of Urgut Market, and attend an exciting match of *buzkashi*, an ancient Central Asian horse game. Celebrate with a festive farewell lunch before hopping the high-speed train back to Tashkent.

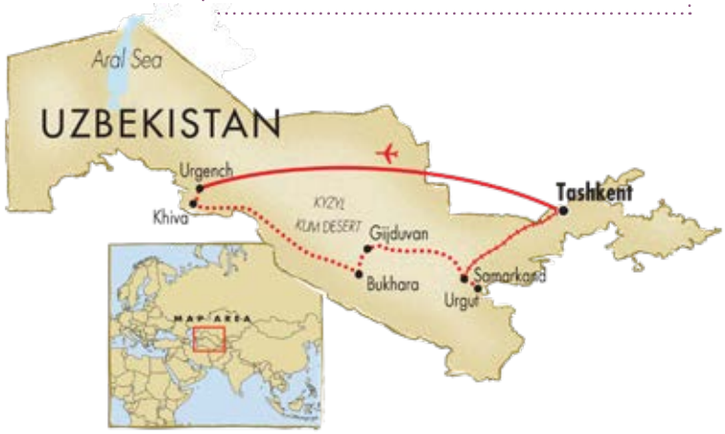


photo: Willis Hughes

Specially decorated festival bread

MIR Signature Experiences

- Immerse yourself in the region's rich cultural and culinary heritage with visits to the cities, villages, and oases of venerable Uzbekistan
- Attend a demonstration of Uzbek cuisine hosted by a renowned local chef
- Participate in a traditional Navruz ceremony unique to Uzbekistan



Once Forbidden Lands of Central Asia & Iran

From Tashkent to Tehran via Turkmenistan

SMALL GROUP TOUR



photo: Ann Schneider

A bouquet of Iranian schoolgirls

20 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$8,195 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $300
(economy class, subject to change)
Single supplement $1,495

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 5-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
October 7-26

Stay a little longer... Come early to explore neighboring countries with our Essential Tajikistan, page 59, or Essential Kyrgyzstan, page 58. Contact us for more details.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Converse with your hostess at a home-cooked meal in Samarkand
- Take a private tour of a farm breeding an heir-loom Turkmen horse, the fiery Akhal-Teke
- Stand in the shadow of the colossal marble pillars of Persepolis, erected more than 2,000 years ago



photo: Michel Behar

A Turkmen hero stands in Independence Park in Ashgabat



The countries of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran are woven together like the burnished threads of a fine Persian carpet. From earliest recorded history, these lands have exchanged rulers, architecture, art, and religion. Explore the dazzling bazaars and extravagant desert architecture along the byways of the old Silk Road between Tashkent and Tehran.

Days 1-3: Tashkent, Samarkand In Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, visit the private studio of a sixth-generation ceramicist. Admire Samarkand's UNESCO-listed Registan, radiating majesty through the ages. Converse with your hostess at a convivial meal in her family's Samarkand home.

Days 4-7: Gijduvan, Bukhara, Khiva En route to the Silk Road oasis of Bukhara, enjoy lunch at the renowned Gijduvan ceramics workshop, admiring the profusion of lustrous glazed earthenware. In Bukhara, wander the labyrinth of mud-brick streets in the heart of the Old Town. Explore the World Heritage Site of Khiva's atmospheric Old Town, including the 19th century Tash-Hauli Palace and the Dzhuma Mosque, with its interior forest of carved wooden pillars.

Days 8-9: Dashoguz, Ashgabat, Nisa Fly to the capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, and tour a working farm that breeds the elegant Akhal-Teke horse. Visit UNESCO-listed Nisa, ancient capital of the Parthian kingdom.

Days 10-13: Mashad, Tehran, Yazd Cross the border into enigmatic Iran, visiting Mashad, where the Tomb of Imam Reza is one of the most sacred sites of Shia Islam. Tour the collections at Tehran's National Museum, and spend time in Yazd, famed for its Zoroastrian Towers of Silence and wind catchers.

Days 14-18: Shiraz, Persepolis, Isfahan Stop in Shiraz, a place of poetry and luxuriant gardens; explore the fascinating remnants of Persepolis, one of the most important cities of the ancient world; and admire the luminous bridges of Isfahan and its graceful UNESCO-listed Imam Square.

Days 19-20: Kashan, Tehran Visit Kashan, watered by an ancient Persian irrigation system of tunnels and vertical shafts called *qanats*. Finish in the capital, Tehran.

Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans

A Classic Silk Road Survey


photo: Ann Schneider

Ornamental Silk Road tilework in Uzbekistan

SMALL GROUP TOUR

21 Days

Premier Series Land Tour
$7,895 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $375
(economy class, subject to change)
Single supplement $1,295

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 5-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
April 7-27 • April 21-May 11 • May 12-June 1 • August 18-September 7 • September 8-28 • October 13-November 2

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with Treasures of the South Caucasus, page 78, or with Ancient Persia – Modern Iran, page 68.

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.

Days 1-4: Almaty, Lake Issyk-Kul, Bishkek Begin the tour in Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, driving into the majestic Tien Shan mountain range. Cross into Kyrgyzstan and spend a night at beautiful alpine Lake Issyk-Kul before exploring Bishkek.

Days 5-7: Osh, Fergana, Margilan, Rishtan, Khujand Fly to the lush Fergana Valley, divided among three of the five 'Stans. Ascend to UNESCO-listed Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain, one of the holiest Islamic sites in Central Asia, rising from the outskirts of Osh, where you meet with a group of locals. In the Uzbek portion of the valley, visit Margilan and Rishtan, villages specializing in silks and ceramics. Cross the border into Tajikistan for an overnight in historic Khujand.

Days 8-16: Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Nukus Journey overland to Tashkent and admire one of the oldest Korans in the world. Explore the blue-tiled mosaics of Samarkand, Tamerlane's UNESCO-listed Ak Saray Palace in Shahrisabz, the interlocking brickwork of Bukhara, and the winding alleys of Khiva. Drive through the Kyzyl Kum (Red Sand) Desert to the astonishing Savitsky Museum of avant-garde Russian art in remote Nukus, capital of Karakalpakstan, for an overnight.

Days 17-21: Kunya-Urgench, Dashoguz, Ashgabat, Nisa, Merv In Turkmenistan explore three UNESCO sites: the ruins of Khorezm's Kunya-Urgench, the Parthian city of Nisa, and mythical Merv. In the modern capital of Ashgabat, discover the white marble monuments so plentiful that they were awarded a Guinness World Record in 2013.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Observe traditional Kazakh falconry at a falcon farm, learning how the beautiful birds are used for hunting in Kazakhstan
- Attend Kyrgyz national horse games after a home-cooked meal in a Kyrgyz village
- Savor traditional Uzbek specialties in the home of a family in Fergana Valley


photo: Vlad Ushakov

Kyrgyz musician in traditional dress



The Pamir Highway & Across Fabled Frontiers

The Silk Road Less Traveled from Kyrgyzstan to Tajikistan

SMALL GROUP TOUR



photo: Jered Gorman

Bargaining for fat-tailed sheep at the Kashgar Animal Market

18 Days
Explorer Series Land Tour
$7,795 per person, double occupancy
Partial single supplement $995 (see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 4-12 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
July 15-August 1

Stay a little longer... Consider a post-tour extension to Uzbekistan. Contact us for details.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Experience the spirit of Kyrgyzstan at exhilarating horse games in a village outside the capital
- Overnight in yurts near the massive stone Silk Road caravanserai at Tash Rabat
- Cross borders at rarely used frontier stations near dramatic mountain passes



photo: Jered Gorman

11th century Burana Tower watched over the old Silk Road



The Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan are some of the most rugged and beautiful on Earth, soaring upward where the Himalayas, the Tien Shan, and the Hindu Kush meet. This adventurous journey over the Pamir Highway is a breathtaking route, in use since the time of the Silk Road.

Days 1-3: Bishkek, Tokmok and Kochkor villages, Naryn Explore Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, enjoying a performance of the Kyrgyz tale the *Epic of Manas*, inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In Tokmok village, attend traditional Kyrgyz horse games, and learn about felt-making in Kochkor. Continue to Naryn, set between red cliffs and green hills at 6,700 feet.

Days 4-7: Tash Rabat, Torugart Pass, Kashgar Follow the old Silk Road, overnighting in yurts near Tash Rabat, a 15th century caravanserai. Cross the 12,000-foot Torugart Pass near the Kyrgyzstan-China border, the most spectacular route into or out of Central Asia. Spend a morning at Kashgar's lively animal market and enjoy a traditional Uighur folk performance.

Days 8-10: Irkeshtam Pass, Sary Tash, Murghab Set out on the stunning drive over Irkeshtam Pass back into Kyrgyzstan. Pick up the Pamir Highway near the little town of Sary Tash. The road climbs over 14,000-foot Kyzyl-Art Pass into Tajikistan, across the Pamir Plateau, up dramatic Ak-Baital Pass, at more than 15,200 feet, and down to Murghab. Enjoy striking views of the surrounding mountains, and a picnic at Karakul Lake.

Days 11-13: Langar, Yamchun, Ishkashim, Khorog Stop in little mountain towns, conversing with local people as they go about their daily lives. In Khorog, the capital of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, visit the beautiful botanical garden and a handicraft center.

Days 14-18: Kalaikhumb, Dushanbe Drive along the Panj River, which forms the natural border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, overnighting in the village of Kalaikhumb. Continue to Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan. Explore nearby Hissar, dominated by its 18th century fortress.

Silk Route Odyssey: Caravan Across Uzbekistan

Valleys, Deserts, Bazaars, and Oases



photo: Abdu Samadov

Samarkand's Shah-i-Zinda is a popular destination for Uzbeks

SMALL GROUP TOUR

15 Days
Explorer Series Land Tour
$4,795 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $100
(economy class, subject to change)
Partial single supplement $525 (see page 109)

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

See special accommodation note on page 109

Group Size 4-12 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
May 17-31 • September 6-20

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with Essential Tajikistan, page 59.

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, the incredible Savitsky Museum in Nukus, and the lush Fergana Valley, where Central Asia's silk production began with two cocoons hidden in the headdress of a royal Chinese bride.

Days 1-4: Tashkent, Fergana Valley Gather in the modern Uzbek capital, Tashkent. Take the train to the Fergana Valley, heartland of Uzbekistan. Alexander the Great founded a city here in 329 BC. Bordered by the Tien Shan Mountains, the valley is an oasis of cotton fields and melon plantations, dotted with ancient villages distinguished for their silk production and ceramic tiles.

Days 5-7: Samarkand, Shahrisabz Continue to Samarkand, the grand capital of the conqueror Tamerlane. Admire the grace of the blue-tiled Registan, and visit Ulug Bek's surprising observatory. Stop at Tamerlane's hometown, UNESCO-listed Shahrisabz, to see the remains of Ak Saray, or White Palace.

Day 8: Navoi, Nurata, Kyzyl Kum Desert Explore the vast Kyzyl Kum Desert, whose red sands protect the remnants of Alexander the Great's ancient well system. Spend the night in a yurt camp, relaxing around a campfire under a dome of stars with a Kazakh musician sweetening the mood even further.

Days 9-15: Bukhara, Khiva, Nukus, Tashkent Visit Bukhara, whose densely inhabited, UNESCO-listed ancient city center is a maze of mud-walled homes, mosques, and stone bazaars, and whose 2,500th anniversary was observed in 1997. Stop in Khiva, the last great oasis on the northern caravan route, then drive to Nukus, capital of the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan, to admire the fabulous collection of avant-garde Russian art rescued from the Soviets. Fly from Nukus to Tashkent where the odyssey concludes.



photo: Ana Filonov

A silk weaver at work in Margilan

MIR Signature Experiences

- Visit Fergana Valley craftsmen in their silk-weaving and ceramics workshops
- Spend the night in a nomadic yurt camp in the desert, relaxing around a campfire under the stars
- Enjoy a meal of Uzbek specialties in the home of a local family



Iran Unveiled

Modern Face of a Legendary Land

SMALL GROUP TOUR

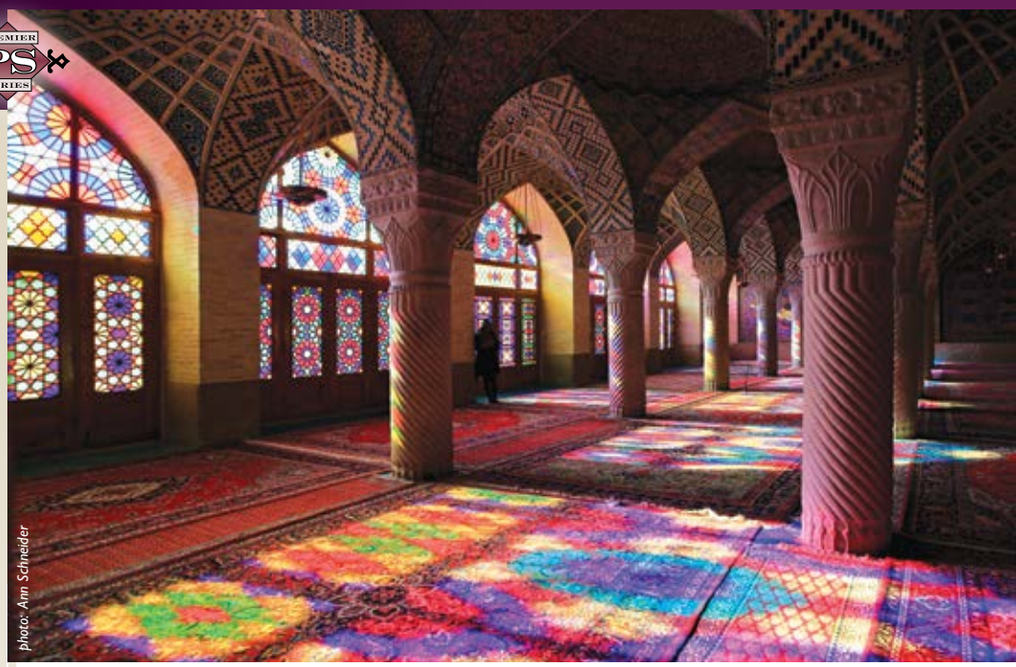


photo: Ann Schneider

The Pink Mosque in Shiraz explodes with afternoon color

12 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$5,995 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $130
(economy class, subject to change)
Single supplement $1,275

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
April 7-18 • October 6-17

Stay a little longer... While in the area, head to Central Asia with an Essential Series trip to Uzbekistan, page 57, or Turkmenistan, page 59.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Discover the Marble Throne in Tehran's UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace
- Converse with local people as you stroll the fabulous bazaars
- Admire the 6th century BC mausoleum of Cyrus the Great in UNESCO-listed Pasargadae


photo: Mariana Noble

A traveler shares her photo with Iranian girls



Day a visit to modern Iran, getting acquainted with its hospitable people on a compact overview that hits all the must-see highlights of Tehran, Shiraz, Yazd, and Isfahan. Browse the unequaled bazaars, meeting and conversing with locals. Admire the treasures of Iran, from the Crown Jewels in Tehran and the UNESCO-listed classical Persian gardens of the interior to the Zoroastrian Fire Temple of Yazd and the luminous bridges of Isfahan. Along the way, experience eight fabulous UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the ruins of Pasargadae, founded by Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BC.

Days 1-4: Tehran Tehran is a metropolis of more than eight million, boasting fashionable boutiques, restaurants, teahouses, and museums. Sample the city's best, including the Museum of Glass and Ceramics and the Carpet Museum, as well as the fabulous Crown Jewels. Peruse the Islamic and archaeological collections at the National Museum, featuring Persian antiquities, Islamic art, and sacred relics from the 8th century to the present. Fly to Shiraz.

Days 5-6: Shiraz, day trip to Persepolis Enjoy UNESCO-listed Eram Garden, with its peaceful fountains and flowers. Browse the 11th century Vakil Bazaar, and visit with local people as they stroll and relax at the tomb of Iran's favorite poet, Hafez. Spend a day in one of the most important sites of the ancient world, monumental Persepolis.

Days 7-8: Pasargadae, Yazd Drive to the magnificent city of Yazd, stopping to explore the UNESCO-listed ruins of 6th century BC Pasargadae. Note the tall *badgirs*, or wind catchers, of Yazd, ingenious Persian structures that vent and cool the buildings. Visit the Fire Temple and Towers of Silence, and learn about the city's Zoroastrian heritage.

Days 9-12: Maybod, Naein, Isfahan On the road to Isfahan, stop in Maybod, with its 2,000-year-old mud-brick castle, and in the little town of Naein, where traditional weavers are renowned for their mantles and rugs. Explore celebrated Isfahan, with its graceful UNESCO-listed Imam Square. Stroll the 17th century Qeisarieh Bazaar, its narrow lanes lined with brass and copperware craftsmen, jewelers, miniature painters, and rug merchants.

Ancient Persia – Modern Iran

Iran from Top to Bottom



photo: Jeremy Woodhouse

Mud-brick Arg-e Rayen, at least a thousand years old

SMALL GROUP TOUR

18 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$7,395 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $220
(economy class, subject to change)
Single supplement $1,495

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
April 8-25 • April 15-May 2 • September 23-October 10 • September 30-October 17

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans, page 64. Contact us for details.

Persia, the extraordinary land that is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, has been known in the west as Iran since 1935, and is a modern country of more than 80 million people. On this 18-day journey, experience 13 wonderful UNESCO sites, explore fabulous bazaars, admire splendid architecture, discover formidable archaeological sites, and converse with the welcoming Iranian people.

Days 1-4: Tehran, Qazvin, Zanjan Survey the jewel-encrusted crowns and scepters in Tehran's collection of Crown Jewels, and its 16th century Golestan Palace. Tour Qazvin, founded in the 3rd century BC, and head to Zanjan to admire the turquoise dome of the beautifully restored Soltaniyeh Mausoleum.

Days 5-10: Tabriz, Kerman, Yazd Drive to Tabriz, browsing its labyrinthine UNESCO-listed bazaar, flourishing since the 13th century. Fly to Kerman and stroll among the pools and greenery of UNESCO-listed Shahzadeh Garden, then sip tea in an old *hamam*. In Zoroastrian Yazd, visit the Fire Temple and the Towers of Silence, and look for the wind towers, called *badgirs*, that cool the homes.

Days 11-14: Shiraz, Persepolis, Firuzabad, Bishapur, Yasuj Inspect the ruins of Cyrus the Great's Pasargadae before arriving in romantic Shiraz, the "City of Roses and Nightingales." Explore one of the most important sites of the ancient world, Persepolis, and visit Firuzabad, winter quarters of the Qashqai nomads. Continue along a mountainous road to Kazerun to see the remains of the old city of Bishapur and its imposing palace.

