

## Kazakhstan

Discovery

# Between mystical lands and natural wonders

A journey through spectacular landscapes, ancient history and living traditions. From unique geological formations to the treasures of the Silk Road, via iconic cultural landmarks and a remarkably diverse natural world, this itinerary invites you to discover a country as rich as it is unexpected!



Set off to discover a land of a thousand contrasts, where breathtaking landscapes meet a rich historical heritage and heartfelt encounters. From the spectacular rock formations of Mangystau to the turquoise lakes nestled in the Almaty mountains, and the majestic traces of the Silk Road, this journey immerses you in a realm of adventure and spirituality. Endless steppes, blazing canyons and sacred sites will shape an authentic exploration, far from the beaten track.

### You will like

- 👉 Breathtaking landscapes
- 👉 Traces of an ancient past
- 👉 Striking historical sites
- 👉 A diversity of ecosystems
- 👉 A living cultural heritage
- 👉 The rich history of the Silk Road

### Barometer

Encounter



Spirituality



Culture



Walk



Driving time



Adventure



Comfort



Immersion



Nature





## Practical information

- 🕒 **Age & public** : For solo travellers, small groups or families with children from 8 years old
- 🕒 **Duration** : 15 days with flights
- 🕒 **Dates & travel periods** : May to late September, on the date of your choice
- 🕒 **Number of travellers** : 2 to 8 travellers (solo travellers and groups from 9+ travellers: on request)
- 🕒 **Travel package** : Nature, history, and culture ("Discovery" package)
- 🕒 **Regions & landscapes** : Countrysides, deserts, forests, mountains, beaches...
- 🕒 **Accommodation** : Yurts, camps, sleeper trains, home stays and hotels
- 🕒 **Transport** : Private transport (4x4 vehicle) + sleeper train
- 🕒 **Luggage handling** : None (luggage carried by the vehicle)

## Program

**Legend: B L D** = meals included in the price of the trip (**B**reakfast, **L**unch and **D**iner)

**Note** : the outline of this program (steps, activities, etc.) is given for information purposes only. It may undergo modifications or adjustments depending on technical criteria, safety requirements, current climatic conditions and availability. Our guides always do everything possible to make the best possible decisions and options.

### little note :

Tout voyage qui sort des sentiers battus comporte parfois des événements imprévus (grève, route coupée, fête locale...) ; votre capacité d'adaptation aux conditions locales (transports, nourriture, hébergements, imprévus, aléas climatiques), comme à des événements inattendus sera aussi une clé à la réussite de votre voyage. Nous comptons sur vous pour avoir un esprit délibérément « positif » et ne jamais oublier votre sens de l'humour. Nous vous souhaitons un très beau et riche voyage .

### Day 1: Aktau Airport (Meals: —; transport: 30 minutes)

Upon your arrival at Aktau Airport, you will be warmly welcomed by our local team. We then transfer to our seaside hotel for a well-deserved rest.

After lunch on the terrace overlooking the Caspian Sea, the afternoon is dedicated to a pleasant guided walk along Aktau's coastline, known as the "Promenade des Anglais." It's the perfect opportunity to soak up the peaceful atmosphere of this coastal town and discover its unexpected charms.

Overnight stay at a beachfront hotel.

### Day 2: Zhygylgan, Sultan-epe, Shakpak-ata & Kapamsai (Meals: BLD; transport: 3 hours)

On this first day of safari, we set out to explore the Zhygylgan Gorge, also known as the "Collapsed Land": an impressive circular depression formed by a massive landslide. Once there, we discover rock paintings, mysterious caves, and fossilised footprints.

We continue to the Sultan-Epe necropolis, dedicated to the patron saint of fishermen and sailors, a disciple of the Sufi poet Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, whose mausoleum is in Turkestan. The visit goes on to the Shakpak-Ata Mosque, carved into the rock and once a site for healing rituals and Sufi dances.

Late in the day, we make our way to Kapamsai Canyon, a spectacular site where the white cliffs dating from the Cretaceous period contrast strikingly with lush greenery, creating a breathtaking backdrop.

