

## Best of Almaty Region

Price: €1,580 per person. Deposit: €500. Payment can also be made in USD or CHF.  
Single supplement available for €300 and required for solo travelers.

### Guaranteed departures in 2022 and 2023:

**4 June – 10 June 2022 | 23 July – 29 July 2022 | 27 August – 2 September 2022**

**27 May – 2 June 2023 | 22 July – 28 July 2023 | 26 August – 1 September 2023**

*Almaty is Kazakhstan's largest city and cultural heart. This charming green city is a perfect gateway in Kazakhstan. However, the highlight of this trip is not so much the city itself, but rather the natural wonders which surround it. Almaty Region is the most popular travel destination in Kazakhstan, and for good reason. The mighty landscapes will capture your imagination. From vividly painted canyons to alpine lakes and juniper forests on mountain slopes, the diverse countryside offers some amazingly varied scenery. On this one-week tour you will be awed by the scale and magnificence of Kazakhstan's natural environments.*



## Highlights

- Tour vibrant [Almaty](#), Kazakhstan's largest city and cultural heart
- Take the gondola to the top of Shymbulak, Almaty's extensive skiing area
- Experience the hustle and bustle of Green Bazaar, Almaty's largest and liveliest market
- Watch Kazakh horse games and experience nomadic culture first-hand
- Be wowed by the scale of Charyn Canyon
- Explore Altyn Emel National Park with its impressive geological formations
- and the curious singing dune
- Visit the stunning Kolsay and Kaindy Lakes surrounded by mountains

## Itinerary Overview

Day 1: Arrival in Almaty and city tour

Day 2: Huns Village and Lake Issyk

Day 3: Altyn Emel National Park and the singing dune

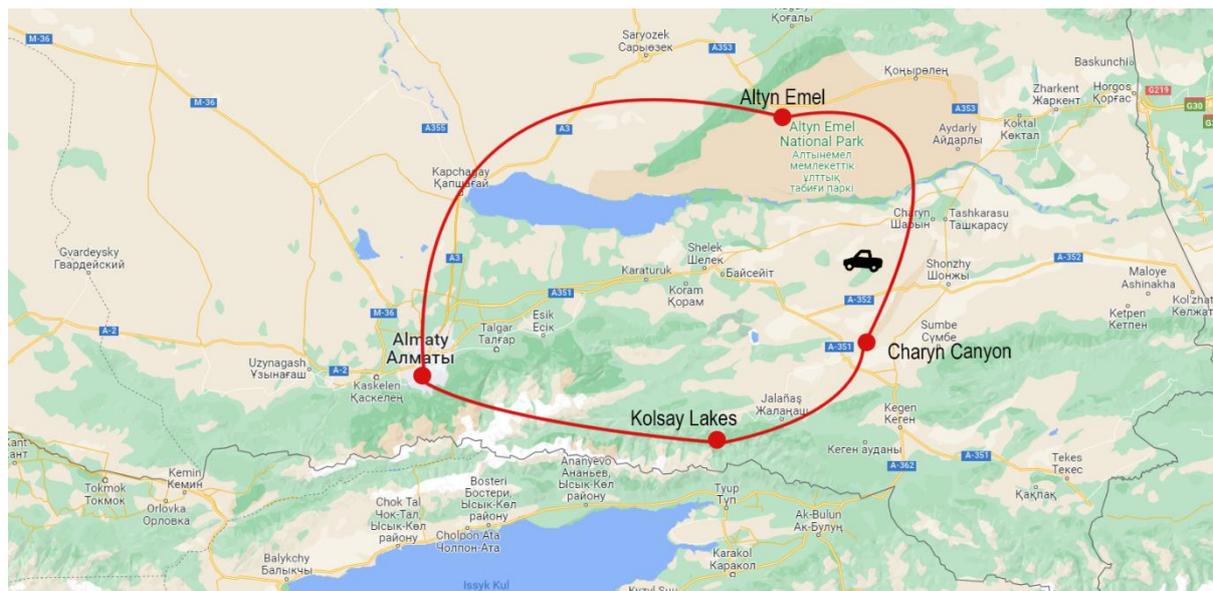
Day 4: Altyn Emel National Park, and the Aktau and Kattytau Mountains

Day 5: Charyn Canyon and Kaindy Lake

Day 6: Kolsay Lakes – Almaty

Day 7: Departure from Almaty

## Map



## Itinerary

### Day 1: Almaty Arrival and City Tour

Welcome to Kazakhstan! Most of the flights arrive early in the morning. Transfer to the hotel for immediate check-in. Have a rest after the long flight and then breakfast. Meet your fellow travelers and your guide in the late morning.