Days 15-18: Isfahan In Isfahan, admire the magnificent Islamic buildings of Imam Square, decorated with pale blue tiles; Shah Abbas the Great built the graceful ensemble in the early 17th century. Lose yourself at the covered Grand Bazaar, overflowing with jewelry, enamelware, carpets, beaten copper, spices, silks, and block-printed textiles.



photo: Jeremy Woodhouse

Beauty in Tehran

MIR Signature Experiences

- Join the crowds of shoppers in the labyrinthine UNESCO-listed Tabriz Bazaar
- Walk amidst 25 centuries of history in the monumental ruins of Persepolis, ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings
- Learn about the nomadic clans of the Qashqai tribe in Firuzabad



To Learn More About the Train, see pages 98–99

Persia & the Silk Road by Private Train

From Almaty to Tehran aboard the *Golden Eagle*

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

NEW!

16 Days
4 nights hotels, 11 nights onboard the *Golden Eagle* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour
Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share	$20,395
Silver Class, single	$30,795
Gold Class, twin share	$24,395
Gold Class, single	$36,395
Imperial Suite, twin share	$40,895

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates
October 2-17

Stay a little longer... Consider an extended program in Iran, or explore the other Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Contact us for details.



photo: Abdu Samadov

Still the same: The rooftops of Old Town Khiva

This remarkable rail journey by private train follows the trail of countless caravan merchants and explorers through three complex and historically rich countries in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan – as well as dazzling Iran. Experience an incredible eight UNESCO sites before the journey ends.

Days 1-3: Almaty, Tashkent In Almaty, Kazakhstan's business center, admire Zenkov Cathedral and Panfilov Park. In Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, view one of the oldest Korans in the world.

Days 4-6: Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva Visit the three UNESCO-listed Uzbek oasis cities. In Samarkand, admire gracious Registan Square and Ulug Bek Observatory. Explore Bukhara's 2,000-year-old Ark Citadel and the emir's Palace of the Moon and Stars. Wander Khiva's atmospheric Old Town.

Days 7-8: Darvaza, Ashgabat, Sarakhs, Mashad Leave the train in the early hours to see the burning Darvaza Gas Crater, aka the "Door to Hell." Spend an afternoon in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabat, admiring its marble and gold monuments. Explore the ruins of ancient Sarakhs, as well as the holy city of Mashad, renowned for its Imam Reza Shrine.

Days 9-10: Yazd, Rayen, Mahan, Kerman In UNESCO-listed Yazd, visit the Zoroastrian Fire Temple and its eternal flame. Pause at the ancient fortress of Arg-e Rayen, at least a thousand years old, and continue by coach to Mahan to enjoy the UNESCO-listed Shahzadeh Persian garden. In Kerman, browse the Grand Bazaar.

Days 11-12: Shahdad, Isfahan From Shahdad, drive into the Dasht-e Lut salt desert to see the *kalouts,* fantastical sand formations recently added to the World Heritage List. In Isfahan, take in graceful UNESCO-listed Imam Square, and shop the fascinating Qeisarieh Bazaar.

Days 13-16: Persepolis, Shiraz, Tehran Discover the ruins of Persepolis, an important capital of the ancient world. In beautiful Shiraz, visit the Tomb of Hafez, one of Iran's favorite poets. And in Iran's capital, Tehran, admire Golestan Palace, glittering with mirrors.



photo: Bill Thornton

Brilliant fashion in Turkmenistan



Jewels of Persia & the Silk Route by Private Train

From Tehran to Moscow via Central Asia

Aboard the Luxury *Golden Eagle*

To Learn More About the Train, see pages 98-99


photo: Tim Littler

The Persian train cuts through fields in rural Iran

This five-country rail adventure begins in complex and beautiful Iran, then heads to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and on to burgeoning Moscow. Discover Iran's fabled treasures and rich archaeological sites, and stop for explorations of Uzbekistan's famed oasis cities before rolling through the Kazakh desert and into Russia.

Days 1-3: Tehran Explore Iran's capital, including the UNESCO Site of Golestan Palace and the Crown Jewels, featuring the world's largest uncut diamond, at the State Jewels Museum.

Days 4-5: Persepolis, Shiraz, Isfahan Walk through the ruins of Persepolis, UNESCO-listed wonder of the ancient world, before touring the fabled city of Shiraz. In elegant Isfahan, wander UNESCO-listed Imam Square.

Days 6-8: Yazd, Rayen, Mahan, Mashad See the eternal flame at the Zoroastrian Fire Temple in Yazd. Admire the ancient mud-brick fortress of Rayen, the UNESCO-listed Prince Garden of Mahan, and the tomb of Sufi leader Shah Nematollah Vali. In Mashad, discover one of Iran's holiest Shi'ite shrines, Imam Reza's tomb.

Days 9-10: Sarakhs, Ashgabat, Darvaza Cross into Turkmenistan, and visit the ancient ruins of Sarakhs. Arrive in the capital, Ashgabat, whose modern white marble buildings won a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. Make a foray into the desert for a glimpse of the burning Darvaza Gas Crater.

Days 11-13: Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand Next is Khiva, among the most atmospheric oases on the Silk Road. The highlights in Bukhara are the mud-brick Ark Citadel and the Palace of the Moon and Stars. Admire the Bibi Khanum Mosque, Ulug Bek Observatory, and Registan Square in Samarkand.

Days 14-15: Tashkent, Baikonur Continue to Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, to see one of the oldest Korans in the world. Cross the Kazakh border and discover Russia's premier space launch facility, Baikonur Cosmodrome, in the arid Kazakh steppe.

Days 16-18: Aboard Train, Moscow Arriving in Moscow, enjoy an overnight stay and a tour of the magnificent Kremlin and the Armory Museum.

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

18 Days

3 nights hotels, 14 nights onboard the *Golden Eagle* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour

Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share	$22,995
Silver Class, single	$34,695
Gold Class, twin share	$27,495
Gold Class, single	$40,995
Imperial Suite, twin share	$45,995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates

October 13-30

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in either Moscow or Tehran. Contact us for details on additional nights and private tours.



Local women visiting Isfahan's spacious Imam Square



Aboard the
Orient Silk Road Express

To Learn More About the Train,
see www.mircorp.com

Essence of the Silk Road by Private Train

Between Ashgabat and Almaty

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

14 Days
6 nights hotels, 7 nights onboard the *Orient Silk Road Express* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour
Per Person:

Ali Baba Class, twin share	$5,645
Ali Baba Class, single	$7,830
Aladdin Class, twin share	$6,645
Aladdin Class, single	$9,240
Sultan Class, twin share	$10,295
Sultan Class, single	$15,890
Kalif Class, twin share	$10,645
Kalif Class, single	$16,440

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates

Eastbound: From Ashgabat to Almaty
April 9-22 • October 15-28*

Westbound: From Almaty to Ashgabat
March 28-April 10 • October 3-16*

**October departures are an additional $250 per person*

More options... A rail journey by private train that travels through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan – with stops in Bishkek and Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan, as well as Khujand in Tajikistan – is also available. Contact us for pricing and details.



A presentation of Uzbek delicacies





photo: Roland Jung

Entrance to the Kalon Mosque in Bukhara

Roll through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan on this riveting rail journey by private train. Begin in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabat, with its gleaming marble monuments, and admire the UNESCO-listed Uzbek Silk Road oases of Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand.

Days 1-3: Ashgabat, Nisa, Merv Arriving in Turkmenistan, explore the archaeological site of Nisa, once a major center of the ancient Parthian Kingdom. In the modern capital, Ashgabat, discover the white marble buildings so plentiful that they were awarded a Guinness World Record. Board the private train, then visit the UNESCO-listed ruins of Merv, capital of the Seljuk Turks. Enjoy lunch with a local family in their courtyard.

Days 4-6: Bukhara In Uzbekistan's largest oasis city, Bukhara, highlights include the mud-brick Ark Citadel, the fortified residence of the emirs of Bukhara, and the Lyabi-Hauz Plaza. Attend a performance of traditional dance over dinner in a former *madrassah*, and spend two nights in a comfortable Bukhara hotel.

Days 7-9: Khiva, Samarkand Investigate Khiva, its mud-brick mosques, minarets, and *madrassahs* protected by undulating city walls. In Samarkand, Tamerlane's beautiful capital, check into a four star hotel for two nights, and explore the Ulug Bek Observatory, Shah-i-Zinda, the majestic Registan, and a silk carpet factory.

Days 10-11: Shahrisabz, Tashkent Explore UNESCO-listed Shahrisabz, the birthplace of Tamerlane. Back on board, enjoy a tasting of Uzbek wines. Visit Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, a modern city rebuilt in the Soviet style after an earthquake in 1966. Survey some of its older surviving architecture and newer monuments.

Days 12-14: Turkistan, Almaty Cross the border into Kazakhstan and make a stop in Turkistan to see Khoja Akhmed Yasavi's stately mausoleum, the country's first UNESCO site. Arriving in Almaty, Kazakhstan's business capital and largest city, visit the 170-foot wooden Zenkov Cathedral. Enjoy a farewell meal in a traditional Kazakh yurt.



SOUTH CAUCASUS & TURKEY

The three distinctive countries of the South Caucasus interlock like puzzle pieces on a gorgeous strip of mountainous land wedged between the Black and Caspian seas. The people of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, Muslim and Christian alike, are gifted with robust pagan roots, a love of life, and a strong culture of hospitality, home, and hearth.

To the south, Texas-sized Turkey is a forward-looking secular Islamic nation filled with welcoming people, fabulous historic sites, incredibly diverse landscapes, and five star cuisine.

ARMENIA ✣ AZERBAIJAN ✣ GEORGIA ✣ TURKEY

Choose from:

Small Group Tours
Custom & Private Trips
Rail Journeys by Private Train

"How could one not be awed by the petroglyphs in Azerbaijan, the caves at David Gareja in Georgia, and the view of Mt. Ararat in Armenia? These are just the highlights of each country. Every day brought new adventures. The depth of the history of this region is amazing."

J. Jones
Santa Cruz, CA



The golden statues of Colchis Fountain in Kutaisi, Georgia, are based on ancient jewelry found at the archaeological site of Vani

photo: Bob Huberman



Private Journeys
to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia & Turkey

Your Dream, Our Design

Thoughtfully Handcrafted
– or –
Researched & Ready

MIR has been specializing in personalized, private journeys for more than 30 years. We love crafting original itineraries to the crossroads of Europe and Asia that fit your travel preferences. Travel wherever, however, and with whomever you like, relying on our expert assistance.

The Turkish Mosque on Martyrs' Lane in Baku commemorates the Azerbaijani civilians killed by the Soviets in 1990

photo: Jered Gorman

Private Journeys to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia & Turkey

Thoughtfully Handcrafted

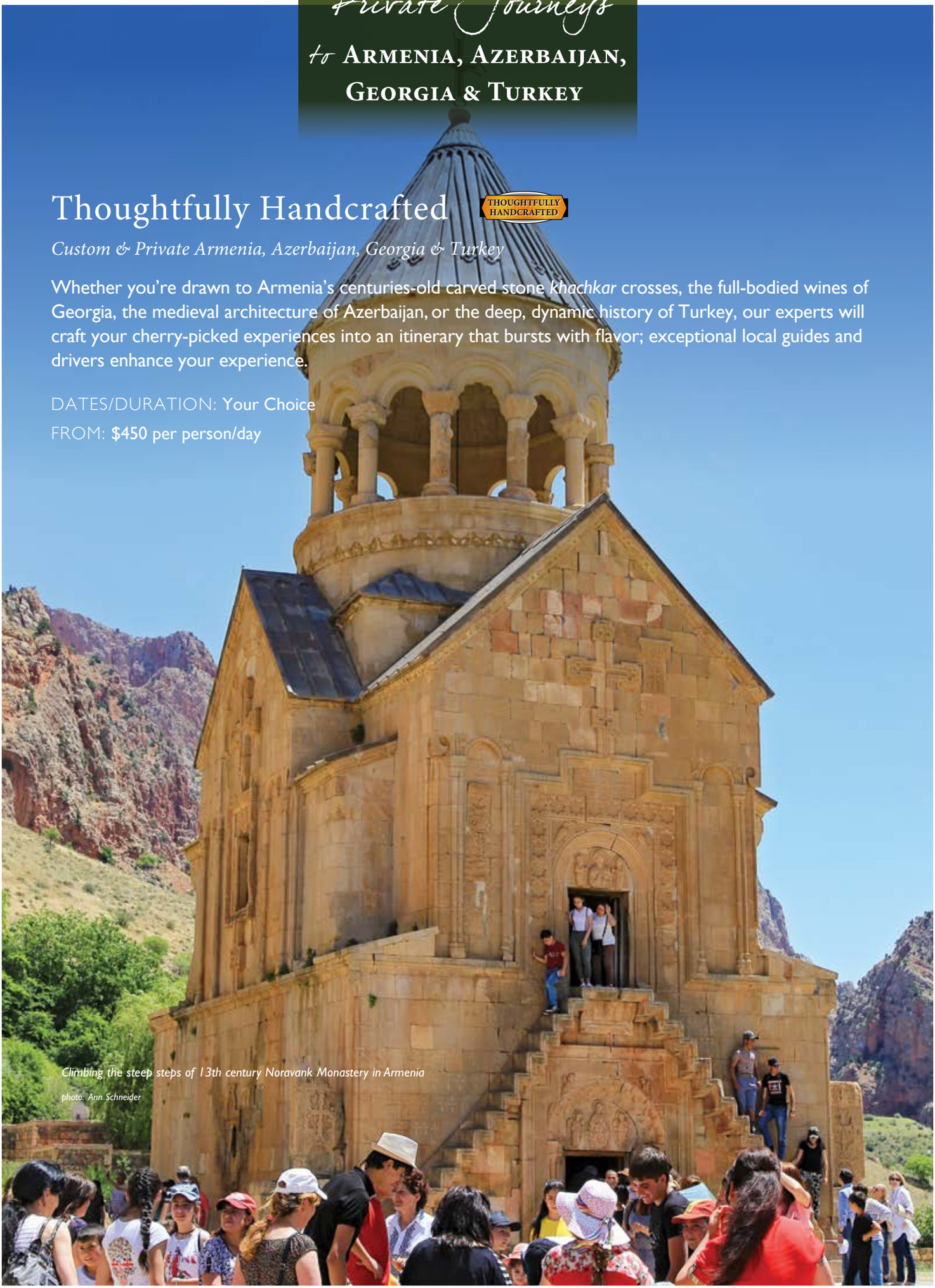
THOUGHTFULLY HANDCRAFTED

Custom & Private Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia & Turkey

Whether you're drawn to Armenia's centuries-old carved stone *khachkar* crosses, the full-bodied wines of Georgia, the medieval architecture of Azerbaijan, or the deep, dynamic history of Turkey, our experts will craft your cherry-picked experiences into an itinerary that bursts with flavor; exceptional local guides and drivers enhance your experience.

DATES/DURATION: **Your Choice**

FROM: **$450 per person/day**



Climbing the steep steps of 13th century Noravank Monastery in Armenia

photo: Ann Schneider

Private Journeys to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia & Turkey













Researched & Ready

FLEXIBLE ESSENTIAL

Prefer that we suggest an itinerary for you? No problem. Our series of pre-planned Flexible Essential Private Journeys are classic independent itineraries already researched and ready to book. Contact us for a descriptive itinerary, solo traveler pricing, and booking details.

Essential Caucasus

Highlights of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan

Experience the best of the three South Caucasus countries, including six UNESCO masterpieces in 10 days.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/10 Days

FROM: **$4,495** per person
+ internal air $290,
based on 2 travelers

Essential Georgia

From Wine Country to High Country

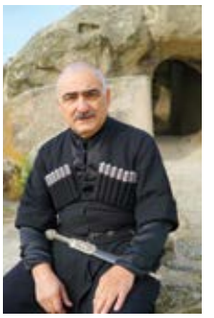
Cave towns, vineyards, sophisticated cities, fabulous food, and mountain villages – discover Georgia's finest in eight days.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/8 Days

FROM: **$3,195** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Private Journeys to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia & Turkey











photos: Shota Lagazidze, Inga Belova, Jake Smith, Jered Gorman, Michel Behar, Peter Guttman, Kees Sprengers.

Essential Georgia & Armenia

Between Two Capitals: A Journey to Cave Towns and Mountain Villages

From river-cut canyons to medieval fortress towers and the mountain homes of the Svan people, explore Georgia and Armenia in 13 days.

DATES/DURATION:
Your Choice/13 Days

FROM: **$5,395** per person,
based on 2 travelers

Essential Azerbaijan

NEW!

Cultures & Contrasts in the Land of Fire

Explore Azerbaijan's cosmopolitan capital, Baku, then take to the hills to visit villages lost in time, ancient archaeological sites, and a stained-glass-lit khan's palace.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/7 Days
FROM: **$2,695** per person, based on 2 travelers

Treasures of the South Caucasus

Classic Survey of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia



photo: Ann Schneider

Mt. Ararat looms over Khor Virap Monastery in Armenia

SMALL GROUP TOUR

15 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$7,495 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $1,595

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 5-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
April 14-28 • May 5-19 • September 1-15 • September 15-29

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans, page 64.



Mountain magic in Georgia

Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan share stunning mountain backdrops, powerful stone architecture, and a strong code of hospitality. Georgia's renowned winemaking traditions, Azerbaijan's Zoroastrian and Islamic background, and Armenia's multitude of ancient churches combine to make this distinctive journey more than the sum of its parts.

Days 1-4: Baku, Sheki Begin in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan. Examine the ancient rock carvings at UNESCO-listed Gobustan; stop in Shemakha, former capital of the Shirvan Khanate; and visit Sheki, one of the oldest towns in Azerbaijan.

Days 5-7: Signagi, Tbilisi In Georgia, discover Kakheti wine country, and explore the fortress town of Signagi. Stroll through the vineyards of Pheasant's Tears Winery, tasting organic wines and learning about traditional Georgian wine-making methods. At their restaurant, enjoy a "Georgian Table" feast, with sumptuous food and copious wine, music, and dance. In Tbilisi, wander lively Rustaveli Avenue, and view the splendid treasures on display at the Georgian National Museum.

Days 8-9: Mtskheta, Ananuri, Gudauri, Kazbegi, Uplistsikhe, Gori, Tbilisi Journey along the Georgian Military Highway to the alpine villages of Kazbegi and Gudauri. Pause at UNESCO-listed Mtskheta, ancient capital of the kingdom of Iberia. Visit the fascinating cave town of Uplistsikhe, as well as Gori, Stalin's hometown.

