

A Country Profile

Kazakhstan



2020



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EMBASSY OF KAZAKHSTAN

**THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN IN
THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

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Foreword by Ambassador of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov

In preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence, the Embassy resumes the publication of its signature edition, COUNTRY PROFILE. It is envisioned as an instant and a comprehensive guide to politics, economic background, history and culture of Kazakhstan as well as its society, education and key institutions.



Ambassador Erlan Idrissov

The 2020 Country Profile also explores the interface of the most important domestic and international developments, Kazakhstan's foreign and trade policy priorities and describes the country's role as a linchpin on the New Silk Road and growing importance as the world's economic centre of gravity is shifting east. It also addresses questions of Kazakhstan's progress towards political and economic liberalisation.

The year 2020 will certainly be remembered throughout history, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing ripples within societies, businesses and industries, and across the globe. The government of Kazakhstan announced an

unprecedented anti-crisis package excluding tax breaks and local support in the amount of 5.9 trillion tenge, roughly \$14 bn or 9% of GDP. It has also introduced additional substantial measures to support SMEs and households.

Kazakhstan was in a relatively favourable position prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with low unemployment, higher GDP growth and low public debt. Despite the challenges facing us today, we see strong prospects for recovery thanks to the hard-won progress and the resilience of our people and the economy.

The crisis has required rapid, large-scale state intervention, but the government's longer-term objective remains the shift to an economic model that relies more on entrepreneurial dynamism and skills, and less on resource extraction. Like never before, we are committed to press ahead with reforms to support the diversification of economic activity and exports, refashion the role of the state in the economy and allow greater scope for private-sector development. There is no alternative: we must and will modernise and adapt.

A special section in this year's Country Profile is devoted to Kazakhstan's diplomacy and strategic relations with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, encompassing a growing number of areas of common interest. The edition provides a snapshot of a wide range of opportunities to expand trade and investment partnership and forge stronger ties between our governments, businesses and people as the UK exits from the European Union. Throughout and following Brexit and at this defining moment in our relations, the UK can rely on Kazakhstan's proximity to the Eurasian and Chinese markets and

sustained commitment to cooperation and economic development to drive mutually beneficial growth.

As the world prepares for the future beyond the pandemic, I am hopeful that this new edition of the 2020 Country Profile will become an essential reading for everyone with a keen interest to understand the history, culture, politics and economic priorities of our young country.

Kazakhstan At a Glance



Kazakhstan is a new country but an old nation. It has been formed by a particularly rich set of experiences: successive waves of invasion, immigration and migration, along the **Great Silk Road**, giving birth to a potent mix of cultures and traditions, which have flowed together to make the country what it is today.

2020 marks **the 555th anniversary of the formation of the Kazakh Khanate**, a confederation of nomadic tribes, which ruled from eastern Cumania (West Kazakhstan) to Lake Balkhash to the Syr Darya River. Indeed, only a nation that has in its blood the genes of peace, good neighbourliness and tolerance, and adept at using the art of diplomacy, could have preserved such a vast territory.

Modern Kazakhstan is the ninth-largest country in the world and covers an area of 2,724,900 square kilometres (1,049,150 square miles), roughly the size of Western Europe. It is bordered by Russia to the north, the Caspian Sea to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to the south and China to the east. Kazakhstan's terrain is primarily steppe, with deserts in the south and centre, and mountainous regions in the southeast. The climate is continental, with temperatures ranging from -45°C in winter to $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$ in summer.

The population of Kazakhstan is approximately 18.7 million, with approximately 1 million living in its capital, Nur-Sultan, and a further 1.9 million in Almaty, the largest city. This makes Kazakhstan one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world, with a population density of approximately seven people per square kilometre.

Kazakhstan's culture and demographics are dynamic, hosting many languages and ethnic backgrounds. Of the roughly 18.7 million people living in Kazakhstan, 66% are ethnic Kazakhs. Russians make up 21% of the population, Uzbeks 3%, Ukrainians 1.7%, Uighurs 1.44%, and Tatars 1.17%, Germans 1.11%. In total there are more than 130 ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan. Islam is the majority religious group, comprising 70% of the population, while Christians form

over a quarter, and other religions combined are over 3%. Kazakhstan is also remarkable for **its adult literacy rate, which stands at 99.7%**; and a relatively **low Gini index** score for inequality of wealth distribution.

Established as an **independent sovereign state on 16 December 1991**, Kazakhstan, under its **founding President Nursultan Nazarbayev**, immediately set about **ridding itself of the fourth-largest store of nuclear warheads in the world**. This constituted both a practical and symbolic act fundamental to the country's foreign policy seeking partners in peace and prosperity at all points of the compass – both regionally and around the globe.

Economically, Kazakhstan is the most successful Central Asian country with its gross domestic product of around \$170 billion, which is larger than the combined total for all other Central Asian nations. The level of **foreign direct investment** is among the highest among the countries which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Enjoying strong relationships with **the United Kingdom, the European Union, China, Russia, and the United States**, Kazakhstan is a member of a swathe of organisations, including the United Nations, the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, and a participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

As a founder member of the **Eurasian Economic Union**, Kazakhstan opened up a potential market of some 190 million consumers for Kazakh and Kazakh-based industries, whilst its 2015 membership of the **World Trade Organisation** paved the way for expanding its trade and commerce worldwide.

Political Structure & Government

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a **unitary** state with the presidential system of government. Under the Constitution, Kazakhstan is a democratic, secular, legal and social state which recognizes its people, their life, rights and freedoms as the supreme values of the country.

The country is divided into 14 administrative zones and has 3 cities of national significance. The 14 administrative regions are: Almaty, Akmola, Aktobe, Atyrau, Pavlodar, Karaganda, Kostanay, Kyzylorda, East Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan, Mangystau, North Kazakhstan, Turkestan and Zhambyl. Besides, **the capital city – Nur-Sultan** – as well as Almaty and Shymkent are the three cities of national significance.

THE PRESIDENT

The president is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He has primary responsibility for domestic and foreign policy and represents Kazakhstan in international relations. Under the 1995 Constitution, **the president is elected for a term of five years and may be re-elected for a second term.** The same person may not be elected President of Kazakhstan for more than two consecutive terms.



President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

Nursultan Nazarbayev – The Founding Father of Modern Kazakhstan

Under the leadership of First President Nursultan Nazarbayev Kazakhstan became an upper middle-income country. Thanks to his visionary leadership, the country has been a magnet for foreign direct investment and a reliable global partner. Nazarbayev is widely credited with maintaining stability and peace in the multi-ethnic Kazakhstan. Since relinquishing his presidential duties, he has vowed to continue to support development throughout the country, and in his official capacity as 'Leader of the Nation' he will surely remain a vital contributor to Kazakhstan's ongoing evolution.