Welcome to Kazakhstan! Most flights arrive early in the morning. You will transfer to the hotel for immediate check-in. Have a rest after your long flight and then enjoy breakfast. You'll meet your fellow travelers and your guide in the hotel lobby at noon to go for lunch, followed by a relaxed half-day city tour of Almaty.

[Almaty](#) was the Kazakh capital until 1997 and it is still the largest city in Kazakhstan. Its name translates as "the place of apples" as it is believed that this is the place where apples first grew. Almaty is a charming and green city, with wide, tree-lined roads. The Zailisky Ala-Too Mountains form a dramatic backdrop to the city.

First you will take a cable car to reach one of the main landmarks of Almaty, the Shymbulak ski resort, where you will enjoy wonderful views of the Ili Alatau Mountains. On the way to the ski resort you will pass the legendary Medeo skating rink. It is located in the picturesque Medeo Gorge at an altitude of 1,600 m and it is one of the largest and highest ice rinks in the world. Another cable car will bring you to the top of the ski resort (3,200 m). It will be a bit cold and windy, so make sure you bring a warm jacket. After enjoying the mountains views, you'll drive back to the city for lunch and a short city tour.

Panfilov Park, which is named after World War II General Panfilov. An impressive monument has been erected in the center of the park in honor of Panfilov's division. Almaty's most famous sight, the wooden Zenkov Cathedral built in 1904, is situated in Panfilov Park as well.

At Green Bazaar, you will have the chance to experience local Kazakh culture as you shop for fresh fruits and vegetables. After the market, you will take the cable car to Kok Tobe, a hilltop overlooking the city which offers panoramic views.

*Overnight in the Novotel (4\*) or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### Day 2: Hunns Village and Issyk Lake

Breakfast will be at the hotel. Today you will immerse yourself in Kazakh culture, learning about traditions and rituals in the Huns ethno-village, about one hour's drive from Almaty.

On arrival you'll be welcomed by hostesses greeting you with a national ritual called Shashu. It involves showering guests with sweets, as Kazakhs do during wedding ceremonies. The sweets must be picked up and kept, as Kazakhs believe they will bring good luck in the future.

At Huns you will learn how to bake puffy Kazakh bread, see the construction of a Kazakh yurt, and be a spectator at performance of national horse games. The games include Jigitovka (horseback riding with acrobatic elements), Atpen audaryspak (jostling and pushing a rival whilst on horseback) and Kyz kuu, where a boy chases a girl on horseback. If he catches her he will be rewarded with a kiss; but if he fails, she can lash him! After the show you will have a delicious lunch of national cuisine.

In the afternoon, you will drive a bit further to Issyk, a postcard-perfect mountain lake at an altitude of 1,756 m above sea level, which is located within a gorge of the same name. Lying along the Kuldja tract, where hundreds of years ago merchants' caravans passed through, the gorge is atmospheric and visually striking. You will then drive back to Almaty in time for dinner.

*Overnight in the Novotel (4\*) or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 3: Altyn Emel National Park**

Your guide and driver will meet you in the hotel lobby at 9 am to drive to Altyn-Emel National Park. You will arrive in the park in time for lunch.

The first place to visit is so-called Singing Dune, tuned up in the middle of the steppe. It rises about 150 m and stretches for a distance of 2-3 km. How did sand dunes appear in the vast steppe? How does this dune make its organ-like song? Your guide will explain all! If you have never climbed a dune before, now is your chance. Here you will have plenty of time for hiking, taking magnificent photos, and enjoying the amazing panoramic views.

In the evening you will drive to your hotel in the village of Basshi and have dinner.

