

Joanna Lumley's Silk Road Adventure



ABC and iview - Sunday September 23 at 7.40PM

“I’m embarking on a 7000-mile journey following the route of the legendary Silk Road, that throughout history helped spread all manner of foods, inventions and cultures across Asia and Europe...my most adventurous and exotic journey yet.” Joanna Lumley.

This epic new four-part series is Joanna Lumley’s grandest and most challenging journey so far, a breath-taking odyssey from Venice to the Chinese border along the veins of the ancient Silk Road.

A perilous network of paths, the Silk Road shaped the modern world, bringing silk, printing, spices, gunpowder, and many other things to the West. Joanna’s adventure will see her travel through a breath-taking array of fabulous landscapes as she crosses continents, deserts, mountains and steppes, boldly following in the footsteps of the merchants, conquerors, kings and pilgrims who once lived and died along this route.

Produced by Burning Bright Productions for ITV.

Details: Kristine Way on 02 8333 3844 or 0419 969 282 way.kris@abc.net.au



Joanna Lumley's Silk Road Adventure

EP 1 - SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 23 AT 7.40PM

In episode one, Joanna begins her adventure in Venice, the European terminus of the Silk Road where she discovers how this famous route helped the merchants of Venice and the city state itself grow rich and powerful. Joanna witnesses first hand evidence of Marco Polo's Silk Road booty, and sees how that all-important commodity, **silk**, cemented Venice's reputation as a centre of luxury and conspicuous wealth.



She visits a fabric workshop that uses silk thread to make some of the finest velvet in the world, which costs 5000 euros per metre and supplies The White House, the Kremlin and many world-renowned fashion houses. Watching the highly skilled workers weaving the fabric by hand on looms, Joanna observes: **“I think that your forefathers, they understood what silk was...today we are ravished by silk, but in those days, it must have been like a gift from heaven.”**

Her journey then takes her to the Balkan country of Albania, where the Via Egnatia, constructed by the Romans in the 2nd Century BC, goes from Durres on the Adriatic Sea all the way to Istanbul. Joanna then travels on to Turkey - starting in Istanbul, a pivotal Silk Road city on the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and then moves on to Cappadocia, where the amazing rock formations create a unique landscape that became both a sanctuary for travellers and the early Christian communities which grew up here.

Joanna then travels by overnight train on a 14-hour journey to the far east of Turkey. In the mountains she visits a village famous for making cheese, and as a self-confessed cheese-addict, can't resist donning a hairnet and rolling up her sleeves to help with production. Joanna says: **“I just adore cheese. If I didn't love cheese so much I'd be so thin people would go, 'Who is that unbelievably thin, old woman?' But because I eat cheese, they go, 'Oh there's Joanna, moving about again'. That's because I eat cheese. Would I give it up? No!”**

Joanna then heads into the cool, lush highlands close to the Georgian and Armenian borders to meet a local family to see how the traditional herding way of life continues.

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EP 2 - SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 30 AT 7.40PM

Joanna travels to Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, its name derived from the Georgian for 'warm', a nod to the 30 hot springs which provided respite for weary Silk Road travellers. There she visits the Kipshitzes family, who have spent 20 years restoring the family home to its former glory, making it the last intact, 19th century townhouse in the whole of Tbilisi.

Joanna meets former model Tako Chkeidze, the woman responsible for Tbilisi fashion week, to learn how she navigated a career under Communist rule and during the civil war. Lastly,

she visits the Sukhishvili Dance Company, an example of how Georgian culture has lasted through centuries of war and occupation, and she watches a rehearsal of dances inspired by a different region of the country or a different chapter of Georgian history.

From Tbilisi, Joanna heads into the magnificent, snow-crested peaks of the High Caucasus to Svaneti - so remote that the Georgian kings of the Middle Ages would send their treasure here for safekeeping, and a unique culture developed, untouched by the outside world. In the village of Langami is the tiny 1000-year-old Church of Christ; and Joanna discovers how the old trading pathways are being restored and walks a part of the Transcaucasian trail.

She then travels to Khaketi, Georgia's most famous wine region, where Archaeologists have discovered evidence of people making wine here 8000 years ago. She meets Shota Lagazidze, who, at just 28, is one of Georgia's most talked about wine growers, and whose methods have changed little from that of thousands of years ago. Khaketi is also home to a young woman in the village of Magaro who is reviving the silk trade. Her small operation goes from silk worms eating mulberry leaves to the finished product, silk thread.

Over the border in Azerbaijan, a country of nearly 10 million people situated between Russia and Iran, Joanna's first stop is Sheki, where artisan crafts and the renowned silk industry attracted huge merchant caravans from Europe and across central Asia. She visits the grand palace of the Khans, the 18th century Persian rulers of Azerbaijan.

Further eastward, after some silk scarf shopping in the village of Kelagayi, Joanna arrives in Baku, on the Caspian Sea, the last port of call on her adventure through Georgia and Azerbaijan. The glittering skyline and ambitious new architecture have given it the moniker 'The Dubai of the Caucasus.' There, she's shown around the \$7000 a night Royal Suite in the Fairmont Hotel at the top of Baku's iconic Flame Towers; undergoes a bizarre folk ritual; and overcomes her fear of heights to walk on the roof of Baku's latest construction marvel, the \$300 million Caspian waterfront complex.