The country's first ever president was elected on 1 December 1991 and remained in the post throughout the most challenging post-independence years. He supported the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and following a referendum in 1995, his term in office was extended until 2000. Subsequent elections in 1999 and 2005 resulted in Nazarbayev retaining his presidential position, and he was given the title 'Leader of the Nation' by the



Parliament in 2010. After winning two further elections his presidency was assured until 2020; **however, he decided to step down in March 2019.**

Nazarbayev sees his current task as **mentoring a new generation of leaders** in continuing to implement the reforms he introduced. He said that “caring for the country and its people will remain” his concerns. Nazarbayev continues to play an active role in policy-making and remains Chairman of Kazakhstan’s Security Council, a constitutional body, which coordinates implementation of unified state policy in national security and defence in order to sustain domestic political stability, defence for current constitutional order, state independence, territorial integrity and the national interests of Kazakhstan in international arena.

The president exercises broad powers under the Constitution and has the authority to issue decrees, initiate constitutional amendments, dissolve parliament, veto legislation, appoint and dissolve the government and appoint local heads of government. Under certain circumstances, the president may issue decrees, which have the force of law. The President is a symbol and guarantor of the national unity and the state power, inviolability of the Constitution, as well as the rights and freedoms of an individual and a citizen.

The country’s First President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is justifiably considered the Founding Father of modern Kazakhstan, relinquished his duties on March 19, 2019, after having held the office for almost three decades. In his resignation address to the nation, President Nazarbayev said

that he saw his future task “in ensuring the coming to power of a new generation of leaders who will continue the ongoing reforms”. As Kazakhstan’s first president, Nazarbayev made an invaluable contribution to the country’s long-term development, and the impact of his leadership will continue to be felt for many years to come.

While in accordance with the Constitution **President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev** was appointed ad interim, to assume the remainder of the First President’s 2015–2020 presidential term, he chose to face **an early election in 2019** in order to ensure that he is led by the “direct will of the people.”

Hence, on 9 June 2019,

Kazakhstan held a presidential election to elect the country’s new head of state.

Seven candidates were registered to participate in the election, with interim President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev being subsequently chosen by the Kazakh electorate. As recorded by Kazakhstan’s Central Election Commission (CEC), turnout in the election was 77.54%. Mr Tokayev was elected with

2019 Presidential Election Results

- Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (Nur Otan Democratic People’s Party): 70.96%
- Amirzhan Kossanov (Ult Tagdyry United National Patriotic Movement): 16.23%
- Daniya Yespayeva (Ak Zhol Democratic Party): 5.05%
- Toleutai Rakhimbekov (Auyl Party): 3.04%
- Amangeldy Taspikhov (Kazakh Trade Unions Federation): 1.98%
- Zhambyl Akhmetbekov (Communist People’s Party of Kazakhstan): 1.82%
- Sadybek Tugel (Uly Dala Kyrandary Public Association): 0.92%

70.96% of the vote. President Tokayev was inaugurated on 12 June 2019, and at the inauguration ceremony he outlined priorities and initiatives of his presidency.

Over 1,000 international observers were accredited by the CEC in order to monitor the presidential election, including representatives from nine international organisations and over 40 countries. The delegation of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly noted that "a woman stood as a presidential candidate" for the first time in the country's history, marking a positive development in the representation of women in Kazakh politics. Furthermore, over 220 foreign journalists from across 40 countries were accredited specifically to report on the election. This is not including the 121 foreign reporters who have received permanent press accreditation in Kazakhstan.

President Tokayev's Background

Prior to being elected by the Kazakh people, President Tokayev, in accordance with the Constitution, assumed the presidency in March 2019, following the resignation of first President Nazarbayev. At the time, President Tokayev was **Chairman of the Kazakh Senate**, a position he had held since 2013.

He has also previously served as the country's **Prime Minister** and **Foreign Minister**, playing an active role in the national strategy of championship of global disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. He continued to campaign for this cause during his time as **Deputy Secretary General and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva** in 2011–2013.

President Tokayev's Priorities outlined in his Inaugural Address

On 12 June 2019, President Tokayev took the oath of office at an inauguration ceremony held at the Palace of Independence in Nur-Sultan. During the ceremony, President Tokayev outlined the “ten directions” on which his administration would focus:

1. **Increase income:** In order for citizens to be able to live and work, a sustained and dynamic economic growth must be provided.
2. **Eliminate corruption:** Systematic work will be carried out to combat corruption, including the preparation of a relevant reforms programme.
3. **Reform judicial and law enforcement structures:** These systems are key to the rule of law, and therefore, respective officials must meet highest professional and moral standards.
4. **Create jobs:** Funds from the state budget should be allocated to support long-term goals and the creation of new jobs with reasonable wages.
5. **Build affordable housing:** The government must take steps to develop a coherent housing policy that will enhance the availability of affordable housing.
6. **Improve social policies and human capital development:** Facilitate the sustainable development of human capital through investment in education and medical services.

7. **Support regional development and strengthen local governments:** The powers of local governments will be strengthened to allow them to effectively address local issues.
8. **Continue the modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity:** The 'Ruhani Zhangyru' programme will continue to be implemented, honouring traditional Kazakh heritage while modernising the national identity.
9. **Pursue Kazakhstan's established multi-vector foreign policy:** Kazakhstan has established itself as a reliable global partner and will continue to pursue its multi-vector foreign policy.
10. **Support and create opportunities for youth:** The youth of Kazakhstan must become the driving force of progress, including through innovative youth employment programmes.

The Parliament and Municipal Legislatures

The Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan performs legislative functions and consists of two Chambers acting on a permanent basis: The **Senate** and the **Mazhilis**.

The Senate is composed of 49 deputies, 34 of whom represent each region of the country, as well three cities of national significance, including the capital of Kazakhstan. Fifteen senators are appointed by the President with due regard to equal representation of national and cultural interests of the society. Each senator serves a six-year term.

The Mazhilis consists of 107 members, 98 of whom are elected based on a proportional system of political party lists. Nine members are elected by the **Assembly of People of Kazakhstan**. The members of the Mazhilis serve a five-year term.

Parliament has the right to initiate laws. Draft laws that originate in the parliament must be approved by two-thirds of the Mazhilis before they move to the Senate, where they must be approved by two-thirds of the upper chamber to go to the president for a signature. Should the president veto a parliamentary initiative, it will return to the Mazhilis for another vote that must receive more than two-thirds approval before going back through the Senate. Parliament is also ultimately responsible for passing constitutional amendments and other legislation.

Under a **Constitutional reform programme launched in 2017**, a part of presidential responsibilities, including certain powers to control the Government and executive agencies, was transferred to the Parliament, leaving the President to focus on defence and foreign policy, governance, protection of the Constitution and ensuring effective cooperation between the branches of state power.

The **political party system** has been steadily developing over the past decades. At the moment, there are three parties in the Mazhilis, including “Nur Otan” People’s Democratic Party, “Ak zhol” Democratic Party of Kazakhstan and Communist People’s Party of Kazakhstan. As a result of the last parliamentary election held in March 2016, Nur Otan received 82.2% of the votes and 84 seats, Ak Zhol received 7.18% of the votes and seven seats and the Communist People’s Party of Kazakhstan received 7.14% of the votes and seven seats.