*Overnight in the simple Altyn Emel Hotel*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 4: Altyn Emel National Park, Aktau and Kattyttau Mountains**

In the early morning you will have breakfast at the hotel. It is then time to depart for the Aktau Mountains, a natural museum of the Earth's distant past. Fantastically-shaped natural sculptures rise from the bottom of an ancient sea in all the colors of the rainbow, from the pale blue of the lunar landscape to red mountains. These mountains are 30 km long, 1.5-2 km high, and 400 million years old. The drive from the hotel to the mountains will take around 1.5 hours. On arrival you will unpack a delicious picnic lunch and enjoy it on the side of the mountain.

The next place you will visit is the incredible Katutau Mountains, which were formed from lava and associated volcanic rocks. Time, water, and the sunlight have created intricately weathered rock formations here. Snap photos as your guide explains the origin of such a fanciful landscape and then drive back to your hotel.

*Overnight in the simple Altyn Emel Hotel*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 5: Charyn Canyon and Kaindy Lake**

Early breakfast will be served in Basshi. There is then a long and exciting day in front of you. After 2.5 hours of driving you will arrive at the Bestamak and Moon Canyon part of the Charyn Canyon. You'll descend to see amazing stone architecture and have a picnic on the bank of the Charyn River.

After spending around three hours in the canyon you will leave and drive to Satty, which is the closest village to the lakes. The main attraction here is the unusual and mysterious Kaindy Lake (Birch Lake), which is located at an altitude of 2,000 m above sea level.

Kaindy Lake formed as the result of a huge landslide after a powerful earthquake in 1911. The landslide blocked the river and the water flooded the valley. That is which Tien Shan fir trees appear out in the middle of the lake. The water is very cold, so the needles of the flooded trees are well preserved and clearly visible beneath the transparent surface. The dry tree trunks stand like towers. It is impossible to describe in words mystical splendor of this lake – it is necessary to go there and see everything with your own eyes.

In the evening you will leave Kaindy Lake and drive to Satty, where a hearty dinner will await you at the hotel.

*Overnight in a simple hotel near Satty*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 6: Kolsay Lakes – Almaty**

Today you are able to choose from two options.

Active option: If you would like to challenge yourself with a mountain hike, get up early and you will drive to the first Kolsai Lake (15km, 30 min) and start hiking to the second lake. Hiking takes around three hours to get up and two hours to go down (16 km in total). You will start hiking at 7:00 am and will return to the starting point around 1:00 pm.

Comfortable option: After a leisurely breakfast, enjoy some free time in the village before driving to the first Kolsai Lake (15 km, 30 min). Here you will be able to admire the mountain scenery and take a boat ride. If you don't mind the cold water you can also have a bracing swim!

Everybody will rendezvous for a picnic lunch at the first Kolsai Lake and we will then drive back to Almaty (c. 4 hours) in the afternoon. Here there will be a farewell dinner.

*Overnight in the Novotel (4\*) or similar*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Day 7: Departure from Almaty**

Individual transfers to the airport will be scheduled according to the departure time of your flight.

*Meals: Breakfast*

### Price includes

- Transfers in a comfortable vehicle with A/C, including airport collection and drop-off
- Accommodation based on two people sharing a double/twin room, including early check-in on Day 1
- Full board (all breakfasts, lunches, and dinners)
- English-speaking local tour leader throughout the whole trip
- All entry fees and activities as per the itinerary

### Price does not include

- International air fares to and from Kazakhstan
- Hotel charges for additional services
- Consular fees for tourist visas (if applicable)
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses (e.g. souvenirs)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tips for guide and drivers (optional)

### Important notes:

- Citizens of most countries can visit Kazakhstan visa-free
- All listed departures are guaranteed
- The maximum group size is 16 people
- One English-speaking local tour leader will accompany the group for the whole trip
- You can opt to book this itinerary as a private tour. We can also arrange extra nights before or after the trip, and suggest private tour extensions in Kazakhstan or neighboring countries.
- A €500 per person deposit is required at the time of booking, and the balance is due 15 days prior to departure. Terms and conditions: <https://kalpak-travel.com/terms-and-conditions/>.
- Travel insurance is required
- We are happy to suggest flights to get to Kazakhstan and back home: please contact us