

# **World66's guide to Kazakhstan**

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# Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is a country in Central Asia. It borders on Russia , China , Uzbekistan , Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan .

It is a beautiful country; however, it is yet undiscovered by tourists. It is the 9th largest country of the world with a little over 16 million people and a lot of places to visit. Those who might be interested in travelling to Kazakhstan should be able to understand its natural beauty, because even though its history is over a thousand years, the nomadic people of Kazakhstan have not left a lot of material evidence of their culture. Their culture, though, has been preserved in their folklore and traditions. I am sure that tourism to Kazakhstan should become more popular within several years, the outdoors lovers will be able to appreciate all the wonderful things that Kazakhstan has to offer.

The old capital city of Almaty – a word, according to the most popular explanation, derived from "alma" (apple) – is a place most visited. It is a laid back city, with a nice atmosphere. From Almaty you can make excursions into the picturesque mountains nearby or visit the skating rink – one of the fastest outdoor tracks in the world.

The new capital of Astana is not yet a true capital. It is situated in the windy steppes of the northern part of the country, and its climate is not very inviting.

## Kazakhstan – History

is the precursor of the present-day clan which is still an important element of Kazak society—see Population and Society this ch.) By the early fifteenth century the ruling structure had split into several large groups known as khanates including the Nogai Horde and the Uzbek Khanate.

*Data as of March 1996*

Source: Library of congress

## Kazakhstan – Getting There

## Kazakhstan – Books

all

**The Kazakhs**



author: Martha Brill Olcott  
isbn: 0817993525  
subject: travel

**Kazakhstan :A Faint-Hearted Democracy**

author: Martha Brill Olcott,Martha B. Olcot  
isbn: 087003099X  
subject: travel

**Kazakhstan**

author: Lerner Geography  
Department,Geography Departm..  
isbn: 0822528150  
subject: travel

**The Kazakhs**



author: Martha Brill Olcott  
isbn: 0817993525  
subject: culture

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subject: history

## Kazakhstan

author: Lerner Geography  
Department, Geography Departm..  
isbn: 0822528150  
subject: history

### **Cattle Car to Kazakhstan: A Woman Doctor's Triumph of Courage in World War II**

author: Ruzena  
Berler  
isbn: 0533127815  
subject: history

## Kazakhstan – People

**Population:** 16 846 808 (July 1998 est.)

### **Age structure:**

*0–14 years:* 29% (male 2 486 607; female 2 413 207)

*15–64 years:* 64% (male 5 243 028; female 5 523 199)

*65 years and over:* 7% (male 393 950; female 786 817) (July 1998 est.)

**Population growth rate:** –0.17% (1998 est.)

**Birth rate:** 17.24 births/1 000 population (1998 est.)

**Death rate:** 10.15 deaths/1 000 population (1998 est.)

**Net migration rate:** –8.79 migrant(s)/1 000 population (1998 est.)

### **Sex ratio:**

*at birth:* 1.05 male(s)/female

*under 15 years:* 1.03 male(s)/female

*15–64 years:* 0.95 male(s)/female

*65 years and over:* 0.5 male(s)/female (1998 est.)

***Infant mortality rate:*** 58.25 deaths/1 000 live births (1998 est.)

***Life expectancy at birth:***

*total population:* 63.59 years

*male:* 58.12 years

*female:* 69.33 years (1998 est.)

***Total fertility rate:*** 2.12 children born/woman (1998 est.)

***Nationality:***

*noun:* Kazakhstani(s)

*adjective:* Kazakhstani

***Ethnic groups:*** Kazakh (Qazaq) 46% Russian 34.7% Ukrainian 4.9% German 3.1% Uzbek 2.3% Tatar 1.9% other 7.1% (1996)

***Religions:*** Muslim 47% Russian Orthodox 44% Protestant 2% other 7%

***Languages:*** Kazakh (Qazaq) official language spoken by over 40% of population Russian official language spoken by two–thirds of population and used in everyday business

***Literacy:***

*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write

*total population:* 98%

*male:* 99%

*female:* 96% (1989 est.)