Days 10-15: Yerevan, Khor Virap, Garni, Geghard, Echmiadzin, Lake Sevan Next is Armenia, the first kingdom to formally adopt Christianity. Stop at UNESCO-listed Haghbat Monastery, hear a live *a cappella* concert at pagan Garni Temple, and enjoy a home-cooked meal in a local village.

Explore the monastery of Geghard, carved from solid rock. Browse among some of the oldest books in the world at the Matenadaran Museum in Yerevan, and tour the 4th century cathedral at Echmiadzin. Visit high-altitude Lake Sevan and a village of Molokans ("Milk Drinkers"), who rejected Orthodox teachings in the 16th century.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Enjoy a reception and private tour at Baku's Nobel House Museum
- Relish the winemaking traditions of Georgia during an authentic "Georgian Table"
- Attend a private concert in the house museum of a Georgian painter



A Taste of Georgia: Wine, Cuisine & Culture

An Epicurean Adventure across Georgia's Wine Country with Carla Capalbo

SMALL GROUP TOUR

13 Days
Cultural Series Land Tour
$5,595 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
October 2-14

Stay a little longer... Combine with a custom, private extension to Yerevan, Armenia, or Baku, Azerbaijan.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Sample natural wines made according to traditional Georgian methods by one of very few female winemakers
- Take in an electrifying performance of polyphonic singing and Georgian folk dancing at celebrated Pheasant's Tears Restaurant
- Accompany the Pheasant's Tears chef to the village market where he selects fresh local produce daily



photo: Kees Sprengers

Bountiful food and wine on a Georgian Table

Join award-winning food and wine writer Carla Capalbo on a culinary and cultural caravan through gorgeous Georgia. Traverse varied landscapes entwined with grapevines, overflowing with wine, and abounding in hospitality, and discover the history and living traditions of this ancient country through its chefs, winemakers, artisans, and musicians.

Days 1-3: Tbilisi, Mtskheta In Tbilisi, the splendid capital where your journey begins, draw your chair up to a *supra*, or "Georgian Table," a leisurely feast featuring dozens of dishes and a toastmaster (*tamada*) to lead the countless toasts. Connect with Georgia's past at UNESCO-listed Mtskheta, early capital of the kingdom of Iberia.

Days 4-6: Kutaisi, Svaneti Drive to Kutaisi through a region of small farms, vineyards, fields, villages, and orchards, pausing at Katskhis Sveti, a tall limestone pillar where medieval hermit monks perched. Delight in a dinner of complex Imeretian cuisine. Explore UNESCO-listed Gelati Monastery, adorned with striking frescoes and mosaics. Drive through the steep and stunning Caucasus Mountains to the secluded Svaneti region, known for its brawny, UNESCO-listed medieval watchtowers. Enter a Svanetian home for a gourmet lunch; specialties could be hen roasted in rose petals, eggplant slices rolled around garlic-walnut paste, and *khachapuri* stuffed with herbs. Enjoy a stirring polyphonic performance by local Svan singers.

Days 7-9: Borjomi, Vardzia, Tbilisi Descend from the heights to Zugdidi, sampling spicy Megrelian cuisine, and continue to the resort town of Borjomi. Overnight at a perfectly located resort in the valley below 12th century Vardzia cave monastery. Explore the caves, then sample hand-made cheeses and chocolates at tiny Phoka Nunnery before returning to Tbilisi.

Days 10-13: Telavi, Signagi, Tbilisi Discover Georgia's wine country, Kakheti, visiting the workshop of a ceramicist who demonstrates the ancient Georgian art of making *qvevri*, the huge earthenware vessels used for making Georgian wines. Near Signagi, take a walking tour of the vineyards at renowned Pheasant's Tears Winery, producing organic wines from regional grapes. Visit Bodbe Monastery, meet a local silk producer, and enjoy a farewell dinner where local musicians and dancers bring to life the spirited traditions of the Caucasus.



photo: Ann Schneider

Old Town Tbilisi topped with Narikala Fortress



Village Traditions of the South Caucasus

Local Life & Landscapes of Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan



photo: Inga Balova

Fog-shrouded mountains above medieval watchtowers in Mestia

SMALL GROUP TOUR

21 Days
Explorer Series Land Tour
$7,995 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 4-12 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
July 28-August 17

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with a custom, private extension in Yerevan, Armenia, or a stopover in Istanbul. Please call us for more details.



photo: Giorgi Bukhaidze

Svan boys on horseback

Experience local life in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, three of the most hospitable places in the world. Share stories and meals in mountain villages, sample natural wines, and meet talented craftspeople – all set to a soundtrack of polyphonic singing that can give you goosebumps.

Days 1-4: Baku, Shemakha, Lahij, Sheki Begin in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, exploring the medieval Old Town. Near Shemakha, visit a village farm to learn how Azeris make yogurt and butter. Stop for a family meal in Lahij, home to coppersmiths and carpet weavers. Visit Sheki, one of the oldest towns in Azerbaijan.

Days 5-8: Signagi, Shenako, Dartlo (Tusheti Region) Crossing the Georgian border, discover Georgia's wine country, Kakheti. Near Signagi, enjoy a traditional "Georgian Table," laden with sumptuous food and wine. Drive into the mountains of the remote Tusheti region, overnighting in a guesthouse in the tiny mountain village of Shenako, and participating in a village celebration in Dartlo.

Days 9-13: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Mestia (Svaneti Region) Explore Tbilisi's red-roofed Old Town, with lunch and a wine-tasting in the art nouveau Sololaki District. Enjoy the dramatic drive into the gorgeous mountains of remote, UNESCO-listed Svaneti.

Days 14-16: Batumi, Akhaltsikhe, Vardzia Drive to Batumi, with its modernized Black Sea waterfront. Explore the Old Town of Akhaltsikhe, and enjoy a meal with a local family. Take a walk through the 12th century cave monastery of Vardzia.

Days 17-21: Phoka, Gyumri, Yerevan On the way to Armenia, stop at the delightful Phoka Nunnery and sample their many varieties of cheese. Near Gyumri, visit the workshop of a master metalsmith. Enjoy lunch in the beautiful old wine cellar of a 170-year-old home. In the capital, discover the narrow lanes of the Old Town, experience a meal of Armenian specialties in a local home, and visit a master carpet maker. Gather for a farewell dinner, featuring Armenian folk music and dance.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Be a guest in remote Tusheti, Georgia, a mountainous region so far off the grid its inhabitants come down to the lowlands every winter
- Savor an authentic "Georgian Table," featuring an abundance of local specialties and an official Georgian toastmaster
- Visit the studio of a master musical instrument craftsman, one of the finest makers of the traditional Armenian reed instrument, the *duduk*



Caspian Odyssey by Private Train

South Caucasus to Central Asia

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

16 Days
5 nights hotels, 10 nights aboard the *Golden Eagle* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour
Per Person:

Silver Class, twin share	$22,595
Silver Class, single	$32,795
Gold Class, twin share	$28,495
Gold Class, single	$41,395
Imperial Suite, twin share	$47,995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates
September 19-October 4

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in either the Caucasus, Central Asia, or both. Contact us for details.



photo: Ann Schneider

In the 13th century, there may have been nearly 70 sulfur baths in Tbilisi



photo: Jake Smith

Georgian vocal ensemble in battle dress

Board the luxury *Golden Eagle* private train and explore the countries on both sides of the Caspian Sea – Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. At the crossroads of trade, religion, and the arts, these countries host fascinating modern cultures and ageless architecture.

Days 1-3: Yerevan, Lake Sevan, Dilijan Discover Armenia's capital, older even than Rome. Admire UNESCO-listed Geghard Monastery and the imposing temple of Garni. Depart aboard the *Golden Eagle*, tracing the shore of Lake Sevan and enjoying an Armenian cognac reception in the mountain resort of Dilijan.

Days 4-6: Tbilisi, Telavi, Gori, Uplistsikhe, Mtskheta Tour the red-roofed Old Town of Tbilisi and explore Georgia's wine country, Kakheti. Make stops at Stalin's hometown, Gori; the cave town of Uplistsikhe, including a private concert of Georgian songs; and UNESCO-listed Mtskheta, capital of the early Iberian kingdom.

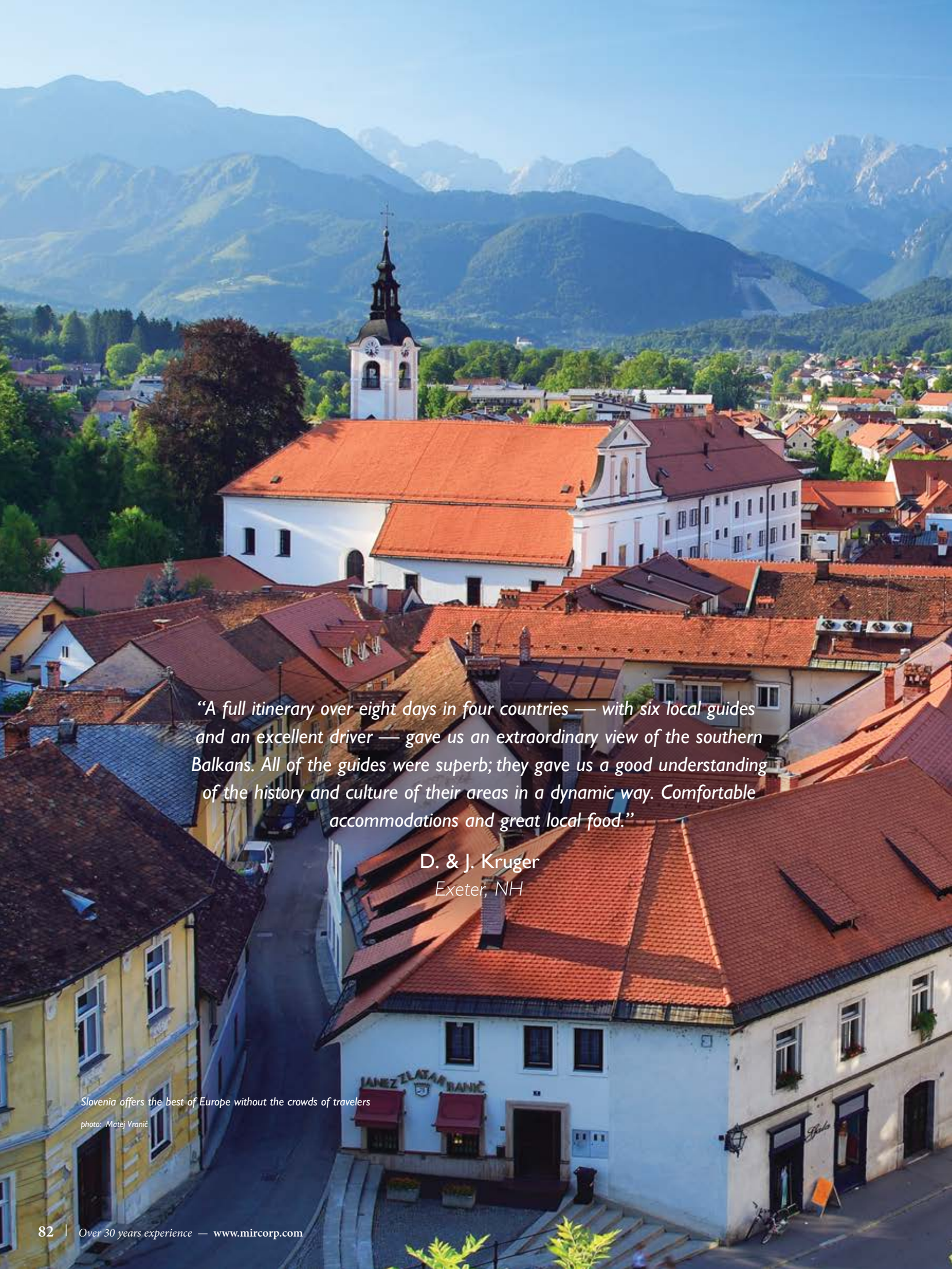
Days 7-8: Baku, Gobustan Arrive in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital, touring its UNESCO-listed medieval Old Town and Gobustan, an important site of ancient petroglyphs. Disembark for two hotel nights in Baku before flying to Ashgabat.

Days 9-10: Ashgabat, Darvaza Gas Crater Explore the flamboyant gilded architecture of Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat. Take a desert drive to the Darvaza Gas Crater, called locally the "Door to Hell." The crater was set alight during Soviet times and is still visible from miles away.

Days 11-14: Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent Visit three Uzbek UNESCO Sites – the Silk Road oasis of Khiva, with its dun-colored city walls; Bukhara, with its 2,000-year-old Ark Citadel; and Samarkand, Tamerlane's blue-tiled capital. Survey the Uzbek capital, modern Tashkent.

Days 15-16: Almaty Explore the "City of Apples," Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan. Admire 18th century Zenkov Cathedral, then gather for a farewell dinner.



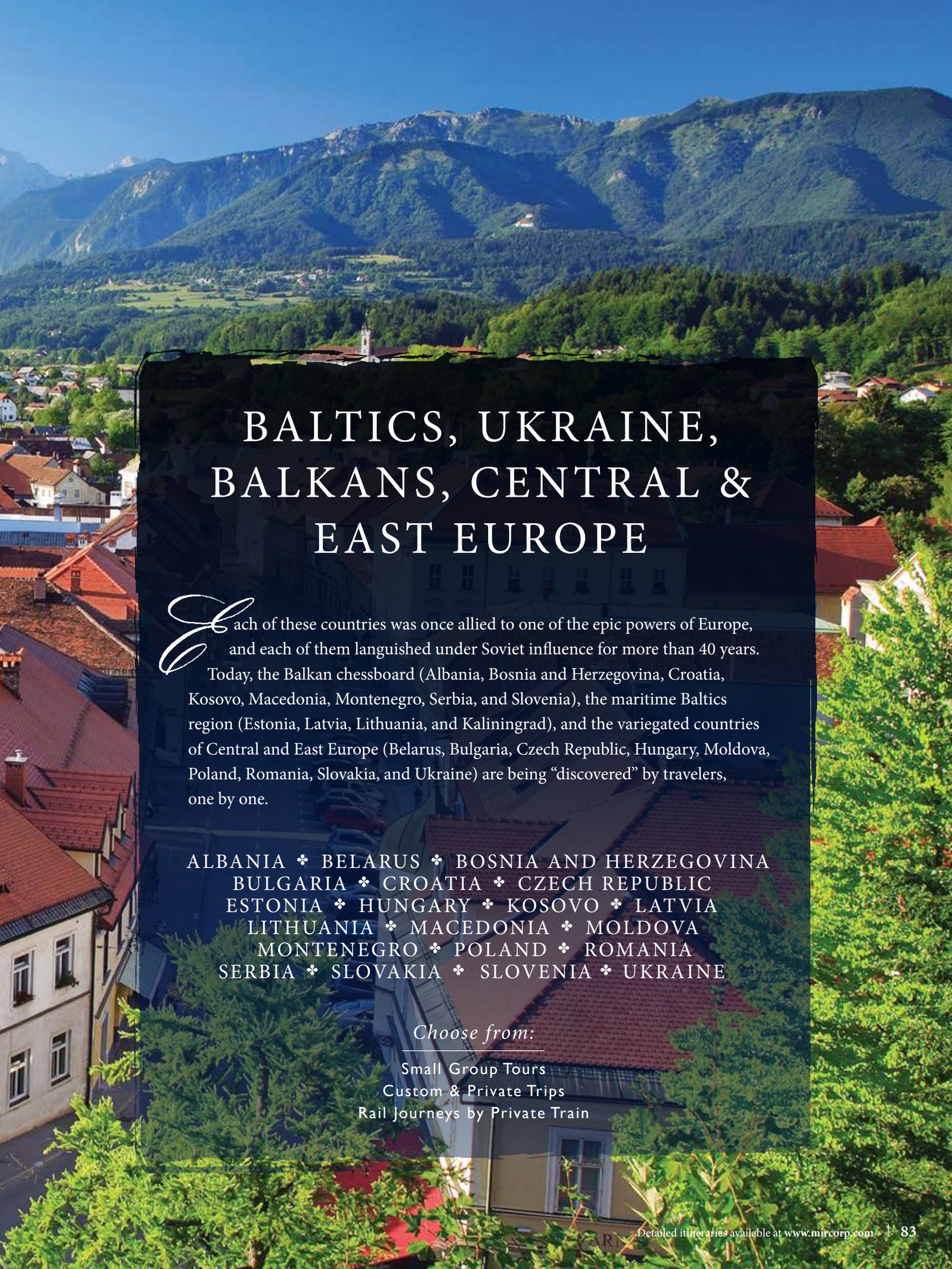


"A full itinerary over eight days in four countries — with six local guides and an excellent driver — gave us an extraordinary view of the southern Balkans. All of the guides were superb; they gave us a good understanding of the history and culture of their areas in a dynamic way. Comfortable accommodations and great local food."