Dr Maulen Ashimbayev
Chair/Speaker of the
Senate
(since April 2020)

Dr Ashimbayev served as First Deputy Chief of Presidential Administration, Assistant to the President of Kazakhstan and Director of the influential Kazakh Institute for International and Strategic Studies as well as Head of the Institute for World Economics and Politics.



Dr Nurlan Nigmatilin
Chair/Speaker of the
Mazhilis
(since June 2016)

Prior to election to the Parliament, Dr Nigmatulin was President Nazarbayev's Chief of Presidential Administration, First Deputy Chairman of the Nur Otan Peoples' Democratic Party as well as Governor of Karaganda Region. He also served as Vice-Minister of Transport and Communication.

Regional electoral bodies called **Maslikhats** are focused on representing the local interests of Kazakhstan's fourteen regions and three cities of national significance. Members of the Maslikhats are elected for two-year terms through direct elections.

In 2015, the government of Kazakhstan began to **expand the rights and powers of local governments** throughout the

country as part of the second stage of its 2013–2020 local governance strategy. The reform granted local authorities greater financial powers and gave local population more involvement in decision-making processes. The local governance strategy also **granted more budgetary powers**, and placed tax revenues from government property, small business, transportation and a few other items, into the hands of local government. In November 2015, a new law established so-called **public councils to strengthen public oversight** of local government operations.

The Government

The Government leads the executive power branch and exercises control over ministries and agencies. The Government is in charge of developing the country's socio-economic policy, its defence, security, and public policies as well as providing for their implementation.

The Government is formed by the president in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The head of the Gov-



Askar Mamin
Prime Minister

Mr Mamin was appointed Prime Minister in February 2019. Prior to that, he served as First Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy National Railways Company, Mayor of Astana (now Nur-Sultan), Minister of Transport and communications, among other government positions.

ernment, the country's Prime Minister, is **nominated by the President** after consultations with political parties represented in the Mazhilis of the Parliament and appointed by the President after the Mazhilis's approval.

The structure of the Government is approved by the President upon the proposal of the Prime Minister. Currently, there are 17 ministries constituting Kazakhstan's Government. Those are ministries of Foreign Affairs; Internal Affairs; Defence; Information and Social Development; Agriculture; Justice; Education and Science; Healthcare; Labour and Social Protection; Industry and Infrastructural Development; Finance; Culture and Sport; National Economy; Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry; Energy; Trade and Integration; Environment, Geology and Natural Resources.

The Judiciary

The justice system in Kazakhstan functions at three levels: **local courts**, which handle petty crimes such as pickpocketing and vandalism; **province-level courts**, which handle offenses such as murder, grand larceny, and organised crime; and the **Supreme Court**, the highest court in the land, to which decisions of the lower courts are appealed. The law also provides for specialised courts such as tax, family, administrative or juvenile courts.

The highest court in Kazakhstan is **the 65-member Supreme Court**, whose members are nominated by the President and approved by the Senate. The Supreme Court is the appeals court for decisions taken at lower (local and province) court levels.

The Constitutional Council is the body with responsibility to **ensure supremacy of the Constitution** in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Introduced with the new Constitution of 1995, it is a body vested with the power to review legislation. Its responsibilities include: reviewing issues concerning the election of the president and members of parliament; national referenda; issues involving the president (including relieving him of his duties on grounds of treason or for medical reasons); determining whether laws proposed for adoption by parliament or through international treaties comply with the Constitution; providing official interpretations of the Constitution; and reviewing appeals from the president and courts of law on constitutional issues. The Constitutional Council is composed of eight members.

In 2018, Kazakhstan introduced a **ground-breaking reform**, unprecedented for the country and the entire region. It created a court which operates on the norms and principles **of English common law**. The court, which is an integral part of the **Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC)**, operates to the highest international standards to resolve civil and commercial disputes in the AIFC. It has exclusive jurisdiction over disputes arising from the activities and operations of the AIFC as well as in other disputes in which all parties agree to proceed with the AIFC Court jurisdiction.

The **AIFC Court** is separate and independent from the judicial system of Kazakhstan. It has its own procedural rules modelled on the principles and procedures of English common law and standards applied by the world's leading financial centres.

The National Council for Public Trust

The National Council of Public Trust established by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on 17 July 2019 is an advisory body that aims to strengthen the public's engagement in President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's **reform agenda** and to facilitate citizens' input in the national **political dialogue**. Establishment of the Council was one of President Tokayev's campaign promises and its formation was officially announced in his 12 June 2019 inauguration address.

The body makes public policy recommendations based on thorough discussion with representatives of the public, political parties and civil society. It currently includes 44 public figures, civil society and human rights activists, and journalists and is designed to make **government more responsive to the people**. President Tokayev chairs the council; the Presidential Administration Head serves as the Council's deputy chair, while a Presidential Advisor is the secretary of the council. The National Council also includes commissioners for human rights, for children's rights and the ombudsman for the protection of entrepreneurs. The council membership is a community service and its members are not paid. The National Council meets three times a year and may also include representatives of public councils at the national and local levels, as well as other persons.

***Tokayev:** "It is time to give an impetus to political competition, expand the real participation of citizens in the political life of the country, and promote the development of a multiparty system. The state is obliged to listen to its citizens and, most importantly, to hear them."*

President Tokayev's Reform Agenda	
Political reforms	Economic reforms
<p>Political rallies – A new law on political rallies signed by the President on 20 May 2020 outlines a simplified procedure for organisation of political rallies and formally determines the status of the organiser(s), participants, observers and their respective rights and obligations. It replaced an outdated 1995 law to introduce a key provision that certain rallies will no longer require formal permits, and organisers will simply have to notify authorities in advance.</p> <p>Political party registration – A new law signed by the President on 25 May 2020 amends the Political Parties Act to significantly reduce a minimum membership threshold required to register a political party from 40,000 to 20,000 members.</p> <p>Involvement of women and youth – Women and young candidates under 29 must make up 30% of party election lists, as stipulated by the new constitutional law signed by the President on 25 May 2020 amending the Elections Act.</p>	<p>Reducing the economic involvement of the government in competitive markets – The government will further reduce the list of state enterprises, especially in big cities, in order to increase the size of the private sector.</p> <p>Foreign debt – The ministries of National Economy and Finance, and the National Bank will develop a Single Register of External Debt in the form of a digitised database.</p> <p>Stabilising national currency – To increase public and investor confidence in the tenge, the National Bank will announce the exchange rate of the National Fund's currency market on a monthly basis, as well as adopt an updated monetary policy strategy.</p>

<p>Parliamentary opposition – A new constitutional law signed by the President on 2 June 2020 formalises the status of parliamentary opposition and allows minority parties to chair major Parliamentary committees.</p> <p>Criminal justice – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was instructed to initiate the process of acceding to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which includes full abolition of death penalty.</p> <p>Libel Law – A new law signed by the President on 27 June 2020 decriminalises and transfers Article 130 of the Criminal Code on defamation to the Administrative Code.</p>	<p>Fighting the shadow economy – To strengthen the fight against the shadow economy, businesses will be empowered to conduct due diligence of their potential business partners through a database drawn from the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. The government and the National Bank will prepare a package of legislative amendments to ensure the introduction of cashless payments for housing and vehicles.</p>
Social reforms	Domestic reforms
<p>Social security and support – Employment and social rehabilitation centres will open across the country in order to provide an effective system of support for those in need. A new state allowance for large families should be established. In addition, children from low-income families will receive a guaranteed social package, including free hot meals, transportation to and from school, school uniforms and school kits.</p>	<p>Use of land – The Ministry of Agriculture is implementing a pilot project to monitor unused land through remote earth sensing, and to increase the base tax rate for those who own but do not use their land up to 20 times.</p>

Rehabilitation aid – Funds from the State Social Insurance Fund will be allocated to provide rehabilitation aid for citizens with disabilities.