## Kazakhstan – Economy

***Economy—overview:*** Kazakhstan the second largest of the former Soviet republics in territory possesses enormous untapped fossil fuel reserves as well as plentiful supplies of other minerals and metals. It also has

considerable agricultural potential with its vast steppe lands accommodating both livestock and grain production. Kazakhstan's industrial sector rests on the extraction and processing of these natural resources and also on a relatively large machine building sector specializing in construction equipment tractors agricultural machinery and some defense items. The breakup of the USSR and the collapse of demand for Kazakhstan's traditional heavy industry products have resulted in a sharp contraction of the economy since 1991 with the steepest annual decline occurring in 1994. In 1995–97 the pace of the government program of economic reform and privatization quickened resulting in a substantial shifting of assets into the private sector. The December 1996 signing of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium agreement to build a new pipeline from western Kazakhstan's Tengiz oil field to the Black Sea increases prospects for substantially larger oil exports in several years. The emigration of large numbers of skilled Slavic managers and technicians from the northern industrial areas will hold back future growth.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity—\$50 billion (1997 est.)

**GDP—real growth rate:** 2.1% (1997 est.)

**GDP—per capita:** purchasing power parity—\$3 000 (1997 est.)

**GDP—composition by sector:**

*agriculture:* 12%

*industry:* 25%

*services:* 63% (1996 est.)

**Inflation rate—consumer price index:** 12% (1997 est.)

**Labor force:**

*total:* 6.9 million

*by occupation:* industry 27% agriculture and forestry 23% other 50% (1996)

**Unemployment rate:** 2.6% includes only officially registered unemployed; also large additional numbers of unemployed and underemployed workers (December 1996 est.)

**Budget:**

*revenues:* \$3 billion

*expenditures:* \$4.6 billion including capital expenditures of \$40 million (1996 est.)

**Industries:** oil coal iron ore manganese chromite lead zinc copper titanium bauxite gold silver phosphates sulfur iron and steel nonferrous metal tractors and other agricultural machinery electric motors construction materials; much of industrial capacity is shut down and/or is in need of repair

**Industrial production growth rate:** 3% (1997 est.)

**Electricity—capacity:** 18.9 million kW (1995)

**Electricity—production:** 61.7 billion kWh (1995)

**Electricity—consumption per capita:** 3 800 kWh (1996 est.)

**Agriculture—products:** grain mostly spring wheat cotton; wool meat

**Exports:**

*total value:* \$5.6 billion (1996)

*commodities:* oil ferrous and nonferrous metals chemicals grain wool meat coal

*partners:* Russia Ukraine Uzbekistan Netherlands China

**Imports:**

*total value:* \$6 billion (1996)

*commodities:* machinery and parts industrial materials oil and gas

*partners:* Russia Ukraine Uzbekistan Turkey Germany

**Debt—external:** \$3.3 billion (1996)

**Economic aid:**

*recipient:* ODA \$10 million (1993)

*note:* commitments 1992–95 \$4 780 million (\$1 795 million disbursements)

**Currency:** 1 Kazakhstani tenge = 100 tiyn

**Exchange rates:** tenges per US\$1—76.4 (February 1998) 75.55 (January 1998) 75.44 (1997) 67.30 (1996) 60.95 (1995) 35.54 (1994)

**Fiscal year:** calendar year

## Kazakhstan – Internet Cafes

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# Almaty

*ALMATY* (uhl–muh–TEE, former Alma–Ata) is the former capital of Kazakhstan. It is the most populated city in Kazakhstan at present. Its population is over a million people. Even though Astana (then Akmola) became the capital in 1995; Almaty is often called the Southern Capital. It can be rightfully called the most beautiful city in the country.

The history of Almaty is not very long. In comparison with other cities in Central Asia it is quite young. It was founded in 1854 by Russians in the valley of Almaty and was just a fort at first. Its name was Zailisky, then it was named Verny. In 1921 it became Alma–Ata and in 1929 it became the capital of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1993 it became Almaty.

The city is located at the foot of Tien Shan Mountains at the altitude of 700–900 meters above sea level. Unfortunately, because the city is located in a valley, smog easily accumulates here. However, a little higher in the mountains the air is crystal clear and many people have dachas (a small garden or an orchard with a small hut or a house) there. A dacha is not only a source of various fruits and vegetables, it is also a place to relax and enjoy the fresh air.

The city has a lot of unique architectural sites. Among those are the bath–house Arasan, the Otrar Hotel, the Cathedral in the Park of the 28 Panfilov Soldiers, and many others. The architectural sites of Almaty are comparatively modern because of the destructive earthquakes that happened in Almaty in 1887 and 1910. A lot of buildings were destroyed at that time.

The climate of Almaty is quite mild. It is never as cold here as in the northern parts of the country and you can easily survive without a fur hat and a fur coat. However, because of higher humidity it may seem a little colder in winter than it is in fact.