D. & J. Kruger
Exeter, NH

Slovenia offers the best of Europe without the crowds of travelers

photo: Matej Vranič



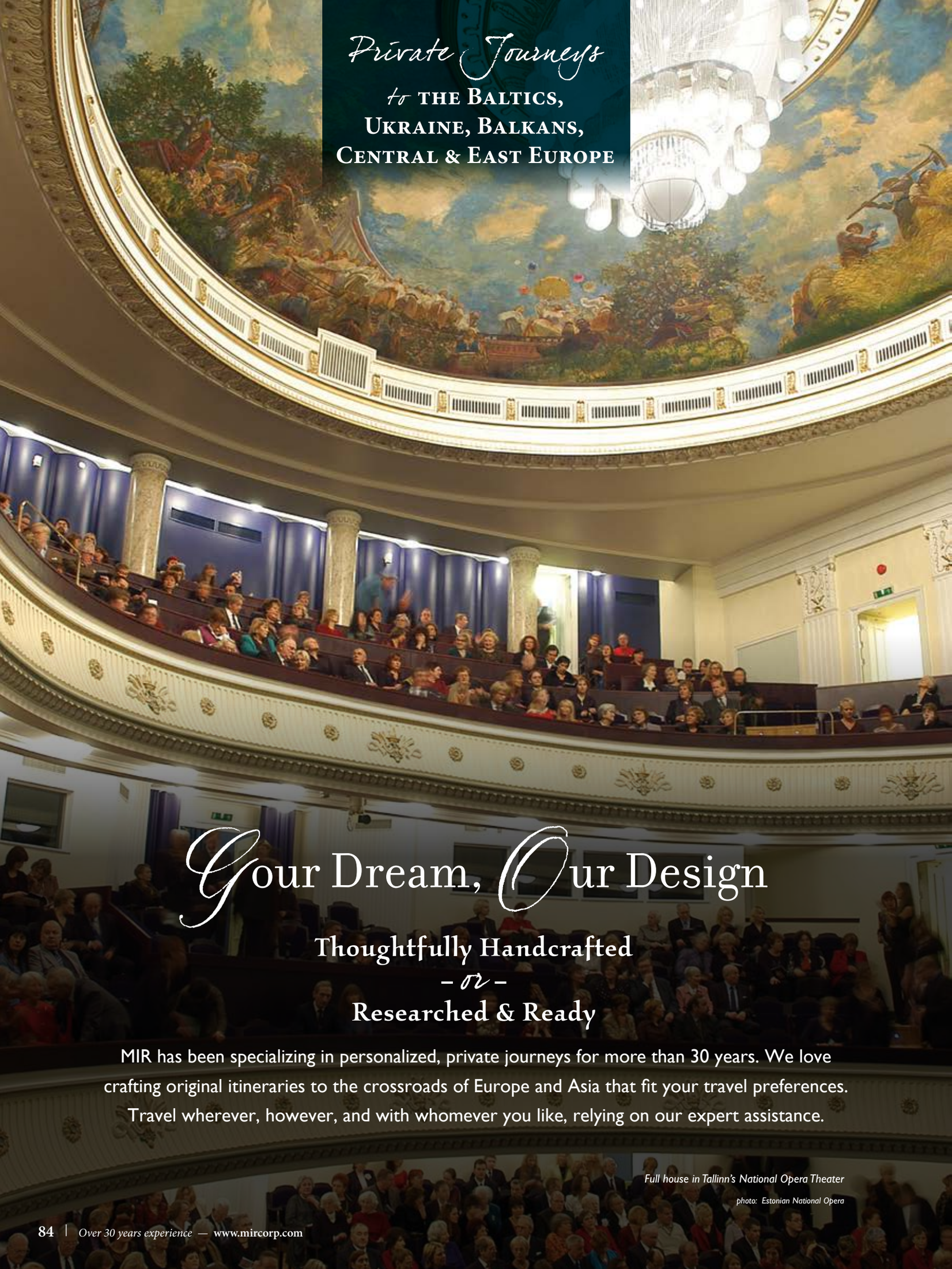
BALTICS, UKRAINE, BALKANS, CENTRAL & EAST EUROPE

Each of these countries was once allied to one of the epic powers of Europe, and each of them languished under Soviet influence for more than 40 years. Today, the Balkan chessboard (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia), the maritime Baltics region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Kaliningrad), and the variegated countries of Central and East Europe (Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine) are being "discovered" by travelers, one by one.

ALBANIA ✣ BELARUS ✣ BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
BULGARIA ✣ CROATIA ✣ CZECH REPUBLIC
ESTONIA ✣ HUNGARY ✣ KOSOVO ✣ LATVIA
LITHUANIA ✣ MACEDONIA ✣ MOLDOVA
MONTENEGRO ✣ POLAND ✣ ROMANIA
SERBIA ✣ SLOVAKIA ✣ SLOVENIA ✣ UKRAINE

Choose from:

Small Group Tours
Custom & Private Trips
Rail Journeys by Private Train



Private Journeys

to THE BALTICS, UKRAINE, BALKANS, CENTRAL & EAST EUROPE

Your Dream, Our Design

Thoughtfully Handcrafted
– or –
Researched & Ready

MIR has been specializing in personalized, private journeys for more than 30 years. We love crafting original itineraries to the crossroads of Europe and Asia that fit your travel preferences. Travel wherever, however, and with whomever you like, relying on our expert assistance.

Full house in Tallinn's National Opera Theater

photo: Estonian National Opera

Private Journeys to the Baltics, Ukraine, Balkans, Central & East Europe

Thoughtfully Handcrafted

THOUGHTFULLY HANDCRAFTED

Custom & Private – the Baltics, Ukraine, Balkans, Central & East Europe

From Estonia in the north to Albania in the south, these countries are dotted with UNESCO sites, handsome medieval churches, and rustic villages, and claim a wealth of distinctive landscapes and cultural heritage. We can help you create your own personal concoction of countries, cultures, and communities – simply contact us.

DATES/DURATION: **Your Choice**

FROM: **$395** per person/day, double occupancy in the Baltics, Central & East Europe

$650 per person/day, double occupancy in the Balkans



St. Olaf's Church in Estonia was built in the 12th century

photo: Estonia Tourist Board

Private Journeys to the Baltics, Ukraine, Balkans, Central & East Europe







Researched & Ready

FLEXIBLE ESSENTIAL

Prefer that we suggest an itinerary for you? No problem. Our series of pre-planned Flexible Essential Private Journeys are classic independent itineraries already researched and ready to book. Contact us for a descriptive itinerary, solo traveler pricing, and booking details.

Essential Balkans

Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Explore seven Balkan countries on this compact journey through history. Visit the capitals, countryside, and competing cultures of the Balkan Peninsula.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/12 Days
FROM: **$7,795** per person, based on 2 travelers

Essential Ukraine

Lviv, Kiev, Odessa

Discover Western Ukraine's Lviv, with its European feel, before flying to the glittering capital, Kiev, and the historic port city of Odessa.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/8 Days
FROM: **$3,295** per person + internal air **$400**, based on 2 travelers

Essential Poland

Warsaw and Krakow: Two of Poland's Finest Cities

Visit Poland's capital, animated Warsaw, the medieval town square and underground pubs of Krakow, and two other celebrated Polish UNESCO sites.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/6 Days
FROM: **$2,695** per person, based on 2 travelers

Essential Central Europe

NEW!

Highlights of Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary

Sample the best of Central Europe's capitals, admiring the medieval masterpieces of Prague, the spires and squares of Bratislava, and the breathtaking baroque architecture of Budapest.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/8 Days
FROM: **$2,695** per person, based on 2 travelers

Private Journeys to the Baltics, Ukraine, Balkans, Central & East Europe









photos: Peter Guttman, Andrus Teemant, Toomas Tuul, Jaak Nilson, Gary Krosin, Srdan Zivulović - Bobo

Essential Albania

Up, Down, and Around Albania

From the capital, Tirana, to the mountains of the south, discover Albania's sparkling Adriatic coastline, remarkable Greek and Roman ruins, and vestiges of Ottoman heritage.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/9 Days
FROM: **$3,695** per person, based on 2 travelers

Essential Romania

NEW!

Myths, Mountains, & Monasteries of Romania

Roam the fortified medieval towns and gorgeous mountains of Romania. Visit folktale villages and UNESCO-listed monasteries, and walk in Dracula's Transylvanian footsteps.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/10 Days
FROM: **$3,895** per person, based on 2 travelers

Essential Albania, Macedonia & Kosovo

NEW!

Valleys and Villages of Three Balkan Beauties

Traverse the lesser-known Balkan nations, exploring the stunning hilltop fortresses of Albania, the sweeping shore of UNESCO-listed Lake Ohrid, and the cosmopolitan capital of Kosovo, Pristina.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/10 Days
FROM: **$4,595** per person, based on 2 travelers

Essential Baltics

The Best of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia

Survey the UNESCO-listed Baltic capitals, and head into the countryside for rural highlights, such as the Hill of Crosses and baroque Rundale Palace.

DATES/DURATION: Your Choice/7 Days
FROM: **$2,895** per person, based on 2 travelers

Balkan Odyssey: Crossroads of Cultures

A Seven Nation Journey Through History



photo: Peter Guttman

Old Town Budva on Montenegro's Dalmatian Coast

SMALL GROUP TOUR

16 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$7,895 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $1,495

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 6-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
May 9-24 • September 12-27

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with Bulgaria & Romania, page 89.

From low-lying Belgrade up through the Dinaric Alps, down to the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia, and back up to mountainous Macedonia, this overland journey ties together seven of the wildly divergent Balkan countries. Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox, politically contradictory and ethnically varied, this kaleidoscopic region offers an apprenticeship in diversity.

Days 1-4: Belgrade, Sarajevo Begin in Serbia's capital, Belgrade, an old city swiftly becoming one of the hippest places in Europe. Visit lovely Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tour the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum with a survivor who used the tunnel to escape the 1990s Serbian shelling.

Days 5-6: Mostar, Dubrovnik Visit Mostar, with its UNESCO-listed Old Bridge from Ottoman times, then Dubrovnik on the sparkling Dalmatian Coast.

Days 7-9: Kotor, Cetinje, Budva, Shkodra, Kruja, Tirana Trace the Adriatic coast to Montenegro, visiting UNESCO-listed Kotor, guarded by walls dating from Roman and Venetian times. Stop in 15th century Cetinje on the way to Budva, an early walled Roman city. Explore Kruja, with its citadel. Continue to Tirana, Albania's capital, where new restaurants and cafés abound.

Days 10-12: Durres, Berat, Apollonia, Ohrid Explore the Roman amphitheater in Durres, the dramatic Ottoman architecture of Berat, and the ruins of Apollonia, built around 558 BC. Spend time in red-roofed Ohrid, located on the beautiful lake of the same name, both UNESCO sites.

Days 13-16: Skopje, day trip to Pristina Head to Skopje, Macedonia's capital, where Mother Teresa was born. Take a day trip into Kosovo, the Balkan territory that declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Celebrate the trip with a Macedonian feast featuring Balkan music and a generous spread of regional delicacies.



photo: Michel Behar

Patricia Schultz, author of 1,000 Places to See Before You Die, visits ancient Greek ruins in Albania

MIR Signature Experiences

- Visit the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum with a survivor who tells about escaping from Sarajevo during the 1990s shelling
- Enjoy a tasting of the Montenegrin village of Njegusi's special cheese, *Njeguski sir*
- Experience a Macedonian feast in Skopje, with live music and a table piled high with succulent dishes



Kaliningrad & The Baltics

Definitive Journey through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Kaliningrad



photo: Kestutis Ambrozaitis

Lithuania's restored 14th century Trakai Castle

This overland journey roves the countryside and urban centers of four distinct nations: the three independent Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – and Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia.

Days 1-2: Tallinn Begin in Estonia's capital, Tallinn, with its collage of narrow cobblestone streets and red-roofed buildings. Explore the Dome Cathedral on Toompea Hill and visit the famous Song Festival Grounds, where the independent spirit of Estonians has been celebrated since 1988, when 300,000 people sang their way to the beginnings of independence from the Soviet Union.

Days 3-5: Sigulda, Riga Skirting Riga Bay, pause at Sigulda, entrance to Gauja National Park, before coming to Latvia's capital, Riga, with its art nouveau architecture. Known for its appealing Old Town and the odd sculptures adorning its old buildings, Riga is a delight to explore on foot.

Days 6-7: Klaipeda, Palanga Travel across the countryside to the Lithuanian seaport of Klaipeda, pausing at the baroque Rundale Palace and at the Hill of Crosses, a place of national pilgrimage. Explore Klaipeda's narrow streets and merchant houses and visit the Palanga Amber Museum.

Days 8-10: Curonian Spit, Kaliningrad, Kaunas Continue to Kaliningrad via the narrow, UNESCO-listed Curonian Spit, passing fishing villages, white sand dunes, and the wood carvings on the Hill of Witches. Known as Konigsberg until the Soviets renamed it in 1946, Kaliningrad has converted a WWII bunker into a museum. Its Gothic cathedral and Hansa Square are reminders of an era long past.

Days 11-13: Vilnius, Trakai Lithuania's beautiful capital, Vilnius, is the final stop. Last to give up its pagan traditions and first to declare independence from the Soviet Union, Lithuania is known for its amber and celebrated for its bravery. An exploration of Vilnius ranges from the medieval, at the restored Brick Gothic castle of Trakai, to the more recent, at the KGB Museum, commemorating the travails of thousands of Lithuanians. Stroll the cobbled streets of the Old Town, shopping for linen and glowing amber jewelry.

PREMIER PS SERIES

SMALL GROUP TOUR

13 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$7,095 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $1,195

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 4-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
April 22-May 4 • July 29-August 10

Stay a little longer... Combine this tour with Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova, page 91.



photo: Jaak Nilson

Ready to perform at an Estonian folk festival in Tartu

MIR Signature Experiences

- Enjoy an organ concert in old Riga at Dome Cathedral
- Pay a visit to the ominous KGB Museum in Vilnius
- Take a boat ride around Trakai Lake



Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova

An In-depth Study of Three Unsung Countries and Transdniester

SMALL GROUP TOUR

14 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$7,395 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $220 (*economy class, subject to change*)
Single supplement $1,395

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 5-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
May 5-18* • May 19-June 1 • August 11-24

**Hosted by Patricia Schultz, author of 1,000 Places to See Before You Die*

Stay a little longer... Combine with Kaliningrad & The Baltics, page 90, or with Bulgaria & Romania, page 89.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Enjoy lunch with a family at a rural farmhouse in Belarus
- Visit an artist in a private studio/workshop in Kiev
- Explore the secret underground Partisan Caves in Odessa

AS FEATURED IN 50 TOURS OF A LIFETIME NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

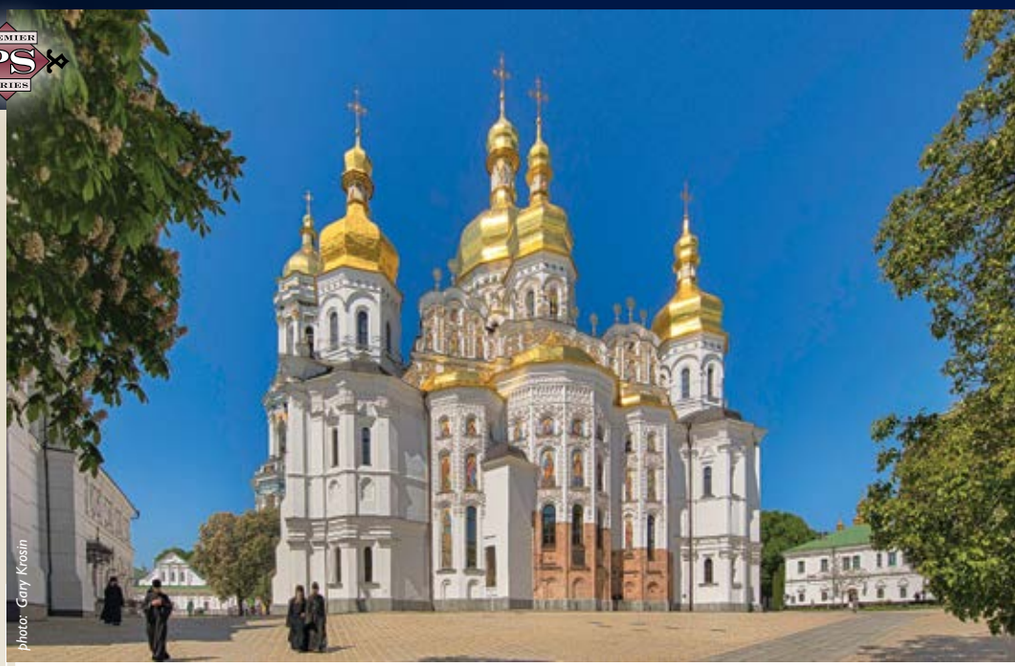


photo: Gary Krosin

Gold on blue: the Dormition Cathedral in Kiev's Caves Monastery

Traverse a little-known region that has changed hands from its earliest history. Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova are three of the least frequented and least familiar countries in Europe. Time slowed drastically here after the devastation of WWII, but these beautiful countries are emerging from the shadows. Visit with an artist in Kiev, share a meal with a Chisinau family, and take a day trip to the Transdniester region, a narrow strip of Moldovan land where separatists have declared a disputed independence.

Days 1-3: Minsk, Brest Begin in Minsk, capital of Belarus, for a fascinating glimpse into the socialist past. At the Great Patriotic War Memorial, remember the half of Minsk's population that perished during WWII. Visit the Gallery of Russian and Modern Belarusian Art, and stop at the manor house of Polish and American hero (and friend of Thomas Jefferson) Tadeusz Kosciuszko. In Brest, admire the massive UNESCO-listed stone Brest Fortress, built by Czar Nicholas I in the mid-1800s.

Days 4-6: Lviv Crossing the Ukrainian border, arrive in Lviv, founded in the 13th century. Conquered by the Poles in 1349, Lviv feels very Central European. Wander its lovely UNESCO-listed Old Town Square, surrounded by 16th-18th century merchant dwellings, then fly to the capital, Kiev.

Days 7-9: Kiev In Kiev, visit some of Ukraine's most important sites, including St. Sophia Cathedral, the Caves Monastery, and the Chernobyl Museum. Stroll and shop on the cobbled descent down Andreyevsky Street, filled with galleries, shops, cafés, and artists' studios. Fly to Odessa, renowned seaport on the coveted Black Sea coast.

Day 10: Odessa Explore Odessa, climbing its much-filmed Potemkin Steps and touring its Partisan Caves, where resistance fighters hid during WWII.

Days 11-14: Chisinau, Transdniester Next is Moldova's capital, Chisinau, a tree-lined city of more than 700,000. Survey some of Moldova's traditional villages and sample the deep red wines the country is gaining a reputation for. Embark on a day trip to the Transdniester region, a narrow strip of land bordering Ukraine where separatists have declared a disputed independence.



photo: Gary Krosin

Belarusian folk dancers



Christmas Traditions of Poland

Brilliant Holidays in Krakow, Warsaw, and the Polish Highlands



photo: Polish National Tourist Board

Mountain sleigh ride in Poland's high country

SMALL GROUP TOUR

8 Days
Premier Series Land Tour
$4,495 per person, double occupancy
Single supplement $595

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

Group Size 4-16 travelers

2019 Land Tour Dates
December 18-25

Stay a little longer... Extend your time in Poland with a visit to Wroclaw or the northern city of Gdansk.



photo: Janusz Leiniak

Mazurka musicians in Krakow

Celebrate the heartfelt holiday traditions of Poland, wandering Krakow's brilliant Christmas Market, and joining a Polish family in their Warsaw home for the intimate Christmas Eve feast called *Wigilia*, where you can sample 12 different traditional dishes. This wintry journey brings you close to the warm heart of Poland's long-standing customs.

Days 1-5: Krakow In Krakow's UNESCO-listed medieval Market Square, browse the Christmas Market where some of the country's folk artists display their handcrafted gifts, such as hand-painted pottery, crèches, and gingerbread ornaments. Make Polish *pierogi* under the guidance of your own private chef, and descend into the Wieliczka Salt Mine. Sample regional delicacies and hot mulled wine in a snowy mountain town lined with 19th century log buildings.