Modernising the pensions system – postponement of mandatory 5% pension contributions by employers until 2023.

Jobs for disabled citizens – The Government will ensure that private companies adopt a special quota to hire people with disabilities.

Transition to Latin alphabet –

The transition of the Kazakh language from a Cyrillic to a Latin alphabet will be carried forward through modernisation of the language system based on a scientific and phased approach to be completed by 2025.

The inaugural meeting of the National Council of Public Trust chaired by President Tokayev took place on 6 September 2019. During the meeting, President Tokayev said that reforms were needed to improve life and government in



President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev chairs a meeting of the National Council of Public Trust in Nur-Sultan.

Kazakhstan but that those reforms should be adopted only after thorough debate and discussion. The National Council of Public Trust held its second meeting in Nur-Sultan on 20 December 2019 where President Tokayev outlined a series of domestic social, economic, and political reforms proposed by the Council.

The third sitting of the Council took place on 27 May 2020, which President Tokayev chaired. The Council members discussed issues of developing the country's human capital, healthcare, science and education. The Council chair noted the urgent need for extensive reforms for these fields to meet modern challenges. He particularly stressed the importance increasing funding of and facilitating school infrastructure development, including through public-private partnership arrangements and foreign direct investment.

Chairing the fourth meeting of the Council on 22 October 2020, President Tokayev spoke at length about the issues of diversity and women's representation in the management of companies with state participation, labour migration, including from the south to the north of the country, transformation of the education system and the development of its digital infrastructure, enhanced protection of children's rights, and the urgency of combating trafficking in persons. The President stated that the thirtieth anniversary of the country's independence in 2021 should be commemorated under the banner of political and economic reforms, digitalisation, children's rights, development of healthcare system and education, and environmental protection.

Over the period between the first and the fourth sittings of the Council, despite the pandemic, its members worked effectively with members of the Parliament and the govern-

ment to develop 7 new laws with the goal to fully implement the presidential package of reform and initiatives. Since the Council's inception, President Tokayev has had 24 meetings with the Council members and 8 online meetings with his cabinet ministers.

The Council's work helps implement President Tokayev's concept of "a listening state", achieve its strategic objectives with an input from civil society as well as improve government transparency, including in the quasi-government sector.

Supreme Council for Reforms

Another important initiative in furthering the pace of ground-breaking political and economic reforms has been the establishment on 14 September 2020 of **the Supreme Council for Reforms**.

The Council is chaired by the President of Kazakhstan, while his external advisor, Sir Suma Chakrabarti, who previously led the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development serves as his deputy. The Supreme Council includes the country's Prime Minister, Presidential Chief of Staff and his Deputy, Governor of the National Bank, Chair of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms, Chair of the Agency for the Development and Regulation of the Financial Market, Secretary of the Security Council as well as Chair of the Atameken National Chamber of Commerce as its members.

The Council's inaugural meeting took place on 21 October 2020 where President Tokayev announced that the Council would make decisions on major complex issues of raising

the competitiveness of the national economy and living standards. He said the Council's six working groups would be charged with developing an effective macroeconomic policy, reforming the judicial and law enforcement systems, "resetting" the social sphere, diversifying the economy, improving public administration and public services, and enhancing business regulation. The Lord Hammond of Runnymede, the Lord Maude of Horsham, and Andrés Velasco of Chile spoke at the Council's meeting and shared their international expertise.

25th Anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The year 2020 marks an important occasion for all Kazakhstan citizens: it is the year of the 25th anniversary of the country's Constitution.

The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan may be three centuries younger than the landmark Bill of Rights (1689), which established the supremacy of Parliament over the Crown, but it is based on **the same great principles of freedom, aspiration for legislative harmony and prosperity of the nation.**

Drawn up with the help of international experts to replace the initial post-Soviet constitution of Kazakhstan, the new document was adopted overwhelmingly in a national referendum in August 1995.

The new Constitution was born during a period of uncertainty and turbulence, as the young sovereign country was struggling to escape the legacy of the final chaotic years of the Soviet Union. The new Constitution emphasized

Kazakhstan's determination to overcome any problems it may face. Starting with the powerful words, "We the People of Kazakhstan", the Constitution **embodies the country's ambitions and values it holds dear**. For the last 25 years, it has guided the nation through many challenges on its ambitious journey to join the ranks of the most developed countries in the world.

Kazakhstan's Constitution has provided the flexibility that it needs in an uncertain world. At a time of global challenge, Kazakhstan has started the process of continued decentralisation and devolution of power, which better suits a more mature, confident and democratic society.

Changes, and constitutional ones, have been introduced under the reforms set out in "**The 100 Concrete Steps**" **programme** designed to accelerate the modernisation of the economy and improve the quality of services to the public.

In a sense, the Constitution has helped and continues to provide **a road map for the future** and a focal point for **a sense of national purpose** towards a common goal. It has undoubtedly provided the springboard for Kazakhstan's economic, social and political development.

The Constitution's role in the country's development has been essential. Its 25th anniversary is rightly celebrated as **a symbol and the fulfilment of Kazakh nation's centuries-long dream of full independence and sovereignty**.

Economy & Investment

When it comes to the size of its economy, Kazakhstan is one of the **55 largest countries in the world by nominal GDP**. Kazakhstan's GDP per capita of just below USD \$10,000 puts it solidly in a **group of rising middle class countries**.

Kazakhstan's GDP has grown consistently at about 4.1% over the past decade, but like much of the rest of the emerging world, has slowed constrained by subdued international trade and investments. The economy expanded in 2019, amid a slacking external environment, while average growth of Kazakhstan's major trading partners, which include the EU, China, and Russia, declined to 1.7 percent in 2019 from 3 percent in 2018. The weak environment in global trade and lower oil prices have negatively affected Kazakhstan's exports and edged up the current account deficit to 2.4 percent of GDP.

Damaging slowdowns and contractions triggered by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic will inevitably hit the country's economy in 2020, which is set to contract by 0.8%, according to the World Bank. The new projection for Kazakhstan, which compares to the 3.7% growth predicted by the World Bank in October 2019, is largely seen as a consequence of anticipated substantial declines in global demand for crude oil and manufactured goods as COVID-19 outbreak mitigation measures drain consumer demand and investment.