Note: The order of visits may vary depending on weather conditions and the season, to ensure your comfort and safety.

Overnight stay in a yurt.

### **Day 3: Torysh, Kokala, Sherkala & Airakty** (Meals: BLD; transport: 2 hours)

This morning, we set out to explore the Torysh Valley, nicknamed the “Valley of Stone Balls.” This remarkable site is home to strange spherical rock formations, resembling giant dinosaur eggs, sparking both curiosity and wonder.

We continue on to Kokala Gorge, where the multicoloured geological strata reveal layers dating back to the Jurassic period.

The day continues with a visit to Mount Serkala, one of the symbols of Mangystau. Its striking silhouette, often likened to a yurt or a lion, along with its natural hues, make it a remarkable place.

Finally, we reach the Airakty site, where steep cliffs resemble natural fortresses. A magnificent panorama to conclude this day full of contrasts.

Overnight stay in a yurt.

### **Day 4: Mount Karadermen & Tuzbair Salt Lake** (Meals: BLD; transport: 2 hours)

We begin the day by discovering the remarkable stone mushrooms characteristic of Mount Karadermen. We then continue to our main destination: Tuzbair Salt Lake, a true paradise for photographers. Its vast expanses of white salt, bordered by impressive cliffs, stretch as far as the eye can see. After rain, the area transforms into a liquid mirror, spectacularly reflecting the sky.

But Tuzbair is more than just breathtaking landscapes. It's also a fossil-hunting site where remnants of marine life from the ancient Tethys Ocean can be found. Its ecosystem is home to camels, wild horses, and the rare saiga antelope.

Overnight stay in a tent.

### **Day 5: Bozzhira & Tiramisu Canyon** (Meals: BL-; transport: 3 hours 30 minutes)

On this final day of the safari, new spectacular landscapes await us. We begin at Bozzhira, a true gem of Mangystau. Located at the western edge of the Ustyurt Plateau, it is famed for its dizzying limestone cliffs, reaching up to 250 metres in height, sculpted over millennia. The site also hosts numerous marine fossils. Three exceptional viewpoints are to be discovered here: the Martian Panorama, the Dragon's Ridge, and the Fang Formation.

We then continue to Kyzylkup Canyon, nicknamed “Tiramisu,” a striking landscape of hills striped in red and white stretching endlessly across the steppe. Its shapes and colours evoke the scenery of another planet. After this final immersion in Kazakhstan's vast wilderness, we make our way back to Aktau, marking the end of our adventure.

Overnight at the hotel.

### **Day 6: Departure for Almaty** (Meals: B-; transport: 3-hour flight)

According to the cultural programme, it is possible to attend an opera, ballet or traditional music concert (optional and not included).

We set off for Almaty, the true cultural heart of Kazakhstan. Nestled at the foot of the majestic Tian Shan mountains, Almaty—originally named “Almaly,” meaning “apple orchard” in Kazakh—is the country's largest city. Both modern and deeply rooted in tradition, the city enchants with its wide boulevards, shaded parks, and spectacular views of the surrounding peaks.

Almaty captivates with its vibrant urban life as much as its closeness to nature. From colourful markets and museums to contemporary cafés and mountain getaways, it offers the perfect balance between culture and escape. An ideal

stop for travellers seeking authenticity and contrasts.

Overnight at the hotel.

**Day 7: Visit of Almaty** (Meals: B- ; transport: 30 minutes)

We set out to explore Almaty's city centre, beginning with Kok Bazar, an iconic market bursting with colours, scents, and local specialties. This vibrant place reflects Kazakhstan's rich cultural diversity, home to nearly 130 ethnic groups. Next, we visit the Park of 28 Panfilov, a tribute to Kazakh soldiers of the Second World War, followed by the stunning Zenkov Cathedral — an impressive wooden structure built without a single nail.

The afternoon is dedicated to the Kasteev Museum, which provides a wonderful insight into Kazakh art, blending tradition and modernity.

Later in the day, we head up to Kok Tobe hill to enjoy panoramic views over the city, followed by a dinner with a view.