## Almaty – Getting Around

It is best of all to have transportation by your company or by people whom you know. Especially when you are coming to Almaty airport, it is important to have someone arrange a taxi for you. The ride from the airport will cost about US\$7. You should be careful to ask the person arranging the car beforehand for the name of your driver and have it written down.

When you are in the city, if there is no possibility to have a car from your company, you might consider mass transit or a cab. There are buses, trolleybuses, and trams (streetcars) in Almaty. It is very difficult to know where this or that bus or trolleybus is going, so it is better to ask beforehand. There are no schedules available. If you know Russian, it will be much easier: you can ask people at a bus stop. There is another type of transportation, which is literally called a route taxi. Those are little vans that work like buses having their own routes. As of February 2001 it cost 20 tenge (14 cents) to ride a bus, trolleybus or a tram. The vans are 30 tenge (21 cents).

The best, but more expensive way of commuting is a taxi. If you need it, stand on the edge of a road and raise your hand. Very soon somebody will stop. The car wouldnt necessarily have a taxi sign. You should tell the driver how much you are going to pay, because if you ask drivers how much it costs, they reply with the

question how much you would like to pay. It will cost you 200 tenge (US\$1.36) or less to ride from any point to another point within the city.

You can also order a cab by phone. This is probably the safest and most expensive way to commute. They charge you by their meter.

## Almaty – Getting There

## Almaty – Internet Cafes

all

### IATP Access Site

The Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the US Department of State. IATP consists of a network of Internet access sites located throughout 11 countries of Eurasia. Through these sites, thousands of individuals per month receive free-of-charge access to the Internet as well as to a wide variety of computer-related training programs. [www.iatp.kz](http://www.iatp.kz)

address: Tole bi, 27

hours: 9 am 18 pm

email: [aparfentyev@freenet.kz](mailto:aparfentyev@freenet.kz)

price: free of charge

tel: (3272) 784165

zipcode: 5

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# Altay mountains

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# Astana

Astana (us-tuh NUH) is the capital of Kazakhstan. The name of the city is translated from Kazakh as the capital city. It became capital in September of 1995. The population of the city is 350 thousand people.

Like many cities in Kazakhstan, Astana changed its name several times. In the 1800s it was called Akmola, according to the most popular version it means a white tomb. The name was given by the Russians who founded a fortress with this name. By 1870s Akmola was a place where merchants from Russia, China and central Asia came to trade cattle and agricultural products. It is worth mentioning that the city is located on the legendary Silk Road.

After the Great October Socialist Revolution and establishment of the Soviet power the name was russified and Akmola became Akmolinsk. In 1961 Khrushchev insisted on changing its name to Tselinograd (the city of virgin lands) because at that time a lot of young people according to the plans of the Communist Party were sent to Northern Kazakhstan to explore the rich steppes of Kazakhstan to increase production of wheat in the Soviet Union.

In 1992 after Kazakhstan became independent, the city regained its original name Akmola, and in 1998 it received its new name Astana. The government, especially the president are trying to make Astana a true capital of the huge country. Their efforts sometimes lead to a lot of waste. The climate is very harsh; the humidity is high because of the underground waters. Therefore, special materials are needed, but it is not always considered.

Astana is still remaining just a political center of the country. It will probably take a while before it becomes a major tourist attraction. However, the potential of the former capital Almaty was almost exhausted (the valley where it is situated is too small to accommodate the growing population and business community) and transferring the capital to Astana was quite reasonable.

## Astana – Nightlife and Entertainment

## Astana – Internet Cafes

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# Atyrau

Atyrau (uh-tee-RUH-oo) is a port on the Kazakh coast of the landlocked Caspian Sea. Named Guryev until 1992, it was an inner port of the Soviet Union. It has become an international port but is not as significant for Kazakhstan as Aktau, through which the country exports sizeable quantities of crude oil on the first stage of a complex route to Western markets.

The city is very important strategically for Kazakhstan since the country is landlocked. However, through the Caspian Sea and various channels ships from Kazakhstan could potentially sail to the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. At this point, ships from Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia sail to Atyrau. ..

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# Kyzylorda

**KYZYLORDA** is a city in Southwestern Kazakhstan, only 400 kilometers far from the infamous Aral Sea. The name of the city, according to the local people, is translated as *Red Center*.

