

Best of Kazakhstan Tour

Price: €2,160 per person. Deposit: €500. Payment can also be made in USD or CHF.
Single supplement available for €500 and required for solo travelers.

Guaranteed departures in 2022 and 2023:

22 May – 29 May 2022 | 28 August – 4 September 2022

14 May – 21 May 2023 | 4 June – 11 June 2023 | 27 August – 3 September 2023

Kazakhstan is a country in flux, where long-held traditions are still valued alongside modern practices. The historic, Soviet, and modern cities exhibit a broad range of architectural styles and cultural influences. Kazakhstan's abundant oil and mineral reserves have financed bold urban landscapes with buildings by world-famous architects, but even as the skylines change day by day, Kazakhstan has not lost sight of its nomadic roots. Visitors are still assured the warm welcome which has characterized the nation's attitude to guests for centuries.

Kalpak Travel's "Best of Kazakhstan" tour takes you around the country in one week – from Soviet Almaty via Turkistan and the ancient capital of Otrar, to the eclectic modern capital, Nur-Sultan. In addition to dramatic landscapes and the attractions of the great Silk Road, you will experience nomadic culture first-hand at the Huns ethno-village, meet Kazakhstan's master craftsmen, and enjoy spectacular mountain views at Lake Issyk. You will stay in 4 hotels throughout the tour, and transfer between cities on convenient domestic flights.*



Highlights

- Visit [Nur-Sultan](#), Kazakhstan's capital since 1997, with its impressive skyline of buildings designed by celebrity architects like Kisho Kurokawa and Norman Foster
- Tour vibrant [Almaty](#), Kazakhstan's largest city and cultural heart, with its colorful Zenkov Cathedral and bustling Green Bazaar
- Explore Kazakhstan's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, the recently renovated Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasavi in Turkestan
- Immerse yourself in Kazakh culture, including nomadic traditions and thrilling horse games
- Discover the scenic mountain lake of Issyk, where the water is so clear you can see to depths of 10m
- Take the gondola to the top of Shymbulak, Almaty's fantastic ski area, for superb views of the Northern Tian Shan and the city
- See the ghostly ruins of Otrar and learn about the history of this once important Silk Road city

Itinerary Overview

Day 1: Arrival in Almaty and city tour

Day 2: Almaty and Shymbulak

Day 3: Huns ethno-village and Lake Issyk

Day 4: Almaty – Turkistan (flight); Otrar and Arystanbab

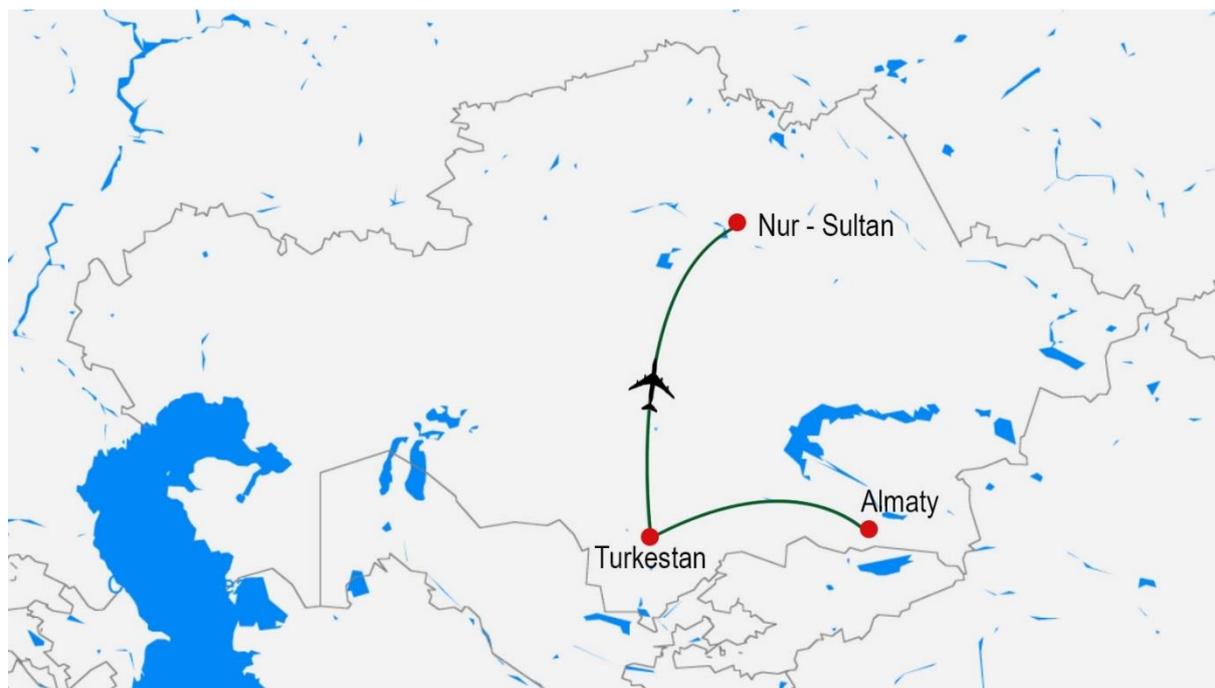
Day 5: Turkistan – Nur-Sultan (flight)

Day 6: Nur-Sultan city tour

Day 7: Nur-Sultan city tour

Day 8: Departure from Nur-Sultan

Map



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Almaty and City Tour

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.