Overnight at the hotel.

**Day 8: Altyn Emel National Park - Singing Dune** (Meals: B-D; transport: 1 hour)

Today, we set out to explore Altyn Emel National Park, located about 250 km from Almaty. This vast natural reserve, one of Kazakhstan's most spectacular, reveals a great diversity of landscapes, from arid mountains and steppes to rolling dunes.

One of the park's most fascinating sights is the famous Singing Dune — a sand formation that produces an astonishing humming sound, much like an organ or drum, when the wind blows. This rare acoustic phenomenon has intrigued visitors for generations.

The park is also a sanctuary for a variety of wildlife: goitered gazelles, Przewalski's horses, wild donkeys, and numerous birds of prey all find a protected habitat here.

At the end of the day, we make our way to the village of Basshi, located at the park's entrance, where we'll spend the night in a welcoming family guesthouse.

Overnight stay with a local family.

**Day 9: Altyn Emel National Park - Mounts Aktaou** (Meals: BLD; transport: 4 hours 30 minutes)

We begin the day with a stroll through the heart of the colourful Aktaou Mountains, featuring stunning layers of clay and sandstone in shades ranging from white to red. This unique landscape bears witness to an ancient seabed.

We then leave Altyn Emel National Park to explore the Bestamak and Moon Canyons, remarkable for their erosion-sculpted formations and ever-changing colours.

At the end of the day, we travel to the village of Saty and settle into a traditional yurt.

Overnight stay in a yurt.

**Day 10: Kolsai Lakes** (Meals: BLD; transport: 5 hours 30 minutes)

After breakfast with our hosts, we set off to discover the Kolsai Lakes, often called the "Pearl of the Tianshan." Nestled deep within the mountains, these lakes boast intensely blue waters surrounded by coniferous forests, offering truly spectacular scenery. We begin with a stroll around the first lake, the largest and most accessible. For the more adventurous, a 3 to 4-hour hike leads to the second lake, perched over 2,200 metres above sea level, through pristine nature that's perfect for spotting local wildlife.

We return to our hosts' home at the end of the day.

Overnight stay in a yurt.

**Day 11: Kaindy Lake** (Meals: B-; transport: 6 hours)

We begin the day by exploring Lake Kaindy, nestled at 2,000 metres altitude. Born from an earthquake in 1911, this lake submerged a forest of fir trees, whose trunks still rise today from its turquoise waters, creating a mysterious and unique atmosphere.

Next, we change scenery as we explore the Charyn Canyon, often likened to the Grand Canyon due to its impressive rock formations. Known as the "Valley of Castles" for its sculpted cliffs, it offers a truly spectacular panorama. The

Charyn River, flanked by rare plant species, adds to the charm of this remarkable place.

Return to Amalty in the evening.

Overnight at the hotel.

**Day 12: Shymbulak** (Meals: B-; transport: 2-hour drive + night on a sleeper train)

Today, we head to Shymbulak, Almaty's iconic ski resort nestled in the Tian Shan mountains. A cable car ride takes us up to 3,200 metres altitude, offering breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding peaks. On the way, we fly over Medeu skating rink, one of the largest outdoor ice rinks in the world, perched at 1,700 metres and celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. We then descend to Medeu for lunch at the Auyl restaurant, where modern Kazakh cuisine, inspired by nomadic traditions, is served in an elegant setting with mountain views.

Late in the day, we board the sleeper train to Shymkent. It's the perfect opportunity to admire the sunset over the steppe and enjoy a convivial moment sharing tea in the dining carriage.

Overnight on a sleeper train.

**Day 13: Aksu Canyon - Sairam Village - Kazgurt** (Meals:—; transport: 4 hours 30 minutes)

We continue our journey to Sairam, formerly known as Ispidahab. Founded as a military fortress in the 9th and 10th centuries, this city was once one of the most beautiful Eastern cities, nicknamed "The White City." It held a strategic position as a starting point for the Kazakh sector of the Silk Road. Merchants from Bukhara, Merv and Samarkand had their own caravanserais here, highlighting its key role as a trading crossroads. We visit the mausoleum of Abd al Aziz Bab, a revered figure for his role in spreading Sufi spirituality in the region, as well as the minaret of the Prophet Khizr's mosque.