In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Government of Kazakhstan has announced a **\$14 bn fiscal stimulus package, which will be equivalent to 9% of Kazakhstan's GDP** – recorded at \$170.9bn in 2019 when the economy grew at 4.5%. A large part of it is expected to come from the National Bank resources and state-owned enterprises. The Govern-

ment intends to reallocate budget resources to the sectors most in need under current circumstances. Included is additional spending on health, social assistance, infrastructure and subsidies for small and medium sized enterprises.

A further drop in business activities due to the COVID-19 lockdown will significantly deteriorate the balance-sheet of Kazakh firms, undermine the ability for households to repay loans but the country has the fiscal ability to raise revenue either through external borrowing or additional transfers from the National Welfare Fund.

Economic Landscape & Macroeconomic Indicators

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Kazakhstan's official unemployment rate stood at below 5%. The national poverty rate likewise declined, from 3.8% in 2012 to 2.5% in 2017. Poverty reduction continued as Kazakhstan created jobs in the service sector, increased public sector wages and social spending, and generated new employment opportunities in all sectors of the economy.

Kazakhstan has consistently risen over the past years in the *World Economic Forum's Global Competitive Index*, moving up four spots to 55th out of 141 countries in the report published in October 2019. It is in the top 12 in the world in corporate governance, and ranks among top 34 countries in the world in burden of government regulation. In terms of labour market efficiency, Kazakhstan is 25th best in the world, with the 26th best in meritocracy and incentivisation." Out of a possible score of 7, Kazakhstan scores

a 6.4 in the quality of its healthcare. In the past five years, Kazakhstan has markedly improved the quality of public and private institutions, electricity and communications infrastructure, quality of higher education, goods market efficiency and competition, and financial market efficiency.

Kazakhstan's investment in economic freedom has also paid dividends. The country recorded the fifth-largest gain in economic freedom of any country in the world over the past year, according to the *Heritage's 2020 Index of Economic Freedom*. The country's score (69.6 on a 0–100 point scale) put it on the threshold of earning the index's "mostly free" designation. Ranked as having the 39th-freest economy in the world (out of 180 countries scored), Kazakhstan leads the Central Asia region in economic freedom. Much of the country's progress has been achieved due to a significant improvement in fiscal health.

Kazakhstan moved up three spots to 25th on *the World Bank Doing Business 2020 report*. Improving the position of Kazakhstan in the Doing Business rating was possible due to the ongoing systematic effort of the Government to reform existing legislation, improve the licensing system, simplify business creation procedures, optimise state control and oversight activities and improve the business climate. In the new rankings, Kazakhstan is ahead of Iceland (26th place), Austria (27th place), Russia (28th place), Japan (29th place), Spain (30th place), and other countries.

Trade and Industries

Trade plays an important role in Kazakhstan's development, and the country is well-positioned to benefit from the growing markets of China, Europe, and Central Asia.

The largest export partners are Italy and China, which account for 19.2% and 10.3% of Kazakh export value, followed by the Netherlands (10.1%), Russia (8.6%), France (6.3%), and South Korea (4.9%), and Switzerland (4.75%). Russia and China are also the largest source of imports by a large margin, and account for 39.3% and 16.0% of the total import. The United Kingdom ranks firmly among Kazakhstan's top 10 trade partners.

The services sector is the most important and accounts for 54 percent of total GDP. The biggest segments within services are: wholesale and retail trade and repairs of motor vehicles and motorcycles (15 percent of total GDP); transport, warehousing, information and communication (10 percent); real estate (9 percent) and professional, scientific, technical, administrative and support services (7 percent). Industry contributes 34 percent of the wealth; construction 7 percent and agriculture, forestry and fishing 5 percent.

Kazakhstan's economy is also driven by its oil production and exports. At around 30 billion barrels, Kazakhstan's proven oil reserves are the 12th largest in the world. Located primarily in the western parts of the country abutting the Caspian Sea, production has increased by around 10% in the last five years and continues to advance, led by the country's giant Kashagan field.

Gas is the next most common export, followed by ferrous metals, chemicals, machinery, agricultural products, and meat. Kazakhstan is the world's biggest producer and exporter of uranium, and possesses 30% of the world's reserves of chromium ore, 25% of manganese ores, 13% of lead and zinc and 10% of iron ores and copper. To which can be added, amongst others, major deposits of molybde-

num, tin, titanium, cobalt, silver and gold – and of great strategic significance the so-called rare earth metals – key to the production of rechargeable batteries, cell-phones, high-frequency lasers, x-ray machines and advanced robotics. There are over 5000 unexplored deposits of rare earths in Kazakhstan with a potential value over time in trillions of dollars. Of the over 100 elements which appear in the Periodic Table, 99 are found in Kazakhstan, reserves of 70 have been explored and reserves of over 60 are in production.

Natural resource wealth will continue to play a fundamentally important role in the country's future development, but not just as a foreign revenue earner per se. It is increasingly the basic supply source for the high value-added processing and manufacturing industries Kazakhstan is seeking to expand and diversify to broaden and deepen long-term sustainable development – with the involvement of foreign investors.

The country's rich natural resource base is complemented by a vast agricultural sector which covers 80 percent of its huge land mass. Additionally, Kazakhstan benefits from grain and wheat growing conditions – possessed only by a handful of countries – which do not require artificial irrigation. As a result Kazakhstan is the **world's fifth largest exporter of wheat**. As with its natural resource wealth, Kazakhstan is increasingly seeking the value-added returns from agribusiness processing and manufacturing, including meat and dairy products – exports of which to neighbouring countries, particularly China, have grown exponentially in recent years.

Kazakhstan is seriously pursuing a transition away from economic dependence on oil and gas. It has taken steps

toward diversification by becoming **a member of the WTO** and expanding its international trade profile, and by committing to long-term structural improvements and transparency. The country achieved an impressive 4.5% growth in 2019 by undergoing massive economic liberalisation and opening its currency to the international market.

Technology has become a major driver of economic development, especially in the telecommunications sector. Fibre optic cables link Kazakhstan's major cities, and there is 100% mobile market penetration. More than 76.8% of Kazakhstan's 18.8 million people are internet users, compared to just 28% in 2009, and Kazakhstan supports more than 30 million mobile telephone subscriptions. Mobile phones and the spread of Internet usage is just one example of the country's burgeoning centres of innovation. In 2005 the Park of Nuclear Technology opened to become a centre of start-ups devoted to radiation technology, nanotechnology, and renewable energy. The Park of Information Technology in Alatau Village is a centre for satellite communications and telecom services, and the National Industrial Petrochemical Plant was opened as a special economic zone. In 2015 the International Science and Technology Centre was relocated to new headquarters in Nur-Sultan.

Modernisation & Development Agenda

Kazakhstan does not want to simply bounce back from the current coronavirus economic turbulence with economic recovery. It wants to break the mould of emerging markets economics with powerful growth and liberalising initiatives that are a vision of the future of the Kazakh economy.

The foundation for these initiatives is known as the **Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy**, which functions as an umbrella programme intended to strengthen and diversify Kazakhstan's economic future by transitioning to a knowledge-based economy.

The Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy is the nation's answer to the instability and challenges driven by uncertain financial markets and unprecedented global economic slowdown. By building a healthy private sector, stronger institutions, and better physical infrastructure, Kazakhstan hopes to attract investment and human capital while accounting for the growing number of risk factors in today's global economic climate.

The Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy was originally envisioned as a strategy for sustaining economic growth, but it has since become an outline for avoiding the pitfalls associated with overreliance on commodities. At the core of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy is that Kazakhstan will join the 30 most developed nations by 2050 as measured by GDP per capita as well as a wider range of social, political, and economic factors. Its purpose is also to transition the country away from reliance on petrochemicals and fossil fuels to a modern and diversified economy based on high level of education, a strong private sector that promotes innovation and protects investment, and transparency of governance, the rule of law, and the financial system.

Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy is supported by various separate but parallel programmes designed to guide structural innovation through the country, including:

The “Nurly Zhol” (Bright Path) is a robust domestic stimulus policy that has since driven state and foreign direct invest-

ment into critical infrastructure and priority sectors and drive economic growth. Nurly Zhol totals around \$9 billion U.S. dollars and helps to shift productivity towards agribusiness, manufacturing, trade and logistics, tourism, information technology and finance, and away from the oil sector. Importantly, Nurly Zhol has increased liquidity in the loans to small and medium-sized business and domestic exporters.

The largest pillar is “**The 100 Concrete Steps to implement Five Institutional Reforms**” programme, which stems from a 2015 address given by President Nazarbayev that aims to improve governance, education, and welfare, and business practices. It purports to turn Kazakhstan into a “modern state for all” through: 1) Creation of a modern and professional civil service; 2) Ensuring the rule of law; 3) Industrialization and economic growth; 4) A united nation for the future, and; 5) Transparency and accountability of the government.

A Strategic Location on the New Silk Road

Kazakhstan sits at the cross-roads of Europe and Asia – making it arguably the **most important geo-strategic location in the world**. Its history echoes with stories of the epic silk route adventurers of centuries past – its present with the rapidly rising sound of rail and road traffic heading between China and Europe, and back again.

Kazakhstan’s geo-strategic pre-eminence is fundamental to China’s Belt and Road Initiative and is increasingly described as the “buckle on the belt” which stretches from China’s east coast to western Europe’s North Sea with Kazakhstan accounting for 70 percent of East-West transit traffic.



A crane loads a container onto trains at the Khorgos Gateway Dryport in the southeast of Kazakhstan on the border with China.

With continuous up-grading of track and rolling stock container trains are now crossing Kazakhstan at the rate of 1,100 kilometres a day with deliveries from south-east China to Europe now taking around 15 days.

Meanwhile, the **Western Europe-Western China Transcontinental Auto Expressway** will facilitate increasing volumes of road freight with a transport time of just 10 days.

Overall transit volume across Kazakhstan has grown exponentially over the last five years or so from 47,000 TEUs in 2015 to an estimated 1.7 million TEUs by 2020.

Trade offers opportunities for Kazakhstan's economic growth and for diversifying away from oil. To benefit from these opportunities, Kazakhstan has taken steps to undertake further cross-cutting reforms such as improvement in

transport logistics, trade facilitation, and the functioning of factor markets (finance, land, and labour).

There is much value for Kazakhstan in escalating transit traffic alone, but the main long-term incremental economic and industrial benefits rest in capturing the added-value such traffic can generate for processing and manufacturing capacity, opening up new industrial areas and sectors – and the logistics industry itself.

Kazakhstan's geostrategic location provides massive opportunities in infrastructure projects linking China with Europe via Kazakhstan. Thus, there are ongoing efforts **to develop tri-party partnership involving UK, Kazakhstan and China** along the lines of British project management matched with Kazakh resources and access to the Chinese market. Trilateral partnership may include infrastructure projects under the public-private partnership format.

Foreign Investment Climate

Kazakhstan has built upon its continued success and religious, social, and political harmony to become a target for large investors and a locus of further innovation. Its private sector foreign direct investment (FDI) amounting to over \$330 billion dollars since independence has played a central role in the country's rapid development.

But over the long-term foreign investors' interest can only be sustained in any country by the host's willingness to create a welcoming, supportive and engaging business environment which provides the stability and security all investors seek. Kazakhstan has worked hard over the years to create such a

climate, not only for its own indigenous business sector, but for the increasing number of foreign investors it has sought to attract. **Political and social stability has been key:** as have the evolution of legal frameworks which **generate investor confidence**, especially those which protect minority rights.

Initially heavily focused on the hydrocarbon sector, FDI in more recent years has further spread across a variety of industries, including transport and logistics, construction and financial services, processing and manufacturing, and agri-business.

Turkistan Special Economic Zone

The Turkistan Special Economic Zone became was the winner of fDi's 2019 Global Free Zone of the Year in the Asia-Pacific region for SME tenants. The zone offers several programmes specifically for SMEs, including 21 state grants and five regional grants, as well as support programmes and loans with low-interest rates and deferred payment options. Initially, the industrial zone of the SEZ consisted of 36.67 million square metres of greenfield land but in order to attract start-ups and SMEs, an additional 343,741 square metres of old factory space was adjoined, which has ready-to-use buildings and is currently undergoing modernisation.

The Turkistan Special Economic Zone offers undisturbed access to the west Europe-west China transnational transport corridor, preferences and incentives, free land and governmental guarantees. Investors can also take advantage of the Eurasian Union and other Kazakh trading partnerships.

Kazakhstan is providing incentives such as tax waivers, easier acquisition of visas and work permits, and special incentives for investors putting more than \$20 million in machine building, mining, chemical, construction, electric power, wind and

Pavlodar Special Economic Zone

The Pavlodar Special Economic Zone was tapped by the fDi's 2019 ranking as "Highly Commended" and received the "Specialism Award" in Aluminium. Kazakhstan's aluminium production is centred in the Pavlodar region due to an abundance of bauxite. The region has huge reserves of mineral resources, including 12.7 billion tonnes of coal, 3.5 million tonnes of copper, 150 tonnes of gold, 14,000 tonnes of cobalt, 251,000 tonnes of nickel, 70,000 tonnes of manganese, 700 million tonnes of refractory clay, 315 million tonnes of oil and 148 billion cubic metres of natural gas. The total value of balance reserves of solid minerals in the Pavlodar region is estimated at \$460bn.

The zone is one of the largest and most successful investment areas in Kazakhstan. It spans 1200 hectares and is home to 30 companies, including the multinationals Chimec, Posco and China Machinery Engineering Corporation. Investors benefit from tax exemptions, provision of land for free, low tariffs for public utilities, proximity to the Russian, Chinese and Central Asian markets, and accessibility to mineral resources. In May 2019, SEZ Pavlodar became the regional office for the World Free Zones Organization in Central Asia.

solar renewables, and others. The government's FDI incentives encourage knowledge-transfer to Kazakh workers.

It is a potent combination which has been – and remains – increasingly attractive to international corporations and financial institutions seeking to invest in Kazakhstan.

Indeed, such have been the efforts of Kazakhstan to streamline foreign investors' engagement with the country that Kazakhstan now stands 25th on the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business Index after climbing four places from the previous year, leap-frogging a clutch of leading global economies, including those of France, Japan, Switzerland, China, the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland and Turkey.