The city is located in a vast semidesert that might remind you of some places in Utah or Nevada. In spring, the lands near Kyzylorda are covered with a beautiful carpet of flowers, among which wild tulips are the most beautiful. The landscape is quite flat, which is very representative of Southern Kazakhstan. One of the most constant features of Kyzylorda is the wind. As one of my acquaintances said, it only blows twice a year: six months in winter and six months in summer. It blows salt from the Aral Sea to the city, and as you take a ride to the north, you can easily see salty crust on the sand.

The first thing that attracts your attention when you go to the city from the airport is the Syr–Darya, or the Syra, the river from the Kazakh folk tales. It is amazing that a river can flow so far through the sands without drying. At some point in history, it supplied fresh water to the people who lived on its banks. However, at present nobody uses its water anymore. As it runs from the south, on its way there are fields that need a lot of water and from which various toxins such as pesticides pour into it. Presently, people have to drill wells to have fresh water supply.

The region is rich in oil. There are oil wells to the north of the city. It gives hope that some day this place might become one of the richest in Kazakhstan.

It is never very cold in the city if not to take wind–chill factor into account. However, only two hundred kilometers north temperatures can drop down to –30 degrees Celsius (–22 Fahrenheit) in winter. sheety city

## Kyzylorda – Getting Around

Taxis are cheap and plentiful. In fact, nearly every car is a taxi. Just put your hand out pointing to the ground at about a 45 degree angle, and a ride is moments away. The city bus system consists of vans with numbers in the window – finding a schedule involves finding a person waiting for a bus that speaks your language. Finally, Kyzylorda boasts the train station that Lonely Planet calls the best in Central Asia, but train rides in this part of the world can be long, and with TB infection rates high, may not be the transport of choice.

## Kyzylorda – Shopping

The bazaar is one of the best places to shop and experience the culture at the same time.

## Kyzylorda – Internet Cafes

There is an public internet cafe in the one telecommunications office in Kyzylorda. Primarily Russian keyboards, but one English keyboard is available.

**all**

### **Kazaktelecom**

address: Ayteki bi 32

hours: 08:00–19:00

price: 1

## **Kyzylorda – Eating Out**

Bish parmac, or "five fingers", is the one meal you cannot leave Kazakhstan without experiencing. This traditional Kazakh meal has it all, from fermented camel milk to horse meat to the main dish – noodles, mutton, and for the honored guest – Lamb's head. This delicacy is to be distributed by the honored guest with a blessing, first the ear to the youngest in the house, and then the other pieces – the tongue, the eyes, etc. as the honored guest sees fit. Dancing, singing, and toast after toast where guests are encouraged to "drink to the bottom" are all enjoyed at this meal, typically eaten on the floor or a very low Kazakh-style table. Guests are usually invited to recline between courses. Pace yourself – because if you eat at the same pace as is typical at more Western tables, you won't make it, and you don't want to offend!

## **Kyzylorda – People**

Kyzylorda is an amazingly diverse place. Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Russians, Koreans, Germans. And they all have stories to tell. The legacy of Stalin is apparent, not only in the artwork on the abandoned factories, but in the German and Korean populations. Most of the Germans left after the fall of the Soviet Union, but not all.

## **Kyzylorda – Tours and Excursions**

A day trip to [Turkestan](#) is an option. Three visits to the mosque there apparently count for one visit to Mecca.

## **Kyzylorda – Getting There**

Air Kazakhstan provides excellent service, once daily, to and from [Almaty](#). Some days on a jet – the Yak-42 or Yak-40, and some days on a smaller, loud prop plane. One thing to watch for – the airport in Almaty is under construction, and the flight to Kyzylorda is very early. Don't be duped by cab drivers into going into downtown Almaty to check in. While it works, airport check in works just fine, in spite of the construction.

## Kyzylorda – Sights

The city has a beautiful new plaza near city hall, and a new river walk along the river. In addition, the train station is noted by Lonely Planet as the best in Central Asia. Finally, one city park has all the old Lenin statues rounded up and in one place. Also interesting are the old Soviet murals at the factories on the way to the airport, between the river and the Petro–Kazakhstan oil worker residences.

## Kyzylorda – Practical Information

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# Lake Markakol

Markakol is a mountain lake located in Eastern Kazakhstan. The easiest way to go there is by helicopter. A car trip might be a little dangerous because of the road conditions. However, if you like roller coasters, you will get the feeling. You will have a steep mountain slope on one side and an abyss on the other. Half way to the top you will see the Chinese border which is covered with sand and looks like a limitless desert.

Once you are on the top, you will see beautiful forests and will breathe clean air drenched with the smell of pines and fir-trees. The plain that you left behind was dry and hot, and dusty. Here you have calm, moisture and cool air. From there, it is about an hour to the lake which looks like a beautiful pearl set among steep slopes of the high mountains.