Take a magical torch-lit sleigh ride bundled in blankets, then warm yourself at a bonfire, roasting *kielbasa* and tasting Polish vodka. Participate in a workshop showing how old-time Polish village people made their Christmas decorations by hand. Tour a small factory where Poland's famous hand-blown glass ornaments are created, and travel by train to Warsaw.

Days 6-8: Warsaw Take a walking tour of Warsaw's Royal Road, a gracious avenue festooned during the holiday season with swags of elegant white lights. Visit some of the city's churches to admire their Nativity scenes.

Gather in a Polish home for a traditional family-style *Wigilia*, the Christmas Eve vigil and dinner, beginning as the first star appears in the eastern sky. Taste each of the 12 dishes served at a Christmas Eve dinner, as well as desserts such as the poppy-seed pastry called *makowiec*. Attend the midnight church service after Christmas carols sung by the whole congregation together. This yearly service is so much a part of Polish Christmas traditions that a participant does not have to be a believer to enjoy the joyful ritual.

MIR Signature Experiences

- Take a tour of one of Krakow's small factories where Poland's famous hand-blown Christmas ornaments are created
- Learn how to make traditional Polish-style *pierogi*, Poland's national dish, with your own private chef
- Gather with a Polish family for a traditional *Wigilia*, the Christmas Eve vigil and dinner



ABOARD THE *GOLDEN EAGLE DANUBE EXPRESS*

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TRAIN, SEE PAGES 102–103

Budapest to Venice by Private Train

A BALKAN RAIL ODYSSEY

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

10 Days
3 nights hotels, 6 nights onboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour
Per Person:

Heritage Class, twin share	$8,395
Heritage Class, single	$12,495
Deluxe Class, twin share	$13,395
Deluxe Class, single	$22,495
Superior Deluxe Class, twin share	$15,995
Superior Deluxe Class, single	$26,995

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 Land Tour Dates
June 13-22

Stay a little longer... Extend your stay in Budapest and beyond. Call for details.



The Rialto Bridge spans the Grand Canal in Venice



Budapest's Chain Bridge crosses the Danube



Glide from Hungary's capital on the Danube, Budapest, all the way to the canals of Venice on this deluxe rail journey by private train. Admire the changing scenes on your way through the mountains, valleys, towns, and villages of seven countries – Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Italy – stopping at ancient and modern cities along the way and discovering four UNESCO sites.

Days 1-2: Budapest, Lajosmizse, Kecskemet Enjoy a reception in the Royal Waiting Room at Budapest's Nyugati station before boarding the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*. Head south onto the Great Hungarian Plain for a spectacular *puszta* horse show in Lajosmizse, and a stop in art nouveau Kecskemet.

Days 3-4: Sighisoara, Brasov, Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv Arrive in the handsome medieval city of Sighisoara, Romania. In Brasov, visit Bran Castle (sometimes called "Dracula's Castle") and magnificent Peles Castle. The train crosses the Danube into Bulgaria, and makes a stop at Veliko Tarnovo, capital of the 12th century Second Bulgarian Empire. Stop in Plovdiv, with its huge Roman amphitheater.

Day 5: Belgrade Tour Belgrade, capital of Serbia, founded in the 1st century BC; today it's an exciting modern city with an ancient citadel, Kalemegdan.

Days 6-7: Mostar, Sarajevo, Ljubljana Browse the bazaar of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Mostar and its UNESCO-listed Old Bridge, Stari Most. Visit the country's capital, Sarajevo, and tour the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum with a survivor. Continue to delightful Ljubljana, where Slovenian arts, culture, and nightlife are fresh and flourishing.

Days 8-10: Trieste, Venice Explore the Italian port city of Trieste, climbing the hill to the Cathedral of San Giusto. Arrive in Venice and check into a five star hotel for a two-night stay in this romantic city on the water.

New Year's in Vienna by Private Train

Budapest and Central Europe

Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*

To Learn More About the Train, see pages 102–103



photo: G. Popp / Austrian National Tourist Office

Vienna's luminous holiday market

Enjoy the pleasures of Old World rail travel as you glide in style from Budapest, Hungary, where layer upon layer of civilizations have flowered and faded, and on to a date with a brilliant New Year's celebration in magnificent Vienna, Austria. Continue through the hip Czech Republic and friendly Slovakia, ultimately arriving back where you started.

Days 1-2: Budapest Arrive in UNESCO-listed Budapest, built in the grand style of the Hapsburgs. Visit the Royal Palace and Matthias Church, originally built in 1255. Enjoy views of the city from Gellert Hill, and admire the facade of Budapest's magnificent Opera House.

Day 3: Keszthely Enjoy a reception at the Royal Waiting Room in Nyugati station before boarding the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* on its way to 750-year-old Keszthely. Tour the 18th century Festetics Mansion here.

Days 4-5: Graz, Vienna, New Year's Eve Walk the cobbled streets of the UNESCO-listed Old Town of Graz. Explore Vienna, Austria's capital. Take a romantic carriage ride to a local *palais* for a champagne reception, and enjoy a special New Year's dinner. Next day, indulge in a sumptuous late brunch at the Palais Coburg.

Days 6-7: Cesky Krumlov, Prague Arrive in Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic, a small, beautifully preserved medieval town on the UNESCO list since 1992. In Prague, attend a performance in a lovely old theater, and wind your way through the Old and New towns on a historic tram car.

Days 8-9: Kosice, Budapest Discover the beautiful city of Kosice, Slovakia. Highlights are the 15th century Cathedral of St. Elizabeth, the 14th century St. Urban Tower, and the ornate State Theater. Return to Budapest for a festive farewell dinner.

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

9 Days

3 nights hotels, 5 nights aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour

Per Person:

Heritage Class, twin share	$7,495
Heritage Class, single	$11,295
Deluxe Class, twin share	$10,495
Deluxe Class, single	$17,595
Superior Deluxe Class, twin share	$12,595
Superior Deluxe Class, single	$21,095

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

2019 & 2020 Land Tour Dates

December 28, 2018-January 5, 2019 •
December 28, 2019-January 5, 2020

Stay a little longer... Extended programs in the Balkans, Caucasus, or Central Asia are available before or after your tour. Please call for details.



photo: Diejun / Austrian National Tourist Office

Empress Maria-Theresa enjoys the fireworks in Vienna



Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*

To Learn More About the Train, see pages 102-103

Venice to Istanbul by Private Train

A Rail Expedition Through the Balkans & Beyond

RAIL JOURNEY BY PRIVATE TRAIN

NEW!

11 Days
3 nights hotels, 7 nights aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* private train

Rail Journey Land Tour
Per Person:

Heritage Class, twin share	$9,195
Heritage Class, single	$13,695
Deluxe Class, twin share	$14,695
Deluxe Class, single	$24,695
Superior Deluxe Class, twin share	$17,595
Superior Deluxe Class, single	$29,595

Request the descriptive itinerary for full details

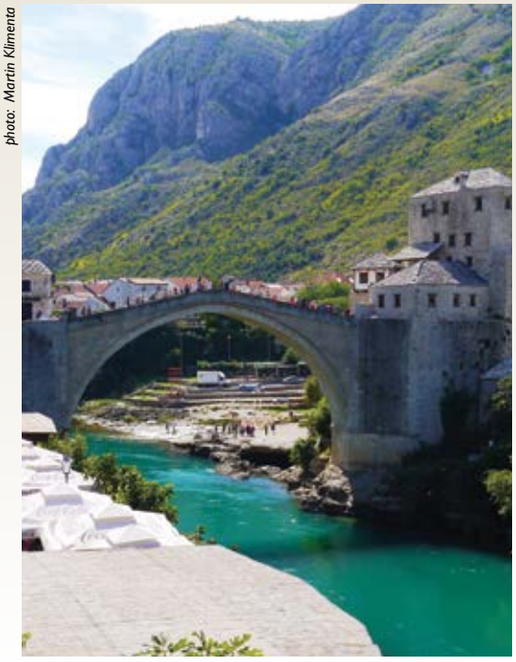
2019 Land Tour Dates
June 19-29

Stay a little longer... Consider an extended program in Eastern Europe. Contact us for details.



Istanbul's glorious Blue Mosque, built in the early 17th century

photo: Martin Klimenta



Mostar's reconstructed Old Bridge, a gesture towards peace in the Balkans



Board a deluxe private train that sweeps through nine countries and five UNESCO World Heritage Sites on an 11-day journey across southern Europe. Roll through capital cities, seaside towns, wooded hills, and little villages on this star-studded survey of highlights from countries clustered near the sunny Adriatic.

Days 1-3: Venice, Trieste Spend a day exploring romantic Venice, crowded with gorgeous old *palazzi* (palaces). Board the luxury *Golden Eagle Danube Express* and climb to the Cathedral of San Guisto in the Italian port city of Trieste.

Days 4-5: Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Mostar Make a stop in Ljubljana, Slovenia's delightful capital, where the arts, culture, and nightlife are fresh and flourishing. In Zagreb, capital of Croatia, admire iconic St. Mark's Church, famous for its 1880 tile roof. Visit Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital, Sarajevo, and tour the gripping Sarajevo Tunnel Museum with a survivor. Browse the bazaar in Mostar and cross its reconstructed UNESCO-listed Old Bridge, Stari Most.

Days 6-7: Dubrovnik, Belgrade Next stop is seaside Dubrovnik, Croatia, its simple limestone buildings and cobbled streets unified by a medieval building code. Spend some time in Belgrade, the sophisticated capital of Serbia, and admire its ancient citadel, Kalemegdan Fortress.

Days 8-9: Skopje, Thessaloniki, Sofia, Plovdiv Stroll through Macedonia's capital, Skopje, where Mother Teresa was born and raised, and then visit UNESCO-listed Thessaloniki, dotted with early Roman monuments, historic Christian churches, and Byzantine reminders. In Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, encounter 4th century St. George Rotunda, sections of the old Roman wall, and Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. In Plovdiv, explore Marcus Aurelius' 2nd century amphitheater, as well as the Old Town.

Days 10-11: Istanbul Arriving in Istanbul, disembark the train and check in for a one-night hotel stay. Take in the city's grandest sights, including the monumental Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia.

ABOUT THE PRIVATE TRAINS

Rekindle the adventurous spirit of early explorers on an incredible expedition by private train on the legendary Trans-Siberian line, north to the Arctic Circle, around Eastern Europe, across Western China and the Tibetan Plateau, through the Balkans, or along the ancient Silk Road. The exclusive private trains furnish the dream of Old World rail travel with modern comforts and amenities that make the journeys as pleasant as the destinations.



photo: Kirkenes Snow Hotel

Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Arctic Explorer by Private Train: Quest for the Northern Lights
From St. Petersburg to Moscow via the Arctic Circle Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

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About the train pages 98-99



Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Venice to Istanbul by Private Train
A Rail Expedition Through the Balkans & Beyond Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*

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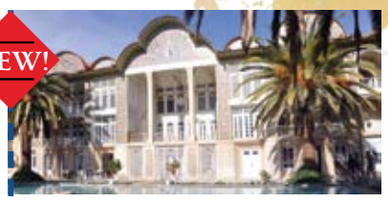


Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Persia & the Silk Road by Private Train
From Almaty to Tehran Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

Page 69
About the train pages 98-99



photo: Martin Klimenta

Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Caspian Odyssey by Private Train
South Caucasus to Central Asia Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

Pages 81
About the train pages 98-99



Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Jewels of Persia & the Silk Route by Private Train
From Tehran to Moscow via Central Asia Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

Page 70
About the train pages 98-99



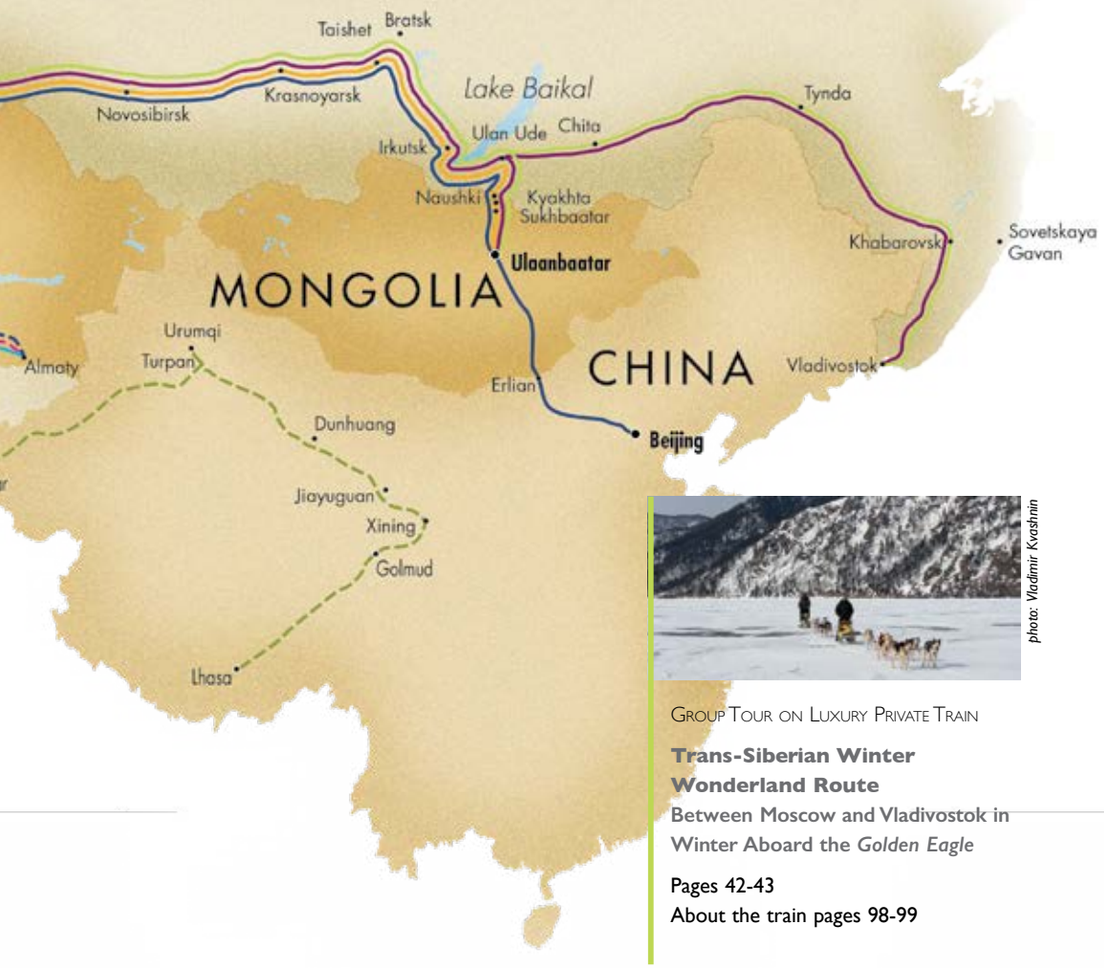
photo: Jens Frank

Group Tour on Comfortable Private Train

Essence of the Silk Road by Private Train
Between Ashgabat and Almaty Aboard the *Orient Silk Road Express*

Pages 71
To learn more about the train, see www.mircorp.com

Route Map





Group Tour on Comfortable Private Train

Tibet & China Rail Discovery by Private Train
From Urumqi to Lhasa Aboard the *Shangri-La Western Express*

Page 50

To learn more about the train, see www.mircorp.com



photo: Martin Klimenta

Group Tour on Comfortable Private Train

Trans-Siberian Express Between Beijing and Moscow
China, Mongolia, and Russia
Aboard the *Tsar's Gold*

Pages 36-37
About the train pages 100-101

photo: Vladimir Kvashnin

Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Trans-Siberian Winter Wonderland Route
Between Moscow and Vladivostok in Winter Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

Pages 42-43
About the train pages 98-99



photo: Joanna Millick

Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Trans-Siberian Classic Route
Between Moscow and Vladivostok
Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

Pages 38-39
About the train pages 98-99



Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Budapest to Venice by Private Train
A Balkan Rail Odyssey
Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*

Page 93
About the train pages 102-103



photo: Bartl / Austrian National Tourist Office

Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

New Year's in Vienna
Budapest and Central Europe
Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*

Page 94
About the train pages 102-103



photo: Martin Klimenta

Group Tour on Luxury Private Train

Trans-Siberian Mongolian Route with Naadam Festival
Between Ulaanbaatar and Moscow
Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

Pages 40-41
About the train pages 98-99

The *Golden Eagle* Luxury Private train



Your train attendants are waiting to greet you

Train Accommodations

Three styles of accommodation are available on trips aboard the *Golden Eagle* luxury private train: Imperial Suite, Gold Class, and Silver Class. The Imperial Suite features a king size bed while Gold and Silver Class cabins are furnished with an upper/lower berth configuration.

Imperial Suites are the most beautiful and spacious cabins onboard the *Golden Eagle*. Measuring a generous 120 sq ft (11.2 sq meters), they are furnished with a luxurious king size bed, dedicated seating area, dressing table, and private en suite facilities with large power shower and under floor heating. Individual air-conditioning, wardrobe, DVD/CD player, and two large picture windows make the cabin a pleasant retreat.

Gold Class cabins are well-proportioned and feature a large picture window. Modern en suite amenities include power shower, under floor heating, a DVD/CD player, remote-controlled air-conditioning/heating, wardrobe, and personal safe. Each cabin is configured with upper and lower berths, and can accommodate double, twin, or single occupancy.

Silver Class cabins are more compact than Gold Class cabins with similar facilities. Silver Class cabins feature the same amenities as Gold Class cabins but in a smaller space and with a smaller, wet-room style shower area.

Tours Aboard the *Golden Eagle* Private Train

Arctic Explorer by Private Train: Quest for the Northern Lights – 12 Days
From St. Petersburg to Moscow via the Arctic Circle — page 29

Trans-Siberian Classic Route – 15 Days
Between Moscow and Vladivostok — pages 38-39

Trans-Siberian Mongolian Route with Naadam Festival – 13 Days
Between Ulaanbaatar and Moscow — pages 40-41

Trans-Siberian Winter Wonderland Route – 15 Days
Between Moscow and Vladivostok in Winter — pages 42-43

NEW!
Persia & the Silk Road by Private Train – 16 Days
From Almaty to Tehran — page 69

Jewels of Persia & The Silk Route by Private Train – 18 Days
From Tehran to Moscow via Central Asia — page 70

Caspian Odyssey by Private Train – 16 Days
South Caucasus to Central Asia — page 81



Sample Imperial Suite with en suite shower and WC



Sample Gold Class sleeper with en suite shower and WC



Sample Silver Class sleeper with en suite shower and WC

Cabin configurations and décor may vary from samples depicted



Sample Bar/Lounge Car



Sample Dining Car



Impeccable service



Black caviar and white cheese



Dessert, anyone?

