

BEST OF KAZAKHSTAN TOUR

Price: €2,180 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:

- **11 May – 20 May 2022**
- **8 June – 17 June 2022**
- **21 September – 30 September 2022**

Kazakhstan is a country in the flux of change, where long-held traditions are still valued alongside modern practices. Here, historic, Soviet, and modern cities combine to create a timeless atmosphere. The country's abundant oil and mineral reserves have financed bold urban landscapes with buildings by world-famous architects, yet Kazakhstan has not lost sight of its nomadic roots, assuring visitors of the warm welcome which has characterized this nation's attitude to guests for centuries.

Beyond the urban settlements, Kazakhstan's mighty landscapes will capture both your imagination and your heart. From vividly painted canyons to alpine lakes and juniper forests on mountain slopes, the diverse countryside offers some of the most beautiful scenery in the region. Every drive, walk, or plane ride is another opportunity to be awed by the scale and magnificence of Kazakhstan's natural environments.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit [Nur-Sultan](#), the capital of Kazakhstan since 1997, with its skyline of buildings by celebrity architects
- Tour vibrant [Almaty](#), Kazakhstan's largest city and cultural heart
- Explore the remote region of Mangystau with its impressive geological formations
- Camp overnight on the salt pan at Tuzbair
- Walk along the shore of the Caspian Sea on the beach promenade in Aktau
- Be wowed by Charyn Canyon
- Experience the hustle and bustle of Green Bazaar in Almaty

ITINERARY OVERVIEW

Day 1: Nur-Sultan Arrival & City Tour

Day 2: Nur-Sultan City Tour – Aktau (flight)

Day 3: Mangystau Offroad Tour: Aktau – Valley of Balls – Sherkala – Tuzbair

Day 4: Mangystau Offroad Tour: Tuzbair Valley – Boszhira Valley

Day 5: Mangystau Offroad Tour: Boszhira – Aktau

Day 6: Aktau City Tour – Almaty (flight)

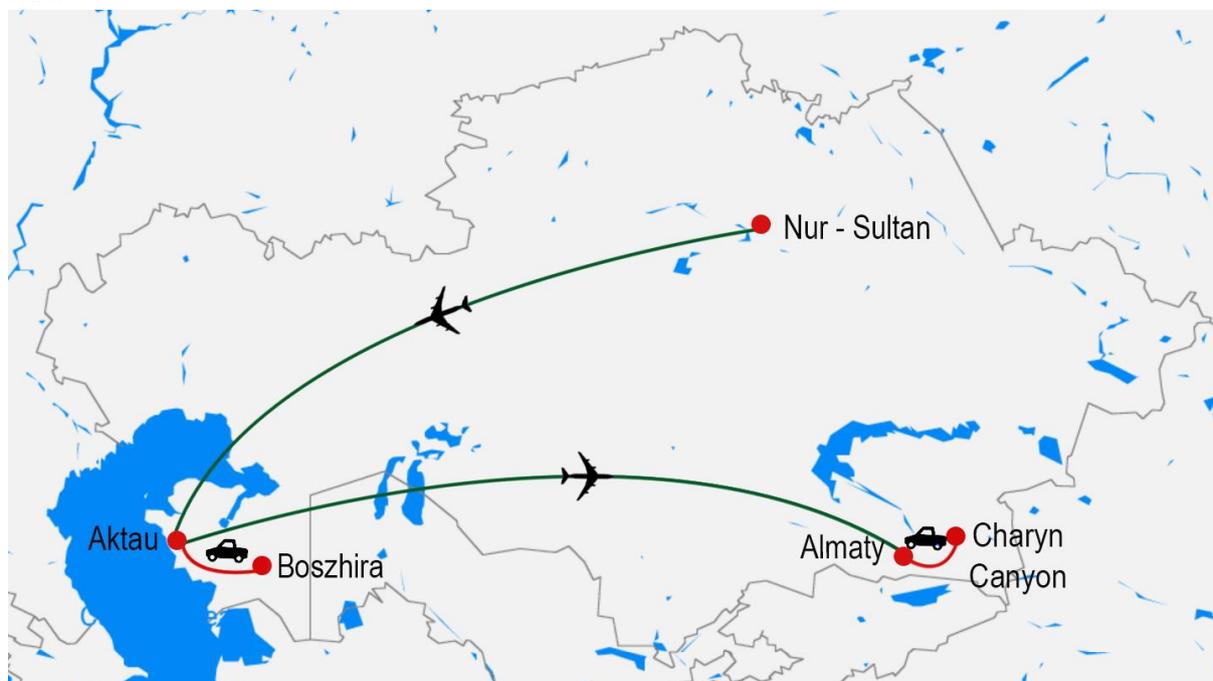
Day 7: Almaty – Charyn Canyon – Kaindy Lake – Satty (300km, c. 5-6h)

Day 8: Satty - Kolsay Lakes – Almaty (300 km, c. 5-6h)

Day 9: Almaty City Tour

Day 10: Almaty Departure

MAP



ITINERARY

Day 1: Nur-Sultan Arrival & City Tour

Welcome to Central Asia and 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 hotel lobby at 1:00 pm to start the city tour.