Additionally, the same report puts Kazakhstan fourth for enforcing contracts and seventh for protection of investors' minority rights, whilst a raft of measures introduced by the government to cut red-tape and reduce business regulation has cut the time it takes to register a business to just two days.

The impressive array of investment incentives are especially concentrated in **13 Special Economic Zones (SEZs)** and **22 industrial zones** around the country offering investors 0% rates for corporation, land and property tax as well as exemption from customs duties. Additionally, the SEZ's offer free land, simplified foreign labour employment procedures, and access to established infrastructure and digital networks.

The SEZs are strategically positioned around the country to act as economic development accelerators and hence are additionally attractive to foreign investors. They include, for example, locations at the **Khorgos Gate** on the south-east-

ern border with China, and **Aktau** at the opposite end of the country where the **New Silk Way** crosses the **Caspian Sea** and heads on into **Europe**.

The highly educated indigenous workforce is an increasing resource for foreign investors, but for those corporate investors who need to bring workers with them, the country has a simplified visa regime especially for workers in the SEZs.

Although temporarily suspended as part of the government's measure to limit the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic until 1 November 2020, the country's **visa-free regime** has provided an opportunity to business-people from 57 countries, including all OECD members, to stay in Kazakhstan up to three weeks.

Travelling around the country has become increasingly efficient, especially by air with many flights daily linking key cities, such as Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Shymkent, Aktau and Atyrau – all centres which facilitate international links to Europe, Asia and beyond.

Moreover, world-class hotel accommodation is available in all main cities and locations, such as Nur-Sultan's state-of-the-art Hilton Astana and the eloquent Caspian Riviera Hotel overlooking the Caspian Sea at Aktau – and 4G connectivity is universal.

In late 2019, the country's eleven airports adopted an **open skies regime**, which allowed more foreign carriers and more flights to operate at the airports of Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Shymkent, Aktau, Karaganda, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Pavlodar, Kokshetau, Taraz, Petropavlovsk and Semey. The regime provides for the removal of restrictions on the num-

KAZAKH INVEST

KAZAKH INVEST National Company JSC is the official agency charged with attracting investments to Kazakhstan, with a wide network of representatives abroad and 16 offices in the country's regions. Its Board of Directors is chaired by the Prime Minister. KAZAKH INVEST harbours a broad range of competencies in project management and consultancy and in facilitating investments, often in cooperation with other government agencies, and performs the following roles:

- a single negotiator on behalf of the Kazakh Government when discussing the prospects and conditions for investment projects in Kazakhstan;
- a "one stop shop" and a "hotline" for investors that provides a full range of services to support implementation of the investment projects from the very idea and throughout the whole life cycle of the production. This includes any interaction with the authorities, obtaining of investment incentives, various permits, approvals and other public services necessary for the implementation of investment projects and its further operation. It also plays an important role in establishing links and match-making between local suppliers, companies and foreign investors;
- a single coordination centre for Kazakhstan's Special Economic Zones.

ber of flights and the provision to foreign airlines of the fifth degree of freedom of the air in areas where Kazakhstan carriers do not operate. The change is intended to increase

Kazakhstan's **transit potential and traffic** through domestic airports. The regime is valid for three years with a possible extension. The open skies regime will attract new foreign carriers, open new international routes, increase competition and ultimately affect air transport availability for the general population. It is also expected to help develop the **country's tourism industry** and make the Astana International Financial Centre more accessible.

In 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan was given new functions in the sphere of investments attraction and a mandate to bring strategic investors into the most important sectors of the economy: manufacturing, mining and metallurgy, chemicals, financial services, agro-industry, alternative energy and cleantech, infrastructure, logistics, and digital industries. There is also a new investment promotion and facilitation framework, and a raft of new investment opportunities on offer. Such institutions as **Kazakh Invest**, the **Astana International Financial Centre** and the **Kazakhstan Investment Development Fund** are also working to create a favourable environment for investors and assisting with numerous fundraising opportunities.

Kazakh Invest is a one-stop-shop for current and potential investors in Kazakhstan and acts as a single point of contact to support foreign businesses across the entire arc of investment from project concept through to launch and development. The organisation acts as the single negotiator with foreign direct investors on behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan. Moreover, it is especially valuable as a single point of contact with central, regional and local government for all regulatory and governance matters, as well as for exploring the availability of various types of support and incentives. The agency operates internationally under

Kazakhstan Investment Development Fund

Kazakhstan Investment Development Fund (KIDF) is a management company whose main objective is to facilitate direct investment into development of the country's economy. Its Board of Directors is chaired by Prime Minister Askar Mamin.

It aids foreign enterprises in expansion of their operations into Kazakhstan and contributes equity capital alongside investments. KIDF Management Company operates within a framework of Astana International Financial Centre.

KIDF is one of the vehicles of the state infrastructure aimed to improve attractiveness of investment climate in the country. Within that ecosystem the state provides foreign investors with a combination of the following support:

- secure legal framework via Common Law on AIFC
- in-kind contributions like
 - o land rights, infrastructure and access to resources through regional government's offices
 - o tax preferences (VAT, corporate income, land and property tax exemptions) through state agencies
 - o reasonably priced debt in local and foreign currency (match currency exposure of an asset being created/developed) through development institutions
- and, in the end, sharing equity investment risks with cash equity co-funding of up to 370 bn tenge, or almost US \$870 mn through KIDF

The Fund sources its project pipeline primarily via Kazakh Invest. Kazakh Invest scouts around the world for entrepreneurs and businesses with a recognizable product/service brand, good corporate governance, effective business processes and practices, positive track record, and capability for growth in the region.

When a potential investor indicates an interest in expanding its business into Kazakhstan, a whole set of state agencies and institutions elaborate on feasibility of a prospective development and applicable government support measures necessary to improve economic performance for an investor, if needed.

the aegis of the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its governing body, which contains several key ministers, is chaired by the Prime Minister. Kazakh Invest is represented around the world in all major industrial centres where it not only promotes Kazakhstan as a highly competitive FDI location, but increasingly smart targets industrial sectors and corporates whose expertise and outputs synergise with Kazakhstan's strategic industrial needs and requirements.

Transitioning towards a Green Economy

There is **an enormous potential for renewable energy** in Kazakhstan, particularly from wind and small hydropower plants. The country has the potential to generate 10 times as much power as it currently needs from wind energy alone. In recent years, it has embarked on building a green economy, taking the lead among its Central Asian neighbours.

GREEN ECONOMY CONCEPT

Objectives

- Increasing the efficiency of resources usage (water, land, biological etc.) and managing them.
- Improving current infrastructure and constructing the new infrastructure.
- Improving the well-being of the population and the quality of the environment through cost-effective ways of mitigating pressures on environment.
- Improving national security including water security.

Target Indicators

- in the water sector, abolishing the water deficit at the national level by 2050.
- in agriculture, tripling labour productivity by 2020, increasing yield by 2030, reducing irrigation costs.
- in the field of energy efficiency, reducing GDP energy intensity by 50% by 2050.