The lake is really worth seeing even if you go there for a couple days. However, please make sure that you get a pass from the OVIR in Kazakhstan (there are offices in Ust-Kamenogorsk) to go to the lake. Even citizens are required to have a pass if they don't reside in the villages close to the border. Also please avoid approaching the Chinese border and going beyond the barbed wire to the neutral territory if you don't want trouble. You can make pictures of barbed wire in other parts of the world under much safer conditions.

## Lake Markakol – Internet Cafes

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# Semipalatinsk

Semipalatinsk also known as Semey is the location of a former Soviet Nuclear Testing Area. The Semipalatinsk Test Site was founded in 1948 with the first nuclear explosion tested in 1949 and the last in 1989. Of the 467 nuclear detonations conducted there, 346 were underground, with the first of these underground experiments conducted in 1961. A total of 87 atmospheric and 26 surface nuclear detonations were also performed at the site between 1949 and 1989. Some tests involved multiple weapon detonations.

During the early days of the atomic energy program in the former Soviet Union, some unfortunate events occurred. The country's first atomic test in Semipalatinsk in 1949 exposed over 25,000 people downwind from the blast to significant doses of fission products, especially <sup>131</sup>I.

Along with the problem of economic development, Kazakhstan must cope with some of the some of the worst prevailing conditions of environmental pollution in the world, existing pollution inherited from the Soviet era. Major current environmental problems in Kazakhstan include radioactive and toxic chemical sites associated with former defense industries and test ranges which are found throughout the country, posing health risks for humans and animals.

## Semipalatinsk – Internet Cafes

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# Turkestan

Turkestan is about a 3.5 hour "fear factor" drive from Kyzylorda.

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# Ust–Kamenogorsk

*My FAVORITE city in the world!!!*

**UST–KAMENOGORSK** has two main variations of its name. In Russian transcription (its official name) it is Ust–Kamenogorsk (pronounced oost–kuh–mee–nuh–GORSK), in Kazakh transcription it is Oskemen (pronounced us–kuh–MEN). If you are ever in Kazakhstan, please use the Russian name since it is more common and people might not understand you if you use the Kazakh equivalent.

Ust–Kamenogorsk is the capital city of Eastern Kazakhstan Region. It is located exactly on the 50th parallel. If you dont see it on your map, look for the Irtysh (a river in the east) and find where it crosses the 50th parallel, this is the exact location of the city.

The city itself is not a big tourist attraction. However, the region is one of the most beautiful in the country. The greatest attractions are the coniferous forests and mountains.

To the south from Ust–Kamenogorsk is Lake Zaisan. To the southeast you will find the beautiful Lake Markakol. Northwest is covered with coniferous forests. To the east next to the Russian border is the sacred Mount of Belukha, the highest point in Eastern Kazakhstan (4,506 meters, which is 14,725 ft).

## Ust–Kamenogorsk – Getting There

### *Train*

If you are going from Almaty or Astana take a train going to the Zashchita Station (it is the major station in Ust–Kamenogorsk). People often dont realize that the Ust–Kamenogorsk Station is just a small station where trains might stop for 5 minutes or they might not. Zashchita is the final stop for many trains and you will have enough time to deal with your luggage and will be able to get a taxi to the hotel.

Please dont go alone, have someone in the compartment to look after your baggage. If you are going in winter, have something warm ready, because trains might be cold. Even if it is in summer, take a warm jacket just in case if you have to travel overnight. Taking food, water, and toilet paper with you on your trip will make your trip perfect.

### *Air*

There are planes going from other major cities. Tickets are not very expensive, but you are only allowed 20 kilograms of baggage (carry–on included), you will have to pay for overweight, which is about a dollar for a kilogram.

### *Bus*

I wouldnt recommend taking a long trip on a bus. The seats dont have a lot of legroom, the buses are not air–conditioned and dont have bathrooms. There are cafes and cafeterias on the way, but you should always be cautious where you buy food. In winter, it is better to go by train or plane because of snow.

### *Car*

Cars are faster and more expensive than buses or trains with almost the same conditions. A car may save you several hours on a long trip. However, never take a car to or from the city in winter since it may snow.

*World66 is Open Content. All content is free for everybody to use, but we're also dependent on travelers for updating our contents. Please use the space below for notes and when you get back home, please take the time to add your notes to World66 so everybody can profit.*

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### **Notes:**

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