[Nur-Sultan](#) (previously named Astana) is Central Asia's youngest capital and a showpiece for 21st century Kazakhstan. Talented and well-known architects have made major contributions to the surreal skyline of this futuristic city in the steppe. We will start our city tour with a relaxed stroll along the main street of Nur-Sultan, Nurzhol Boulevard, which was designed by Kisho Kurokawa. From the Ak Orda Presidential Palace, we will continue to Baiterek Tower and then finish at the Khan Shatyr shopping mall, a giant, tent-like structure designed by Norman Foster. After this walk, we will have a welcome dinner in a traditional Kazakh restaurant.

Overnight at the Hilton Garden Inn (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 2: Nur-Sultan City Tour – Aktau (flight)

After breakfast, today's city tour will begin at the Independence Monument, where the guide will talk about Kazakhstan's long journey to independence. Next, we will visit the National Museum to learn more about the country's rich history. The biggest collection of Scythian gold is exhibited here, as well as displays about the heritage of the mysterious Scythian Empire. From the museum, we will continue to Kazakhstan's main mosque, Hazret Sultan. After lunch, we will visit the futuristic Expo 2017 complex, which has the biggest spherical building in the world, the Nur-Alem Museum of the Future. Before its transformation into a museum, the building was the Kazakh Pavilion during the Expo.

In the late afternoon, we will transfer to the airport to catch the domestic Air Astana flight to Aktau, departing at 6:15 pm. Upon arrival in Aktau at 8:10 pm we will have dinner and then check-in at a comfortable hotel for a good night's rest.

Overnight at the Holiday Inn (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3: Aktau – Valley of Balls – Sherkala – Tuzbair Valley

Would you like to walk on the bottom of the ocean? There is a place on Earth where you can wander for days on what was once the bed of the ancient ocean, rarely meeting another tourist. It is one of the best-protected nature reserves, since its topography and the absence of infrastructure condemn visitors to travel hundreds of kilometers by jeep, something only very few visitors will attempt. This place is the Ustyurt Plateau, 200,000 square kilometers (77,000 square miles) of clay and stony desert divided between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Its main eastern boundary is the Aral Sea, and on the west, it borders with the Mangyshlak Peninsula on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. The Ustyurt Reserve was established in 1984 and it includes monumentally eroded rock cathedrals on the western edge of the plateau. It's one of the largest geomorphological features of the Earth's surface and clearly visible from space.

Today marks the start of our three days off-road trip to the Ustyurt Plateau. You will see some of the most fascinating and dramatic landscapes on the planet, but should be prepared for rough roads and two nights of wild camping.

We will depart in the early morning departure from Aktau in 4WD cars (2-3 people per car). Our first stop is the Valley of Balls, where ferromanganese nodules are scattered across the plateau-like huge billiard balls. They were formed at the bottom of the sea, but as they were more resistant to weathering, they remained on the surface while other limestone and dolomites were eroded by water.

After walking in the valley, we will continue to Sherkala, the name of which translates as the Lion's Castle. It's a giant, impregnable mountain in the kingdom of the desert. We will visit the spectacular Airakty Shomanay Mountains, and then finish the long day in the fantastic Tuzbair Valley, a place of pure beauty with three striking colors: white (salt, clay), blue (sky), and brown (soil). We will spend the night in tents under the bright stars with hot tea and a freshly-made dinner.

Overnight in tents

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4: Tuzbair Valley – Boszhira Valley

Our second day of this offroad trip will start with a magical sunrise over the Tuzbair Valley (only if you like to get up early, of course!). We will have a leisurely breakfast and then drive to the dramatic Boszhira Valley, making photo-stops on the way at the most breath-taking viewpoints. Lunch will be served somewhere en route when you have built up an appetite for an open-air meal. We will reach Boszhira before sunset, which is the best time of day to capture beautiful photos. In the evening there will be another delicious dinner and a good night's sleep under canvas and the starry sky.