About Your Rail Journey by Private Train

Life Aboard the *Golden Eagle*

A Bar/Lounge Car is a favorite destination in the train formation. The lounge offers a relaxing and comfortable area where you can enjoy a drink (except when traveling through Iran), take language lessons, and gather around the piano with other passengers.

Dining Cars feature Russian and European cuisine complemented by a selection of superior local and European wines. Dining cars are multi-purpose, used for on-board lectures and viewing documentaries.

Sleeping Cars offer private en suite shower and toilet, as well as attendants who provide bed turndown service. Enjoy complimentary tea, coffee, soft drinks, bottled water, and continental breakfast in your cabin on request. L'Occitane bodycare products are provided in all cabin categories.

Join travelers from around the world to enjoy the relaxed and casual environment onboard, with no need to wear formal attire on excursions or while dining.

Hotel Accommodations

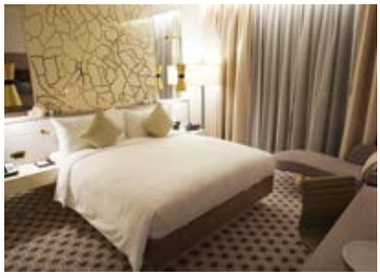


photo: Jake Smith

The first and last nights of most tours are spent in well-appointed four and five star hotels. Some tours include more hotel nights, such as the Mongolian Route with three nights in Ulaanbaatar, and the Arctic Explorer with two in St. Petersburg, two in Kirkenes, and one in Moscow.

Additional nights before and after any tour can be arranged on request.

Ask about our suggested extensions to St. Petersburg, the Gobi, and beyond.

Off-Train Tours



Rail journeys feature an extensive selection of educational city tours in the various stops along the routes. Private coaches and local guides whisk you away for fascinating half- or full-day forays into the principal towns and cities, often including an in-city dining opportunity.

The *Tsar's Gold* Private Train



photo: Roland Jung

Welcome to the Tsar's Gold



photo: Ross Hillier

Friendly service



Ready for dinner



Sample Dining Car

Tours Aboard the *Tsar's Gold* Private Train

Trans-Siberian Express Between Beijing & Moscow – 15 or 16 Days
China, Mongolia, and Russia pages 36-37

About Your Rail Journey by Private Train

Dining Cars featuring Russian and European cuisine can serve up to 200 passengers traveling aboard the *Tsar's Gold* train, and operate as lounges after dinner. Water, tea, and coffee are included with your meals. A selection of soft drinks, wine, beer, and spirits are available for purchase.

Each sleeping car has two attendants who make up and turn down the beds daily. Bottled water, tea, or coffee may be purchased from your cabin attendant for delivery to your cabin on request.

Join travelers from around the world to enjoy the relaxed and casual environment on board, with no need to wear formal attire on excursions or while dining.

Please note that a variety of cabin styles are in use aboard the Tsar's Gold train. As not all cars are configured identically, décor and layout of dining and accommodation cars on your journey may differ from the sample images depicted in our brochures/websites.

Hotel Accommodations

Five or six nights of the tour (depending on which direction you are traveling) are spent in hotels – two or three in Beijing, one in Ulaanbaatar, one in Irkutsk, and one in Moscow. Please note that the hotels in Ulaanbaatar and Irkutsk are moderate – basic but comfortable. Additional nights before and after the tour can be arranged on request.

Off-Train Tours

Rail journeys feature an extensive line-up of educational city tours at the various stops on our routes. Private coaches and local guides whisk you away from your private train in groups of no more than 26 guests per coach for fascinating half- or full-day forays into the principal towns and cities, sometimes including an in-city dining opportunity.

Train Accommodations

The *Tsar's Gold* train is a comfortable, though not luxurious, private train, which can accommodate up to 200 passengers. Average group sizes can range from 120-180 passengers.

Six styles of accommodation are available aboard the *Tsar's Gold* for the journey between Erlian and Moscow: Bolshoi Platinum Class (en suite), Bolshoi Class (en suite), Nostalgic Comfort Class (shower for every two cabins), and three varieties of cabins with shared facilities: Superior Plus, Superior, and Classic.

Bolshoi Platinum Class cabins are the most comfortable option available on the *Tsar's Gold* private train. Each cabin is outfitted with a shower stall, WC, and washbasin. Cabins are equipped with an upper and a lower berth and a window-table.

Bolshoi Class cabins feature the same modern en suite amenities as Bolshoi Platinum, but in a smaller space. Bolshoi Class cabins are smaller than Bolshoi Platinum cabins but still have en suite facilities, though with a smaller, wet-room style shower area.

Nostalgic Comfort Class cabins are aboard new cars retrofitted with furnishings reminiscent of the special sleeping cars used by Communist Party leaders in the 1950s. Cabins include convertible upper and lower berths, a comfortable armchair, and storage space under the bed. A small, basic hand-held shower is shared between every two compartments, and a WC is found at each end of the car.

There are three levels of more basic accommodation on the *Tsar's Gold* train: **Superior Plus Class**, **Superior Class**, and **Classic Class**. All three levels 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. A WC is found at each end of the car, and every other car has a shower compartment at one end.

The three levels of cabins:

Superior Plus Class cabins feature new upholstery and modern design, include an electrical outlet in the cabin, and offer the best cabin-to-shower ratio of these three levels of cabin options.

Superior Class cabins are newly upholstered with new trim and a more modern interior design.

Classic Class cabins are the best-value cabin option.

One night aboard a Chinese Train For the approximately 16-hour overnight journey between Beijing and Erlian (Chinese/Mongolian border where the rail gauge changes), guests travel aboard a chartered Chinese train. All cabins are similar to the Classic Class category and accommodate two passengers. There are no Bolshoi, Bolshoi Platinum, or Nostalgic Comfort-type cabins on the Chinese train, and no showers aboard. The number of cabins available for single occupancy is limited; therefore single occupancy for travelers booked in Classic Class or Nostalgic Comfort Class is not guaranteed for this overnight travel segment.





Sample Bolshoi Platinum Class sleeper with en suite shower and WC





Sample Bolshoi Class sleeper with en suite shower and WC





Sample Nostalgic Comfort Class sleeper





Sample Superior Plus Class sleeper





Sample Superior Class sleeper





Sample Classic Class sleeper

Cabin configurations and décor may vary from samples depicted

The *Golden Eagle Danube Express* Private Train



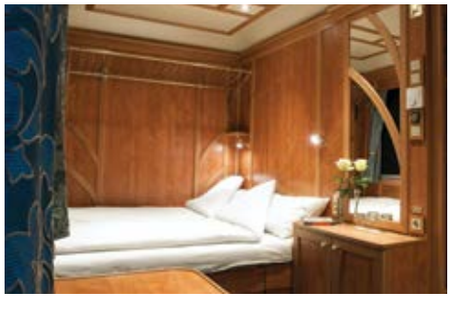
Get the white-glove treatment on the Danube Express train

Train Accommodations

Three styles of accommodation are available on board the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*: Superior Deluxe Class (en suite), Deluxe Class (en suite), and Heritage Class (shared facilities).

Superior Deluxe Class The Superior Deluxe Class on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* is the ultimate in luxury, featuring only four en suite cabins per car, a UK king size bed, and WiFi access. Designed and built in 2017, Superior Deluxe cabins include a full-length sofa and two chairs, air-conditioning, USB ports, power sockets, personal safe, and en suite bathroom with its own shower cubicle. The sofa is transformed into a king size bed at night. One of the two picture windows opens.







Sample Superior Deluxe Class sleeper with en suite shower and WC

Tours Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* Private Train

Budapest to Venice by Private Train – 10 Days
A Balkan Rail Odyssey page 93

New Year's in Vienna by Private Train – 9 Days
Budapest and Central Europe page 94

NEW!
Venice to Istanbul by Private Train – 11 Days
A Rail Expedition Through the Balkans & Beyond page 95

Deluxe Class The Deluxe Class features newly designed air-conditioned cabins which pair luxury with utility, offering superior accommodations that feature two lower berths and fully en suite facilities. Cabins are furnished with two sofas, an armchair, table, and a wardrobe with a safe. Your attendant will convert the two sofas into comfortable twin beds for nighttime use. The en suite bathroom features a shower, hair dryer, and heated towel rack.











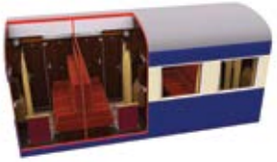
Sample Deluxe Class sleeper with en suite shower and WC

Heritage Class Comfortable air-conditioned seating by day is transformed while you dine into upper and lower berths ready for nighttime use. A washbasin is included in the cabin, and large windows make sightseeing pleasant. Toilet and shower facilities are provided at the end of each car.











Sample Heritage Class sleeper; shower and WC at the end of each car

Cabin configurations and décor may vary from samples depicted



Sample Bar/Lounge Car



Sample Dining Car



Sample Dining Car



Piano in the Bar/Lounge Car



Champagne and roses

About Your Rail Journey by Private Train

Life Aboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*

A Bar/Lounge Car is included in the formation of the train. The lounge offers a relaxing and comfortable area where you can enjoy a drink and gather with other passengers around the piano.

A Dining Car features European cuisine complemented by a selection of European wines.

Towels and toiletries are provided. Each sleeping car has its own attendants who provide bed turndown service. Bottled water is available on request 24 hours a day.

Join travelers from around the world to enjoy the relaxed and casual environment onboard, with no need to wear formal attire on excursions or while dining.

Hotel Accommodations

The first and last nights of each tour are spent in well-appointed four and five star hotels. Additional nights before and after the tour can be arranged on request.



photo: John Seckel

Off-Train Tours

Rail journeys feature an extensive selection of educational city tours in the various stops along the routes. Private coaches and local guides whisk you away for fascinating half- or full-day forays into the principal towns and cities, sometimes including an in-city dining opportunity.



photo: Martin Klimenta

Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia, Bulgaria

Our U.S. Staff

Our staff of expert travel planners is exceptionally well-traveled and extremely knowledgeable about our destinations. We couple an unrivaled depth of experience with an unmitigated enthusiasm for foreign culture, history, language, and geography. From Kaliningrad to Kamchatka, from the Arctic Circle to the Gobi Desert and beyond, we've been there, and we've returned with a wealth of experience, knowledge and information that benefits our clients immeasurably.



Douglas Grimes, President and co-founder of MIR, was inspired to grow the company after traveling to the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s on a goodwill exchange between members of the Soviet Olympic volleyball team and players of the sport from 11 U.S. states. He has made over 100 trips to our destinations, and is a member of the Explorers Club. Whether exploring archaeological sites in Central Asia and the Caucasus or leading "Inside the Russian Space Program" tours to the Baikonur space launch site, Douglas' trips have spanned MIR's destinations since our inception. Recent travels include Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.



Annie Lucas, Vice President, has been with the company since its very early years. Her background in Russian & Eastern European studies supports her role overseeing company-wide operations, systems, and product development. With a passion for out-of-the-way places (favorites include Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), Annie scouts emerging destinations and has an extensive travel history. She represents the company at industry trade events in the U.S. and around the globe.



Dmitry Rudich, Director of Custom Group Tours, grew up in Ukraine and traveled in his home country, in Russia, the South Caucasus, and Turkey before coming to the U.S. for an international business degree. Since then, he has been from Minsk to Moscow to Vladivostok, across Central Asia, and throughout Eastern China. Most recently, he returned to Western Russia and visited the Baltic capitals of Tallinn and Riga.



Anne Thorsteinson, Tour Specialist, earned her bachelor's in Russian language and history at the University of Washington, followed by a master's in international relations. She has studied Russian in St. Petersburg and Vladivostok, lived in Budapest, and traveled throughout Central Europe, Central Asia, the Baltics, Balkans, and Russia. Most recently, Anne spent time in Uzbekistan and Ukraine.



Alexander Whan, Tour Specialist, is a native Seattleite. He earned a B.A. in international studies and an M.A. in Russian, East European, and Central Asian studies at the University of Washington. Studying Serbian and Georgian languages in Belgrade and Tbilisi respectively, he has traveled extensively throughout much of Eastern Europe, including the Balkans, Turkey, and the Caucasus, and has lived in Lithuania, Serbia, and Georgia. Most recently, Alex spent time traveling in the 'Stans of Central Asia.



Nathan Cox, Tour Specialist, was born and raised in Utah, but has spent much of his adult life living in Russia and Ukraine. He double-majored in English and Russian literature and language, and received his master's in literature. Nathan worked for nearly nine years in St. Petersburg Russia, as the director of study abroad programs. Beyond his extensive travels in Western Russia, Nathan has been to China, Central Asia, the Baltics, and Europe.



Andrew Barron, Director of Service & Support, studied Chinese and Russian in college and spent a year living and working outside of Beijing. His travels have taken him across China from Xi'an to Lhasa, on an extended overland expedition from Shanghai to Urumqi, through Chinese Turkestan, and from Western Russia to Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan at the heart of Central Asia.



Jonathan Gann, Tour Specialist, has lived in various countries and traveled to over 100. Having earned advanced degrees in linguistics, he speaks Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian. He has held a variety of positions, working as a guide in Latin America and Eastern Europe, and in the international education field. Proud of his Brazilian roots, Jonathan has a special affinity for Brazilian *bossa nova* music and soccer.



Willis Hughes, Tour Specialist, hails from Zephyr Cove, Nevada, and received his master's degree in Eurasian, Russian, and Eastern European studies in 2016, studying tourism and development in Georgia. He is well versed on the political and social developments of the former Soviet region, speaks Russian and Georgian, and has traveled extensively in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Western China.



Matt Robertson, Tour Specialist, is originally from California's Redwood Coast, and received his M.A. in Russian history in 2013 after studying in Moscow, Germany, Spain, and Siberia. Previously the director of the Tahoe-Baikal Institute, the head concierge at the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe, and a tour guide in Russia and the U.S., Matt has traveled to Mongolia, Siberia, Central and Western Europe, and Western Russia.



Marisa Dodd, Assistant Tour Specialist, is a native Virginian with a deep-rooted knowledge of and passion for Russian culture. While earning her degrees in Russian language and literature and international affairs at George Washington University, Marisa spent a summer teaching English in Western Russia, and also participated in a study abroad program in St. Petersburg. She recently returned to the States after completing an internship in Moscow.



Olga Hayes, Senior Private Journeys Specialist and native of St. Petersburg, Russia, worked as a senior curator for the State Russian Museum, as a consultant to museums throughout Europe, and as a professor at St. Petersburg University. She has a doctorate in Russian culture specializing in Russian icons, and served as a tour guide in St. Petersburg for many years. She returns to St. Petersburg regularly, and recently traveled to Czech Republic.



Lisa Peterson, Private Journeys Specialist, earned her degree in international studies from the University of Washington and taught English and history in Romania and Russia. She also studied in Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, and Zagreb, and returns almost every year. Lisa recently explored Uzbekistan, Macedonia, Iran, the Russian Far East, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine, where she was able to find and visit her great-grandmother's ancestral village.



Joanna Millick, Director of Sales, was born in Warsaw and speaks a host of Slavic languages. Her experience in Poland as a tour manager complements her master's degree in international studies. She has led groups through the Balkans, to Iran, and along the Trans-Siberian Railway. Joanna is our resident expert on Jewish Heritage tours in East and Central Europe. In recent years, she has led numerous tours covering the breadth and depth of Jewish history in Poland, Austria, Czech Republic, and Lithuania.



Amy Stidger, Travel Sales/Client Services Specialist, hails from Texas where she earned a B.A. in History and an M.A. in Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies. She studied Russian in Moscow and Voronezh, Eastern Armenian in Yerevan, and has traveled around Europe, Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and most recently Ukraine.



Kevin Testa, Travel Sales & Client Services Specialist, is a graduate of Portland State University, where he earned degrees in both international business and Russian language, and spent several months at Corvinus University in Budapest. Kevin's travels have taken him to Poland, the Balkans, Ukraine, Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the North Caucasus. Most recently, he has been to Azerbaijan and Belarus.



Jered Gorman, Director of Air Travel/ Logistics, lived in various countries in Europe and Asia as a child before setting down roots in the Pacific Northwest. Jered studied in and traveled throughout China toward his degree in Chinese studies. Over the past decade, he has traveled through Southeast and Central Asia, Mongolia, Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.



Liz Tollefson, Marketing Director, grew up in Delaware, where she earned a degree in mass media communication. Her love of adventure, the arts, and the internet brought her to Seattle, where she has combined all of them at MIR. Liz has explored Western Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.



Jessica Clark, Marketing Coordinator, grew up in West Virginia and earned a bachelor's in mass communications and a master's in international business. She studied in Dubai, India, and New Zealand, and also worked in tourism in South Africa. Jessica's travels have taken her to Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Western Russia, and the South Caucasus.



Helen Holter, Content Manager, is a media strategist specializing in TV/digital storytelling and cross-cultural communication. An Emmy-winning journalist, Helen was a senior correspondent reporting in Russian for Soviet TV. She loves Siberia and the Trans-Siberian Railway, and has lived in Turkey, the Balkans, Central Asia, and Russia.



Mariana Noble, Senior Copywriter, earned her Russian studies degree in Seattle, and studied Russian language in St. Petersburg. She's traveled in Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Jordan, and Iran, but her favorite vacation spot is Siberia. She is semi-retired and works from home on beautiful Whidbey Island, Washington.



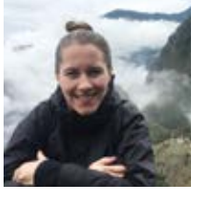
Emily Kelso, Marketing Associate/ Copywriter, is a travel enthusiast with a strong interest in off-the-beaten-path locales and languages. A University of Colorado grad with degrees in English and fine arts, her love of Asian art and culture propelled her to explore Japan, China, and other far-flung places across the globe. She makes it back to her quirky hometown of Boulder, Colorado, whenever she can.



Megan Gilboy, Director of Finance, received her accounting degree from Western Washington University in her hometown of Bellingham. She has been passionate about the dance and music of Central Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East since she was 17. She dances and creates costumes with Anar Dana, a dance troupe in Seattle. Her most recent travels include Turkey and Uzbekistan.



Rebecca Morris, Accounting Assistant, was born and raised on a small farm in Washington State with 10 horses of her own. She recently returned to the Seattle area after spending five years in Anchorage, Alaska. Rebecca has traveled extensively around the globe, including several MIR destinations – the Balkans, Romania, Hungary, and Czech Republic.