Today you will visit 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: Almaty and Shymbulak

You will meet your guide in the hotel lobby after breakfast and then head to the studio of a local artisan. Here you will learn about ancient nomadic ornaments and make your own little piece of a Kazakh national quilt.

After this masterclass, 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. You will have lunch here on the summer terrace of a Kazakh restaurant at an altitude of 2,260 m.

After lunch you will take another cable car and continue 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 taking in more mountain views, you will drive back into the city for a walk along shady Terrenkur, a delightful path along the Little Almatinka. It is one of the most popular places for locals, where Almaty's residents come to exercise or simply enjoy a stroll.

Overnight in the Novotel (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3: Huns Village and Lake Issyk

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 4: Almaty – Turkistan (flight); Otrar and Arystanbab

After having breakfast and checking-out from the hotel, you will drive to the airport to catch the flight to Turkestan at 10:15. The flight takes around 1.5 hours.

Turkistan is the Spiritual Capital of the Turkic World and has long been a place of pilgrimage. You will have lunch on arrival and then drive through the scenery of South Kazakhstan to Otrar, also known as Farab, which was one of the biggest cities on the Silk Road. Located at the junction of many caravan routes, Otrar, was a significant center of culture and trade. Its history dates back 2,000 years, and the surviving ruins include a fortress and remains of a once densely populated town.

After Otrar you will visit the Mausoleum of Arystanbab. He was the spiritual teacher of Khodja Ahmed Yassavi, whose mausoleum you will visit on Day 5.

In the early evening you will return to Turkistan. The city has undergone major changes during the last couple of years, and it has become the center of tourism in Southern Kazakhstan. You will have time to walk around the newest Karavan-Saray complex and watch a multimedia show to finish a long but interesting day.

Overnight in the Karavanserai Khaganate (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: Turkistan – Nur-Sultan (flight)

After breakfast you will have a full day of sightseeing at the Azret-Sultan Museum Reserve, which surrounds the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. You will begin by visiting the necropolis, a fragment of the fortress wall, the citadel and gates, the hammam, and the Hilvet underground mosque.

Turkistan was founded around 500 AD at the crossroads of caravan routes from Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva. The city was the spiritual and political center of Turkic-speaking peoples from the 16th to 18th centuries, and it was also the capital of the Kazakh Khanate. Turkistan gained its international reputation thanks to the preaching of the famous Sufi sheikh and philosopher Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, who was buried in a small mausoleum here in 1166. The current mausoleum was erected 233 years

after the saint's death, on the orders of Emperor Timur (Tamerlane). It is a masterpiece of medieval architecture and remains a major place of worship for Central Asian Muslims.

After lunch you will finish your museum tour and then transfer to the airport to catch the flight to Nur-Sultan at 6:15 pm. Upon arrival at 7:55 pm, you will drive into the city center and have dinner. Your hotel in Nur-Sultan is located right next to the iconic Baiterek Tower.

Overnight in the Sheraton (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6: Nur-Sultan City Tour

[Nur-Sultan](#) (previously named Astana) is Central Asia's youngest capital and a showpiece for 21st century Kazakhstan. Talented, well-known architects from all over the world have made major contributions to the surreal skyline of this futuristic city in the steppe.

Your city tour will start at Independence Square. You will visit the impressive new National Museum. It has a huge collection, but your guide will focus on the most interesting rooms, including those exhibiting the Scythian gold hoards and, most importantly, the Golden Man. You will then have a stop at the Hazrat Sultan Mosque, the largest mosque in Kazakhstan.

After lunch you'll drive to Baiterek Tower in the very center of Nur-Sultan. The tower has become the symbol of the city. Its shape represents a poplar tree, and on its top is a golden egg laid by a magic bird from Kazakh folk tales. From the top of the tower you can enjoy the best views of Nur-Sultan and the surrounding steppe. You will then have a walk along Nurzhol Boulevard. This avenue was designed by Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa, and most of Nur-Sultan's most exciting contemporary buildings are situated here. The walk will end at the Khan Shatyr, a giant, tent-like shopping center designed by architect Norman Foster.

Overnight in the Sheraton (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7: Nur-Sultan City Tour

Today will be your last day in Kazakhstan. You will visit the futuristic Expo 2017 complex which boasts the biggest spherical building in the world, the Nur Alem Museum of the Energy. It was originally the Kazakh Pavilion. After this you will take a boat ride on the Ishim River, followed by a relaxed wander through Arbat, the artistic area of the capital.

Before our farewell dinner you will have some free time for shopping, to have a rest, or to further explore the city on your own.

Overnight in the Sheraton (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: Departure from Nur-Sultan

Your individual transfer to the airport will be timed according to the departure of your flight.

Meals: Breakfast

Price includes

- Transfers in a comfortable vehicle with A/C, including airport collection and drop-off
- Economy class domestic flights from Almaty-Turkistan and Turkistan-Nur-Sultan
- Accommodation based on two people sharing a double/twin room and early check-in on Day 1
- Full board (all breakfasts, lunches, and dinners)
- English-speaking local tour leader for 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