Overnight in tents

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: Boszhira - Aktau

After breakfast, you can climb up the hill for impressive views and a good stretch of your legs, or just relax for a while and admire the landscape. We will then drive to an amazing viewpoint nearby, looking out on an expansive desert of white clay which stretches for hundreds of kilometers and is punctuated by two sharp stone formations called the Boszhira Tusks. You can stand on the edge of this dangerously-high precipice regarding an other-worldly panorama. Afterward, we will drive back to Aktau city, seeing working oil-pumps near Zhana-Ozen and driving through the Karagie Depression (the lowest point in Central Asia, at an altitude of 132 meters below sea level) on the way. We will reach Atyrau in the late evening, where you can enjoy a well-deserved rest in your hotel room.

Overnight at the Holiday Inn (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6: Aktau – Almaty (flight)

After breakfast, we will explore the city of Aktau, located on the shore of the Caspian Sea. We will drive through the city and have a walk on the modern promenade alongside the beach. In the early afternoon, we will take the domestic flight to Almaty (1:55 pm – 5:55 pm, a three-hour flight with one hour's time difference). We will then transfer to the hotel in the city center and dine in a restaurant next to the hotel.

Overnight at the Novotel (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 7: Almaty – Charyn Canyon – Kaindy Lake – Satty

There is a long and exciting day in front of you! After three hours of driving, we will arrive at Charyn Canyon. It is one of Kazakhstan's most unique natural monuments. The canyon is about 12 million years old and its dramatic vertical cliffs are reminiscent of ancient castles, albeit ones created by wind, sun, and rain. We will walk around 3 km down to the Charyn River where we will have a picnic on the riverbank. After taking time to relax we will then re-ascend to the rim of the canyon, which will take around one hour. We will then drive on to the village of Satty, and from there to Kaindy Lake. The last 30 minutes of this journey is offroad.

The unusual and someone mysterious-looking Kaindy Lake (Birch Lake) is located at an altitude of 2,000 meters above sea level. It was formed after a powerful earthquake in 1911 when a huge landslide blocked the river and the water flooded the valley. This is why there are Tien Shan fir trees in the middle of the lake. The water of the lake is very cold. This preserves the needles of the flooded trees and leaves them clearly visible through the transparent water. Trees' dry trunks stand out above the surface of the lake.

In the evening we will leave Kaindy Lake and drive back to Satty village, where we will have a hearty dinner and stay the night at the guesthouse of the local family.

Overnight in family-run guesthouse (shared bathroom facilities)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8: Satty - Kolsay Lakes – Almaty

Today you will choose from two options.

Active option: If you would like to challenge yourself with a mountain hike, get up early and we 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). We 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 and before we drive 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. You will dine independently in Almaty.

Overnight the Novotel (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9: Almaty City Tour

The last two days will have been quite active, with lots of driving and hiking. Today we will slow down and enjoy [Almaty](#) on a relaxed half-day city tour. Almaty was the Kazakh capital until 1997 and is still the largest city in Kazakhstan. Its name translates as "the place of apples" as it is believed this is the place where apples first grew. Almaty is a charming and green city, with wide, tree-lined roads and the Zailisky Ala-Too Mountains forming the backdrop to the city.

Today we 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 explore local Kazakh culture as you shop for fresh fruits and vegetables. After the market, we will take the cablecar to Kok Tobe, a hilltop overlooking the city

with panoramic views. The rest of the day will be spent at leisure: you might want to join the guide at the museum or head up to the Shymbulak ski resort above Almaty to enjoy more mountain scenery and fresh air.

Kazakhstan is a multicultural country with more than 130 ethnicities living peacefully together. We will have our farewell dinner for Kazakhstan in a Georgian restaurant.

Overnight in the Novotel (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10: Almaty Departure

On the final morning, you will transfer to the airport at an appropriate time to catch your flight back home.

Meals: Breakfast

Price includes

- All transfers, including airport collection and drop-off
- Accommodation based on two people sharing a double/twin room, with breakfasts included
- Full board (all lunches and dinners) on most days, except where mentioned in the itinerary
- English speaking local accompanying tour leader during the whole trip
- All entry fees & 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
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses (e.g. souvenirs etc)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tips for guides and drivers (optional)

Important notes:

- All listed departures are guaranteed
- The maximum group size is 16 people
- One tour leader will accompany the group for the whole trip
- You can opt to book the whole 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.
- Citizens of most countries do not need a visa to visit Kazakhstan
- A €500 per person deposit is required at the time of booking, and the balance is due 15 days prior to departure. Terms & 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