Tia Low, Administrative Assistant/Travel Support Specialist, received her international business degree from Washington State University, on the opposite side of the state as her hometown of Sammamish. While she has lived in Australia, South America, and South Korea, it's her endless curiosity about the people and cultures of the rest of the world that feeds her interest in MIR's destinations.



Jake Smith, Special Projects, earned a degree in Near Eastern studies from the University of Washington. While working on his degree, Jake's participation in two study abroad programs in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan reinforced his passion for Central Asia. Jake went on to spend six years supporting educational and cultural exchange programs in Central Asia with an international nonprofit, four years of which were based in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. His most recent travels include Iran, China, the South Caucasus, and Kamchatka.

Overseas Partners and Tour Managers

Our partners in the field are a dynamic bunch of creative professionals who work closely with MIR to ensure that every part of your trip unfolds smoothly. Nothing can compete with a local resident's combination of knowledge, experience, personal connections, and intuition, and we rely on those attributes from our partners in the field.

The **Tashkent** team of Mikhail Gerasimov, Dmitry Kim, Andrey Bayev, and Alexander Uryupin manages Central Asian Operations in our affiliated partner office. Our long-standing connections in the region show in every tour we run there.

The energetic **Siberian** Operations team of Vladimir Kvashnin, Oksana Sokolova, Natasha Suzdalnitskaya, Xenya Suranova, and Lida Sherstobitova covers Irkutsk, Ulan Ude, and the Baikal region. They range as far afield as Tuva, Severobaikalsk, and the distant Yakutia. The team in our affiliated Siberian partner offices is our frontline connection with the diverse and welcoming peoples of this region, and a group that loves to share warm Siberian hospitality with guests.

Ukraine and Western Russia operations are managed by, in order of appearance: Luba Rudenko, Katya Boyarskaya, and John Seckel, who are assisted by Janna Khaimovskaya, Lena Sukhova, Tatiana Voevodina, Julia Snigiryova, Elena Kostzova, Katya Prozorovskaya, Evgenia Hansen, and Natalia Ryadovkina. We rely extensively on this group of travel veterans and top-notch guides in our affiliated overseas offices to ensure smooth operations, attention to detail, and timely responses to any surprises that arise.

"The people were the friendliest we have ever met. Our Tour Manger had an encyclopedic knowledge of the area and is the human C-3PO of languages."

G. Adel
Ocala, FL

"Our Tour Manager was fabulous! I want to travel with him again. Very organized and intuitive. He knows so much, and is a great listener."

M. Pollock
East Lansing, MI

Central Asia and Siberia Operations











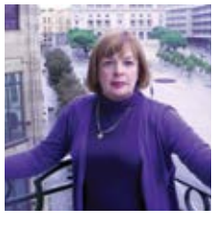
Ukraine and Western Russia Operations













Tour Managers and Guides

Your guide's knowledge and destination experience are crucial to the success of your trip, but are not the only essential elements. MIR's tour managers and national guides are experienced, caring, multilingual leaders who bring good humor and a love of their work to ensure your satisfaction. Their expert leadership in the field is unmatched and has earned them rave reviews from our past guests.



Maria Akkaya
A St. Petersburg native, "Masha" earned an M.B.A. from the Stockholm School of Economics. Travel and study of the English language have always been her passions. Since 1999, she's combined these interests as a tour manager with MIR.



Michel Behar
Michel has worked for MIR since 1998 and has led tours to every corner of MIR's realm, from Tibet to Tehran and everywhere in between. Michel, a Dutch citizen, speaks a host of languages, including Russian, Italian, Turkish, and Hebrew.



Inga Belova
Born in Tbilisi, Georgia, tour manager Inga has worked in the travel industry in Georgia for years. She has traveled to many of MIR's destinations, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Baltics, Turkey, Czech Republic, Iran, and Russia.



Olga Boyarskaya
Olga has been guiding MIR travelers to Russia and beyond for over 15 years. A native of St. Petersburg with a great sense of humor, she has traveled extensively throughout Russia, China, Central Asia, Iran, and along the Trans-Siberian.



Tamara Dubko
A St. Petersburg native, Tamara's extensive training in languages and fine arts serves her well in her tour manager role with MIR. Tamara has a lifelong interest in art history, hiking, and nature.



Jamshid Fayzullaev
Born and raised in Bukhara, Jamshid is familiar with every corner of Uzbekistan. Fluent in English, Russian, Uzbek, and Farsi, Jamshid spent several months in the U.S. as an intern with the Mississippi Consortium for International Development.



Yuriy Kim
With a background in the hospitality industry, "Yura" guides MIR travelers throughout Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, and China. A resident of Bukhara, he is fluent in English, Russian, Tajik, and Uzbek.



Martin Klimenta
A Czech national and former teacher, Martin has led MIR tours since 2000. He speaks Russian, German, English, and his native Czech. Martin is extremely well-traveled, having led countless journeys to virtually every MIR destination.



Anvar Nasimov
Anvar has worked in the tourism industry in Uzbekistan for more than a decade, interpreting, guiding, leading tour groups, and working in a tour office. He studied languages at Samarkand State University, and speaks fluent English, Russian, and Tajik.



Furkat Pulatov
Furkat was born in a village near Samarkand and studied at Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages. He has worked in the travel industry since 1996, speaks Uzbek, English, Russian, and Tajik, and is a soccer fan.



Katya Puzyreva
Katya was born in Moscow and spent several early years in Belarus. She earned a master's in journalism from St. Petersburg University, and has been guiding and managing tours for over 20 years across Russia, along the Trans-Siberian, in Europe, and in the U.S.



Abdu Samadov
Born and raised in Samarkand, Abdu Samadov is full of inside information about his hometown. He studied in England and the U.S., and is fluent in English, Farsi, and Russian. Abdu guides MIR's travelers throughout Uzbekistan.



Paul Schwartz
Introduced to Russia through a study abroad program, Paul worked aboard Soviet fishing ships before leading his first group of Americans to the Soviet Union in 1988. He has since led over 100 tours covering all of MIR's destinations.



Batir Shamakhsudov
Hailing from the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, Batir has been working as a guide in Central Asia since 1997. He studied English at Tashkent's World Languages University and is also fluent in Uzbek and Russian.



Alla Shishkina
Born and raised in Irkutsk, Alla received a master's degree in English and German, and has been working as a guide and tour manager in the Baikal region for more than 15 years.



Jurate Terleckaite
A native of Vilnius, Lithuania, Jurate has been an interpreter at Lithuania's Parliament and a freelance journalist, as well as a longtime tour manager and guide in the Baltics.



Tatiana Timoshuk
Tatiana was raised in St. Petersburg, and has been guiding and managing tours for over 15 years. Fluent in Russian and English, Tatiana enjoys local guiding, as well as managing MIR trips throughout Russia.



Irena Trushkevych
Irena hails from Lviv, Ukraine, and has more than 15 years experience working with foreign tour groups. She is a certified interpreter and speaks fluent Russian, English, and Polish in addition to her native Ukrainian.

Booking Terms and Conditions

Planning Your Trip with MIR

Give us a call at 1-800-424-7289; our tour specialists are available to consult on travel options to these dynamic destinations, coordinate airfare through our in-house air department, address your questions regarding trip rigors and visa requirements, and plan personalized pre- and post-trip extensions.

By booking a trip with MIR Corporation ("MIR"), paying a deposit, or signing this agreement, you accept all of the terms in these BOOKING TERMS and CONDITIONS, which, along with the Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement, constitutes the entire agreement between you and us with respect to any and all bookings, reservations, trips and transactions made with us.

Reservations

For scheduled group tours, please review the Descriptive Daily Itinerary for trip details and important information prior to signing up. The quickest way to reserve is to call us at 1-800-424-7289 and place a non-refundable deposit by credit card over the phone. Early reservations are recommended, as space on all scheduled tours is limited. To finalize your booking, complete the Reservation Form and sign the Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement (at the back of this catalog and available at www.mircorp.com/reservation-form) and mail to MIR with a color photocopy of the signed photo page of your passport.

Once we receive these documents, we will send you a comprehensive confirmation packet which includes a Descriptive Daily Itinerary, our *Touring with MIR* handbook containing general information and travel tips for the countries you'll visit, and a preliminary invoice. Visa kits for applicable trips are generally sent out about 3-4 months prior to departure. A final packet with air tickets, luggage tags, an updated itinerary and contact information is generally sent 2-3 weeks prior to departure. (Note that international shipping charges will apply for non-U.S. addresses.)

Responsibility

In booking with MIR, you understand and agree that MIR purchases or reserves travel-related services on your behalf from independent service providers that will provide components of the tour, including but not limited to transportation, lodging, restaurants, and other services. Because MIR does not own or control any of these independent service providers and suppliers, it is not responsible for any delay, inconvenience, accident, expense, injury, loss, death or damage caused by any negligent or willful act or failure to act or default of any such service provider or supplier.

Travelers' Responsibilities & Eligibility

Travelers are responsible for selecting an appropriate tour that matches their interests and physical abilities and for preparing for the tour by studying the Descriptive Daily Itinerary and additional trip information sent by MIR. By booking and participating in a tour, you represent that you do not have any physical or other conditions that would create a hazard for you or other participants or affect other people's enjoyment of the tour. Travelers must be 18 years of age or older (or traveling with a legal guardian) and physically and mentally capable of participating in the tour. Reservations are subject to our review and acceptance of your completed Reservation Form and signed Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. We reserve the right at our sole discretion to request additional information or medical clearance at any time from a traveler. We also reserve the right at our sole discretion to accept, decline, or remove anyone from a tour (at or prior to departure or during the tour) for any reason, including but not limited to if we believe a person is incapable of meeting the tour's physical or mental demands.

Payment Schedules

At the time of reservation, a non-refundable per person deposit is due per the chart below. The balance is due upon receipt of invoice or latest by date noted below.

	Non-refundable deposit amount:	Final payment due by:
-Scheduled Small Group Tours	*$750*	*60 days prior to departure*
-Flexible Essential Private Trips	*$750*	*60 days prior to departure*
-Special Tours	*$2,000*	*120 days prior to departure*
-Rail Journeys by Private Train, Imperial Suites, Superior Deluxe Class	*$5,500*	*120 days prior to departure*
-Rail Journeys by Private Train, Gold, Diamond, Kalif, Bolshoi Platinum Classes	*$3,000*	*120 days prior to departure*
-Rail Journeys by Private Train, Deluxe, Silver, Sultan, Bolshoi Classes	*$2,500*	*120 days prior to departure*
-Rail Journeys by Private Train, all other classes	*$2,000*	*120 days prior to departure*
-Custom & Private Journeys – for individuals	*$750*	*60 days prior to departure*
-Custom & Private Journeys – for groups	*see reservation form/itinerary*	

For reservations made directly with MIR, land tour payments are accepted by check, wire transfer, ACH, money order, or credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Amex). If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment the agent accepts. **MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check, wire or ACH only.** Please also note that all communications on bookings made through agents (updates, confirmation packet, invoice, final documents) will be through your agent.

Full payment for land tours is due at the time of booking for reservations made at or within final payment deadlines, as MIR may be required to pay for services and accommodations immediately, and in full at time of reservation, on your behalf.

Transfers on Scheduled Small Group Tours

Travelers may transfer non-refundable deposits once, from one scheduled Small Group Tour to another scheduled to depart in the same calendar year, up to 91 days prior to departure of the original tour, subject to availability. All deposits remain non-refundable in the event of your cancellation. 90 days or closer to the original tour date, standard cancellation penalties apply. (See "Cancellations.") *Transfer policy not applicable from/to any Rail Journey by Private Train, Special Tour, Flexible Essential Private Trip or Custom or Private Journey.*

Cancellations

Should you need to cancel your travel plans, please notify us immediately by email or by fax. At the time we receive written notification of cancellation, the following charges will apply:

Scheduled Small Group Tours, Flexible Essential Private Trips and Custom & Private Journeys for Individuals:

If received up to 61 days or more prior to departure
non-refundable deposit due or paid in full of $750
31-60 days prior to departure — *50% of the land tour cost*
30 days prior to departure or after trip departure — *no refund*

Scheduled Rail Journeys by Private Train & Special Tours:

121 or more days prior to departure
non-refundable deposit due or paid in full of $2,000, $2,500, $3,000 or $5,500
65-120 days prior to departure — *50% of the land tour cost*
64 days prior to departure or after trip departure — *no refund*

Custom & Private Group Journeys:

Please refer to your tour itinerary/reservation form for details

Air Tickets:

Refunds for unused air tickets are subject to the rules of the respective air carrier(s) and to a MIR service fee of a minimum of $75/ticket.

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 used by the participant during the tour.

MIR Corporation reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure for any reason whatsoever, including but not limited to too few participants or circumstances outside our control such as geopolitical turmoil, wars, natural disasters, or supplier issues, in


photo: Peter Guttman

which case a refund of the land tour payment will constitute full settlement. In the event of cancellation, MIR is not responsible for any expenses incurred by travelers in preparation for the trip (e.g. non-refundable airline tickets, visa fees, etc.).

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 or contact Travel Guard at 1.877.709.5596.

Visas, Passports & Travel Advisories

A valid passport with six months validity from the end of the tour is required for participation. Travelers are responsible for obtaining all necessary visas prior to departure. MIR cannot guarantee visa or permit approval by foreign governments, and cannot assume responsibility for incorrect or improperly issued visa, permit or passport documentation, nor for any costs associated with a traveler's refused visa or permit issuance or refused entry into a country due to incorrect or incomplete documentation.

Travelers are responsible for their own welfare while traveling and for educating themselves on the conditions in the countries they will be visiting during the tour. For information concerning possible dangers at an international destination, contact the government office in your country that is responsible for issuing travel advisories. In the U.S., contact the Travel Advisory Section of the U.S. State Department, 1-888-407-4747, http://www.travel.state.gov/. For medical information, contact the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 800-232-4636, http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/, or the responsible government agency in your country.

Itinerary & Price Changes

Published itineraries are subject to change without notice due to changing conditions in the field. As trips are priced more than a year in advance, we reserve the right to change the land cost in the event of significant increased costs over which we have no control, including but not limited to changes in internal airfares, fuel surcharges and currency fluctuations.

Single Travelers

If you prefer single accommodations, the single supplement fee/single occupancy rate is payable. Single accommodations are not always available, as some nights may be spent in yurts/*gers*, tents, lodges, guesthouses, aboard regularly scheduled rail service or in private homes and are subject to the availability of rooms and/or camping space. A partial single supplement is available on tours that employ non-hotel accommodation for some nights.

We are happy to attempt a same-gender roommate match for solo travelers who request it on small group tours. Should no one be available with whom you can share, you will be assessed the single supplement fee/single occupancy rate at the time of invoicing. In the event of a last-minute cancellation or roommate incompatibility resulting in assignment of a single room, the single supplement fee/single occupancy rate will be assessed.

Special Accommodation Note for Select Tours

As specified in the Detailed Daily Itinerary documentation, a selection of our trips (Return to the North Caucasus-pg 24, Siberian Odyssey-pg 26, Mongolia to Moscow-pg 34, Mongolia's Golden Eagle Festival-pg 48, China's Silk Road & Tibet-pg 49, Silk Road Backroads & Byways-pg 60, Tien Shan to the High Pamirs-pg 61, Pamir Highway-pg 65, and Silk Route Odyssey-pg 66) make use of yurts, *gers*, overnight trains or other non-hotel accommodations. In these particular cases, travelers may be asked to share sleeping quarters with multiple other group members for those nights. Land Tour inclusions and details of accommodation for each scheduled Small Group Tour are outlined in the Descriptive Daily Itinerary.

Air Reservations

MIR's in-house, full-service air department will gladly assist with your air travel needs. Payment for air tickets that are not part of the land tour is due upon confirmation and may be made by credit card or check according to the acceptance policies of the carrier. Fares, taxes and fuel surcharges remain subject to change until ticketed. Should you decide to take on the responsibility of making your own arrangements (including mileage-based reservations), please supply MIR with a copy of your air itinerary showing your full travel itinerary at the time of final payment for your land tour. Any contract or reservation for air travel is exclusively with the carrier, and not MIR – even if MIR assists with those arrangements.

Land Tour Cost

Prices listed in this catalog are per person in U.S. dollars, based on double occupancy. Land Tour inclusions for each scheduled Small Group Tour, Rail Journey by Private Train, Special Tour or Flexible Essential Private Trip are outlined in the Descriptive Daily Itinerary. For Custom & Private Journeys, inclusions are detailed in the custom trip proposal. In all cases, the quoted price represents a package price for the services offered and an itemization of individual component costs will not be provided.

Prices do not include international or internal airfare and related taxes and fuel surcharges, airport departure or other fees, visa fees, passport expenses, cost increases of internal airfares, customary end-of-group-tour gratuities to tour managers, some meals on some trips, alcoholic beverages, insurance, single supplement (by choice or circumstance), baggage fees not included in the fare, items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls/email; or expenses arising from the delay, extension or modification of a tour due to bad weather, flight delays, sickness or medical emergency, government action, or any other cause beyond our control.

MIR reserves the right to add staff or invited guests to any of our group departures, even if such addition exceeds the advertised group maximum size.

Limitation of Remedies

You agree that the sole remedy for any default by MIR arising under this agreement shall be the return of the paid Land Tour cost, to the extent consistent with applicable law. To the maximum extent permitted under applicable law, MIR shall not be liable for any special, consequential, indirect, punitive, incidental or other damages arising out of or in any way connected to this agreement, including lost profits, whether such damages arise in contract, negligence, tort, under statute, in equity, at law, or otherwise, even if MIR has been advised of the possibility of such damages. You expressly waive any right you may have to recover such damages.

Force Majeure

MIR will not be deemed in breach of this agreement or otherwise liable to you, by reason of delay in performance or nonperformance of any of its obligations under this agreement to the extent that any such delay or nonperformance is due to any Force Majeure. "Force Majeure" means any circumstances beyond MIR's reasonable control, including without limitation forces of nature, terrorist activities, geopolitical disturbances, explosions, flood, tempest, forceful wind, fire or accident, war or threat of war declared or undeclared, sabotage, civil disturbance, labor strikes, quarantine, government intervention, weather conditions, and unforeseen circumstances. If MIR and any of our suppliers are affected by Force Majeure, we and our suppliers shall be entitled to, and may in our sole discretion, vary or cancel any itinerary or arrangement in relation to the tour.