Finally, we conclude our day with a visit to the summit of the sacred Kazygurt Mountain, a place of great spiritual significance.

Overnight at the hotel.

**Day 14: Otrar Oasis - Arystan Bab Sanctuary - Turkestan** (Meals: B-; transport: 4 hours 30 minutes)

We leave Shymkent for the ancient oasis of Otrar, once a major commercial and intellectual centre on the Silk Road. We explore the ruins of the mosque, palace and Sufi retreat, bearing witness to the region's rich cultural and religious past. Otrar is also known as the birthplace of Farabi, a renowned philosopher and scientist of the Islamic world.

We continue our journey by visiting the Arystanbab sanctuary, a major pilgrimage site dedicated to the spiritual master Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. The adjacent mosque, with its serene atmosphere, enhances the sacred character of this place.

Next, we head to Turkestan, where we have the opportunity to explore an ancient hammam and the underground Hilvet Mosque. The highlight of our visit is the majestic mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built in the 14th century under the patronage of Tamerlane, this monument is a true masterpiece of Islamic architecture.

At the end of the day, we return to our hotel — evening and dinner at leisure.

**Day 15: Shymkent - Airport** (Meals: B-; transport: depending on your return journey)

Today marks your final day in the country.

Depending on your flight schedule, enjoy some free time to stroll around, do any last-minute shopping, or simply relax before your final transfer to the airport.

## Prices and conditions

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**Price per person** (varies depending on the number of travellers, including adults and children)

### English-speaking guide

- 8 travellers: **€2,595 €**

- From 6 to 7 travellers: €2,995
- From 4 to 5 travellers: €3,395
- 3 travellers: €3,495
- 2 travellers: €3,995
- Solo traveller: [on request](#)

### English-speaking guide

- 8 travellers: **€2,995**
- From 6 to 7 travellers: €3,495
- From 4 to 5 travellers: €3,995
- 3 travellers: €4,495
- 2 travellers: €5,495
- Solo traveller: [on request](#)

### Supplements

- Domestic flight (*day 6*): from €150 per person depending on the period of travelling
- Single room: from €399 (8 nights in total throughout the journey)
- Transfer in case of arrival/departure at another time than the first booked: from €50 per transfer per person

### Options

- Groups from 9+ travellers: [on request](#)
- Horse ride and demonstration of equestrian games: [on request](#)
- Extension: [on request](#)
- Combined trip with Uzbekistan: [on request](#)

### Included in the price

- Trip organisation – travel booklet and itinerary booklet
- Airport transfers (round trip)
- Transport throughout the journey
- English-speaking guide and/or local guides, mountain guide
- Accommodation throughout the journey
- Entrance fees to monuments as per the programme
- Meals as mentioned in the programme
- Complete “Emotion Planet” activity programme
- Invitation to take part in relationship-based activities, a journey to the heart of oneself
- Pharmacy (*first aid*)
- Hotel and tourist taxes

### Not Included

- Everything not listed under the “Included” section, as well as any changes during your journey.
- Transport to destination: domestic and/or international flight, round-trip train...
- Carbon offsetting of your flight and travel (*on a voluntary basis*)
- Travel insurance (*highly recommended*)
- Meals not included *Budget: +/- €5-10 per person per meal*
- *If you hold a British passport, you can visit Kazakhstan without a visa for up to 30 days for business or tourism. You can make as many visa-free visits as you like, but you must not stay more than 90 days without a visa in any 180-day period.*
- Photography fees in monuments to be paid on site
- Beverages (other than water)
- Tips (*Budget: from €3 per day per traveller*)
- Personal expenses

### Contact

Discover these colorful countries, the heart & values that drive us and comments from former travelers.

**Contact person for your trip :**



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« **Emotion Planet**, the world is never far away when its men are not strangers to us. »