2019 Tour Calendar

Page	Tour Name	Days	2019 Land Tour Start Dates											
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Russia													
20	Essential Siberia	7 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
20	Essential St. Petersburg	7 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
21	Essential Russia	7 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
21	Essential Golden Ring NEW!	8 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
22	Inside the Russian Space Program	10 Days							13					
23	Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages	11 Days					24		26	30				
24	Return to the North Caucasus	14 Days							15					
25	Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits & Nomads	16 Days						11						
26	Siberian Odyssey: Legends of Lake Baikal & Tuva	13 Days							28					
27	Remote Russia: Yakutia & Kamchatka	14 Days								6				
28	Russian Winter Wonderland	10 Days												29
29	Arctic Explorer by Private Train	12 Days		1										29
30	North Pole: Top of the World NEW!	16 Days	Special Tour departs June 2020											
	Trans-Siberian Railway													
34	Mongolia to Moscow: A Trans-Siberian Railway Adventure	16 Days							10		4			
36	Trans-Siberian Express – Beijing to Moscow	15 Days					12	9	5, 28	23	15			
36	Trans-Siberian Express – Moscow to Beijing	16 Days					4	1, 27	20	15	7			
38	Trans-Siberian Classic Route – Moscow to Vladivostok	15 Days					5	2	22	18				
38	Trans-Siberian Classic Route – Vladivostok to Moscow	15 Days					18	15		4, 31				
40	Trans-Siberian Mongolian Route with Naadam Festival – Moscow to Ulaanbaatar	13 Days							1					
40	Trans-Siberian Mongolian Route with Naadam Festival – Ulaanbaatar to Moscow	13 Days							10					
42	Trans-Siberian – Winter Wonderland Route Moscow to Vladivostok	15 Days		12										
42	Trans-Siberian – Winter Wonderland Route Vladivostok to Moscow	15 Days		24										
	Mongolia, China, Tibet													
46	Essential Tibet	8 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
46	Essential Mongolia NEW!	7 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
48	Mongolia's Golden Eagle Festival	12 Days									28			
49	China's Silk Road & Tibet: Route of Monks & Merchants	18 Days					10					12		
50	Tibet & China Rail Discovery by Private Train	12 Days				11								
51	Mongolian Explorer: The Gobi & Beyond with Naadam Festival	14 Days						30						
	Central Asia & Iran													
56	Essential Iran	10 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
56	Essential Iran Enhanced	12 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
57	Essential Central Asia	13 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
57	Essential Uzbekistan	10 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
58	Essential Kyrgyzstan	8 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
58	Essential Kazakhstan	7 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
59	Essential Turkmenistan	12 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
59	Essential Tajikistan	8 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											

Page	Tour Name		Days	2019 Land Tour Start Dates											
				Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Central Asia & Iran														
60	Silk Road Backroads & Byways	NEW!	19 Days								22				
61	From the Heavenly Tien Shan to the High Pamirs	NEW!	18 Days								5				
62	Backstreets & Bazaars of Uzbekistan		10 Days			16									
63	Once Forbidden Lands of Central Asia & Iran		20 Days										7		
64	Journey Through Central Asia: The Five 'Stans		21 Days				7, 21	12			18	8	13		
65	The Pamir Highway & Across Fabled Frontiers		18 Days							15					
66	Silk Route Odyssey: Caravan Across Uzbekistan		15 Days					17				6			
67	Iran Unveiled		12 Days				7						6		
68	Ancient Persia – Modern Iran		18 Days				8, 15					Sept. 23, 30			
69	Persia & the Silk Road by Private Train	NEW!	16 Days										2		
70	Jewels of Persia & the Silk Route by Private Train – Tehran to Moscow		18 Days										13		
71	Essence of the Silk Road by Private Train – Ashgabat to Almaty		14 Days				9						15		
71	Essence of the Silk Road by Private Train – Almaty to Ashgabat		14 Days			28							3		
	South Caucasus & Turkey														
76	Essential Caucasus		10 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
76	Essential Georgia		8 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
77	Essential Georgia & Armenia		13 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
77	Essential Azerbaijan	NEW!	7 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
78	Treasures of the South Caucasus		15 Days				14	5				1, 15			
79	A Taste of Georgia: Wine, Cuisine & Culture		13 Days										2		
80	Village Traditions of the South Caucasus		21 Days							28					
81	Caspian Odyssey by Private Train		16 Days									19			
	Baltics, Ukraine, Balkans, Central & East Europe														
86	Essential Balkans		12 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
86	Essential Ukraine		8 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
86	Essential Poland		6 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
86	Essential Central Europe	NEW!	8 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
87	Essential Albania		9 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
87	Essential Romania	NEW!	10 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
87	Essential Baltics		7 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
87	Essential Albania, Macedonia & Kosovo	NEW!	10 Days	Private Journey on your choice of dates											
88	Balkan Odyssey: Crossroads of Cultures		16 Days					9				12			
89	Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses		16 Days					28			27				
90	Kaliningrad & the Baltics		13 Days				22			29					
91	Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova		14 Days					5, 19			11				
92	Christmas Traditions of Poland		8 Days												18
93	Budapest to Venice by Private Train		10 Days						13						
94	New Year's in Vienna		9 Days												28
95	Venice to Istanbul by Private Train	NEW!	11 Days						19						

Denotes Flexible Essential Private Trip: Classic Independent Journeys – Our Itinerary – Your Dates

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Back cover photos: Kevin Testa, Yuriy Kim, Jonathan Irish, Phil Kidd, Michel Behar

Register for your trip online
MIRCORP.COM/RESERVATION-FORM

Stay up to date with our website, www.mircorp.com

Our award-winning catalog comes out only once a year, but you can stay up to date 24/7 with our award-winning website.

User-friendly and inspiring, our website is loaded with information about our tours and splashed with photos and videos of our favorite places.

At www.mircorp.com, you can find:

- **Tour info:** Itineraries, dates, prices, and updates.
- **MIR in the Press:** Published articles that let you see us from a different perspective.
- **Travel Journals:** Day-by-day descriptions of various MIR tours, written by travelers like you, as well as MIR staff.
- **The MIR Blog:** Hundreds of stories with topics such as how to train like a cosmonaut, the eagle hunters of Mongolia, and the time a Soviet dog lived in the White House. Fascinating, informative, and/or bizarre true stories about our destinations, with new stories every month:
  www.mircorp.com/blog

Sign up for our newsletter and receive access to Special Offers and more.
www.mircorp.com/subscribe-mirs-email-newsletter/

Ask about our special business class and premium economy class airfares on Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, Swiss Air, and United Airlines.

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CORPORATION

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photo: Richard Fejfar

Need More Information?

Descriptive Daily Itineraries

- Need more information about a particular tour? You can find detailed information on tour features and inclusions plus important notes regarding weather, international airfare, visas, and more in our Descriptive Daily Itineraries.

  It's easy to download them from our website; we can also send them by email or post on request.

References

- Wish to speak to someone who has taken a tour with MIR? We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers – just ask for a list of references.

Custom & Private Journeys

- Want to travel privately? We specialize in customized journeys for solo travelers, families, and groups of all sizes. Contact us at privatejourneys@mircorp.com for more details on our Private Journey travel planning services and to request Custom Travel Planners for the regions in which you are interested.

Personalized Planning

- Have complex travel planning questions? Want to link trips together? Looking for suggestions for a pre- or post-tour? Contact a MIR Tour Specialist at info@mircorp.com who will answer your questions and guide you through the travel planning process from start to finish.

Send a Catalog to a Friend

- Want to send a catalog or Descriptive Daily Itinerary to your friend? We'd be happy to do that. Just call or email us at info@mircorp.com.

MIR
CORPORATION

www.mircorp.com • 800.424.7289

2019 Reservation Form

MIR Corporation
85 South Washington Street, Suite 210, Seattle, WA 98104
Tel: 800-424-7289 • 206-624-7289 • Fax: 206-624-7360
Email: info@mircorp.com • www.mircorp.com

Please enclose a color passport copy, or scan and email a copy to MIR. Faxes are not suitable.

❑ **Small Group Tour** ❑ **Rail Journey by Private Train** ❑ **Flexible Essential Private Trip** ❑ **Custom / Private Journey**

Tour Name _____ **Tour Dates** _____

Alternate/additional _____ Alternate/additional _____

Traveler 1 Please include a copy of your passport. Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the tour end date. Enter passport data as it appears in the passport.

Full Name (MUST BE LISTED EXACTLY as in passport) _____ Gender _____

Passport No. _____ Issue Date _____ Exp. Date _____ Place of Issue _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth (as listed in passport) _____ Citizenship _____

Dietary restrictions _____ Smoker? ❑ Yes ❑ No Are You Retired? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Please describe your health and physical condition, including any medical conditions and medications which might affect your ability to participate in this trip.

_____

Occupation* (or former occupation if retired) _____ Place of Work* (Co. name) _____

Description of Employer and Position* _____ Trips to Iran only: Father's Full Name _____

*If retired, please list former occupation, last place of work and last position held. Your status ❑ Married ❑ Unmarried ❑ Widowed Have you visited Iran before? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Traveler 2 Please include a copy of your passport. Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the tour end date. Enter passport data as it appears in the passport.

Full Name (MUST BE LISTED EXACTLY as in passport) _____ Gender _____

Passport No. _____ Issue Date _____ Exp. Date _____ Place of Issue _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth (as listed in passport) _____ Citizenship _____

Dietary restrictions _____ Smoker? ❑ Yes ❑ No Are You Retired? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Please describe your health and physical condition, including any medical conditions and medications which might affect your ability to participate in this trip.

_____

Occupation* (or former occupation if retired) _____ Place of Work* (Co. name) _____

Description of Employer and Position* _____ Trips to Iran only: Father's Full Name _____

*If retired, please list former occupation, last place of work and last position held. Your status ❑ Married ❑ Unmarried ❑ Widowed Have you visited Iran before? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Contact Information

Home Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Tel: (Home) _____ (Cell) _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Ship Documents to (no P.O. boxes) _____ City/State/Zip _____

Emergency Contact (Name / relationship / phone number) _____

Accommodations on Group Tours Trip participants who occupy single accommodations either by choice or by circumstance must pay the single cost.

❑ We are traveling/rooming together. Preferred sleeping arrangements: ❑ Twin ❑ Double (subject to availability)

❑ I am traveling together with a companion who is billed separately. Companion name _____

❑ I am traveling alone and prefer a single room wherever available at the single cost.

❑ I am traveling alone. Please assist in finding me a roommate of the same gender if possible (I agree to pay the single cost if no roommate is available).

International Airfare International airfare is not included in the package price. MIR will provide customized air reservations from your preferred city of departure on request.

❑ Please send me a suggested itinerary and estimate departing from _____ ❑ Economy class ❑ Business class

Traveler 1: Frequent flyer airline and member #: _____ Seat preference: window / aisle

Traveler 2: Frequent flyer airline and member #: _____ Seat preference: window / aisle

❑ I will handle my own air or am using mileage tickets (Please mail MIR a copy of your itinerary showing arrival and departure flights and times by 60 days prior to departure).

Booking Terms and Conditions

For complete terms and conditions, please refer to the Booking Terms and Conditions section of the current (2019) MIR Corporation catalog, pages 108-109.

Deposits and Cancellations

I/we enclose a non-refundable per person deposit in the amount of $750 for Small Group Tours, Flexible Essential Private Trips, Custom & Private Journeys; $2,000 for Special Tours; Rail Journeys by Private Train Tours: Imperial Suite, Superior Deluxe Class, $5,500; Gold, Kalif, Diamond, Bolshoi Platinum Classes, $3,000; Deluxe, Silver, Sultan, Bolshoi Classes, $2,500; all other Classes $2,000:

$ _____ (deposit) per person x number of travelers _____ = total enclosed $ _____ in the form of: ❑ check ❑ Visa ❑ MC ❑ Amex

Name on Credit Card _____

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____ Card Security # _____

Credit Card Billing Address (if different from home address above) _____

I authorize MIR Corporation to charge the total enclosed amount (your signature): _____

Payment Terms: Deposits are non-refundable and are accepted by check, money order, ACH or credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express). Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (**MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check, wire or ACH only.**) Air fares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

Cancellation Policy: If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of written notice, the following charges apply to land tours (cancellation policies vary for air tickets, custom & private group journeys). Cost of cancellation, if received:

Scheduled MIR Small Group Tours, Flexible Essential Private Trips and Custom & Private Journeys for individuals:
61 or more days before departure, deposit due or paid in full of $750;
31-60 days before departure, 50% of land tour cost;
30 days or less prior to departure, no refund.

Special Tours and Scheduled Rail Journeys by Private Train:
121 or more days before departure, deposit due or paid in full $2,000, $2,500, $3,000 or $5,500;
65-120 days before departure, 50% of land tour cost;
64 days or less prior to departure, no refund.

Please review our Booking Terms and Conditions before carefully completing this Reservation Form.
Read and sign the Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement on page 2 and mail with deposit to MIR.

RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT

Please read carefully: This is a legally enforceable waiver of rights

In consideration of being permitted to participate in the Tour organized, arranged and/or provided by MIR Corporation, a Washington corporation dba in the State of California as MIR Corporation Tours ("MIR," "we," or "us"), I, an adult participant and/or parent or legal guardian of a participant under the age of 18 ("minor"), acknowledge and agree to the following terms and conditions to the maximum extent allowed by law.

BOOKING TERMS AND CONDITIONS AND IMAGES RELEASE: I have carefully read and fully understand the "Booking Terms and Conditions" contained in the current (2019) MIR Corporation ("MIR") catalog and this Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement ("Release"). I understand that MIR reserves the right in its sole discretion to accept, decline, or remove anyone from a Tour (at or prior to departure or during the Tour) who MIR judges to be incapable of meeting the Tour's physical and mental demands. I also acknowledge that during a MIR Tour, my image, likeness and personality may be captured on photograph, video and on other media (the "Personal Images"), and that MIR may wish to use these Personal Images for promotional and other business purposes. I consent to the taking of Personal Images of me while participating in a MIR Tour, and I grant MIR the absolute right to copyright, re-use, publish and reproduce by any medium, including electronically, any Personal Images of me or in which I may be included worldwide, free of charge and without my right of inspection. If I do not want MIR to use any Images, I understand and agree that I must inform MIR in writing before the start of the Tour.

ASSUMPTION OF ALL RISKS: I voluntarily apply to participate in a Tour under the arrangements of MIR with knowledge of the inherent hazards and risks involved in travel and activities in which I voluntarily choose to participate, including, but not limited to (all collectively referred to in this Release as "Risks"): motor vehicles, aircraft, trains, boats and all other conveyance; roads, trails and accommodations which are not maintained or operated to standards common in the United States; traveling in remote areas; the forces of nature; civil disturbance; terrorism and government restrictions, which I agree to monitor; high altitude conditions; accident or illness in remote locations without access to rapid rescue or medical facilities; and the adequacy of medical attention once provided. I have considered my own condition and limitations and the Tour itinerary and have concluded that I am physically and emotionally fit and able to participate in this Tour. **I acknowledge that these are some, but not all, of the inherent and acquired risks associated with the activities performed on a Tour. I EXPRESSLY AGREE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MY OWN WELFARE AND THE WELFARE OF MY MINOR DEPENDENTS TRAVELING WITH ME, AND I ACCEPT ANY AND ALL RISKS. I VOLUNTARILY AND KNOWINGLY FULLY ASSUME ALL OF THE ABOVE RISKS, as well as all other risks set forth in this agreement, both known and unknown, foreseeable and unforeseeable, to the fullest extent permitted by law.**

ARBITRATION: Any claim or controversy arising out of or relating to this Tour, whether or not specifically addressed in this Release, shall be exclusively and fully settled by binding single-arbitrator arbitration in Seattle, Washington, in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association which are in existence at the time of the dispute. The Superior Court of Washington for King County in Seattle shall have exclusive venue and jurisdiction over all parties in enforcing the terms and requirements of this Release, including the enforcement of any arbitration award. The rights and obligations of the parties shall be fully construed under Washington State law.

RELEASE: I acknowledge having received full disclosure and the opportunity to have this Release reviewed by an attorney. Subject to such acknowledgement, and by voluntarily signing and delivering this Release, **I (including, but not limited to, my heirs, successors, assigns, beneficiaries, agents and legal representatives) FOREVER RELEASE AND DISCHARGE, HOLD HARMLESS AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE MIR, ITS OWNERS, OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AGENTS, CONSULTANTS, EMPLOYEES, SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS ("Released Parties") FROM AND AGAINST any and all liability, claims, causes of action, demands, costs, damages, losses or suits of any and every kind (including, as permitted by law, claims, causes of action, demands or suits which allege MIR's negligent acts or omissions)** which I now have or may later have against Released Parties arising out of, relating to, or in connection with any MIR Tour, including, but not limited to, any claim for property loss, damage, injury or death that I might suffer. This RELEASE shall be legally interpreted to the fullest extent permissible; and, should any portion be held invalid, it is agreed that all other parts shall continue in full legal force and effect. I also acknowledge that I shall have no right to sue MIR, other than to enforce the arbitration clause, which shall control all legal claims. **I HAVE CAREFULLY READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO THE CONTENTS AND LEGAL TERMS OF THIS RELEASE. I UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS A LEGALLY BINDING CONTRACT AND SIGN IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL. I AGREE THAT THE TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT SHALL SERVE AS A COMPLETE RELEASE AND EXPRESS ASSUMPTION OF RISK.** I certify that I have read this agreement, fully understand its terms, understand that ***I have given up substantial rights by signing it,*** and voluntarily agree to be bound by its terms.

Print Name of Traveler	Print Name of Traveler
Signature of Adult Traveler/Parent of Minor Traveler	Signature of Adult Traveler/Parent of Minor Traveler
Date	Date
Print Name of Person Signing	Print Name of Person Signing

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NEW TOURS & PRIVATE JOURNEYS FOR 2019

Silk Road Backroads & Byways
Deserts & Diversions in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan & Turkmenistan

August 22-September 9, 2019
Small Group Tour – see page 60

From the Heavenly Tien Shan to the High Pamirs
Majestic Mountains of Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan

August 5-22, 2019
Small Group Tour – see page 61

Persia & the Silk Road by Private Train
From Almaty to Tehran aboard the Golden Eagle

October 2-17, 2019
Rail Journey by Private Train – see page 69

Venice to Istanbul by Private Train
A Rail Expedition Through the Balkans & Beyond

June 19-29, 2019
Rail Journey by Private Train – see page 95

New Private Journeys
New Essentials featuring Azerbaijan, the Balkans, Mongolia, Russia's Golden Ring, Romania, and Central Europe.

For a complete Tour Calendar, see pages 110-111

For Descriptive Daily Itineraries,
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