The prize from low-carbon reform is a more resilient and diverse economy. A transition to a green economy is aligned with **Kazakhstan's structural reform agenda and investment policy objectives**. The country has made important, early progress towards these ends, aligning national strategic development plans and programmes with green economic objectives. Progressive domestic legislation has been passed covering laws on renewable energy and energy efficiency as well as the introduction of an emissions trading system.

These efforts are underpinned by ambitious low-carbon and sustainability targets and guided by **The Green Economy Concept** as well as Kazakhstan's nationally determined contribution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris Agreement (a 15% reduction in GHG emissions by 31 December 2030 as compared to 1990).

Kazakhstan's plans are ambitious considering the unique circumstances of the country. It is the 14th-largest emitter of greenhouse gases and until recently its renewable energy use was limited to a few hydropower plants constructed during the Soviet era. The country experiences climatic extremes, with summer temperatures in the capital, Nur-Sultan, reaching over 40°C, and winter temperatures reaching below -40°C. This requires substantial energy use for heating and cooling.

Charting a course for long-term prosperity, therefore, requires encouraging new drivers of greener growth. In addition to generating environmental benefits, green growth will promote efficient resource use, improved and new infrastructure as well as resource, including food security, all of which are critical for sustaining and enhancing the socio-economic development of Kazakhstan's industries, businesses and citizens and enabling the country to address and adapt to the existential threat of climate change.

Kazakhstan also has a decisive opportunity to orient its financial system to fuel a low-carbon transformation. As the country progresses in its pursuit of the green economy, the future of Kazakhstan's renewable energy sector is promising. With increasing efforts to reduce the risks of renewable energy investment through regulatory and financial optimisation, private investment has also grown.

EXPO-2017

In 2017, Kazakhstan hosted a three-month specialized exhibition, EXPO-2017, in the capital Nur-Sultan. The expo's theme, "**Future Energy**", reflected the most vital problem for the mankind on the rational use of energy and natural resources, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, use of renewable energy sources, transition to green technologies, and also raises the problem of access to electricity and reducing poverty. It also set the goals of attracting the best technologies and solutions in the field of green economy in Kazakhstan and increasing the country's status on the world stage in the field of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

Transformed into an international investment site of Kazakhstan, EXPO-2017 was the centre of attraction of the world community's attention to solving global environmental problems through the development of alternative energy sources. **115 states and 22 international organisations participated in the exhibition.** The number of visitors exceeded 4 million people. During the EXPO, 53 heads of foreign states and governments, 72 ministers of various profiles and 20 speakers of parliaments visited Kazakhstan.

The effect of EXPO-2017 permeated all spheres of Kazakhstan's economy. Today the legacy of EXPO-2017 lives on: the premises of the exhibition host the Astana International Financial Centre, the International Centre "Future Energy" and the International Park of IT Start-ups and other entities.

Renewable energy auctions

In 2017, the Government of Kazakhstan unveiled an online atlas indicating each region's renewable energy potential,

with solar power emerging as a clear opportunity in the country's southern parts.

It has also fully embraced a new popular policy tool – **renewable energy auctions** – among the first countries in Eurasia to adopt them.

The country's interest in auction schemes is driven by their potential to achieve deployment in a cost-efficient and regulated manner.

The first energy auctions ever held in Kazakhstan took place in the spring of 2018, which attracted competitive bids for a total capacity of 960 MW resulting, according to the Ministry of Energy, in a 20% reduction of tariffs for wind power, a 25% reduction for solar power, and 23% reduction for small-hydro power stations.

RE Auction Mechanism: Key Features

- held in accordance with the auction schedule set by the Ministry of Energy.
- held by zones: Northern, Western and Southern.
- held separately for different types of RE.
- two types of auctions, auctions with documentation and auctions without documentation, are held separately.
- divided into two types depending on the capacity: up to 10 MW and over 10 MW.
- conducted as unilateral online auctions.
- eligibility criterion: financial guarantee in the form of a bank guarantee or a standby letter of credit issued with the SWIFT system.
- primary selection criterion: the lowest price.
- auctions recognised as valid if: (a) at least 2 participants; (b) total amount of bids is more than 130% of the declared capacity (but does not apply to BioPPs auctions).

The government clearly understands that now is the time to seize the opportunity to go green, to demonstrate that immediate investments can lead to a new period of growth and rapid energy transition.

The city of Turkestan, the administrative centre of South Kazakhstan, for example, has been experiencing an economic boom and is a top priority for the government to attract “green” investors to the area.

Astana International Financial Centre



The Astana International Financial Centre, a financial hub in Nur-Sultan with a special constitutional status. The Centre operates on the principles of English Common Law and offers its residents access to a special Court led by prominent British legal experts. It is based in the centrepiece of the former EXPO-2017 grounds in Nur-Sultan designed by Smith and Gill – a glass globe sitting atop an undulating glazed podium.

Opened in July 2018, the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) is a financial hub for Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Middle East, West China, Mongolia and Europe. It is the first of its kind in the region, located on the site of EXPO 2017 in Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan and supported by **modern infrastructure and state-of-the-art technology**.

The Astana International Financial Centre, based on the principles of English Common Law, is an important platform for attracting FDI with the appropriate financial instruments and international level services. Investors already enjoy favourable conditions including independent regulation, court, international arbitration centre that meets international standards and provides legal comfort to foreign investors.

The role of the AIFC includes developing Kazakhstan's non-banking financial sector, providing a favourable environment for investments, and becoming a financial hub for the region. Its aim was to form a leading international centre of financial services, taking inspiration for the best models of global financial centres in London, New York, Singapore and Dubai.

The AIFC was established as part of the ambitious '100 Concrete Steps to implement five Institutional Reforms' programme.

Objectives of the AIFC

- Establishing an attractive environment for investment in the financial services.
- Developing local capital markets.

- Ensuring Kazakhstan's integration with the international capital market.
- Developing markets for insurance and banking services and for Islamic financing in Kazakhstan.

Activities and entities of the AIFC

The strategic pillars of the AIFC include capital markets, asset management, Islamic finance, financial technology, private banking, and green finance. To increase its value to and engagement with key international financial stakeholders, the official language of the AIFC is English.

There are **over 230 companies** from across more than 25 countries which work with the AIFC, including financial institutions such as the China Construction Bank, China Development Bank, the China International Capital Corporation Limited, and Wood & Co. The AIFC also includes over 150 registered companies and around 25 recognised non-AIFC members.

The AIFC rose ten places in the Global Financial Centres 2019 Index, ranking 51st globally and first in Eastern Europe & Central Asia. The report noted that it is unusual for a new centre to perform so strongly.

AIFC Court

The AIFC Court is an independent judicial body established to resolve civil and commercial disputes among AIFC participates, or other participants in commercial activities that have chosen to use the AIFC Court to adjudicate their disputes.

The AIFC Financial Bodies

- **The AIFC Court:** The AIFC Court is an independent common law judicial body established to resolve civil and commercial disputes.
- **The Astana International Exchange (AIX):** The AIX is a secure financial trading platform with access to capital and investment opportunities for participants in Kazakhstan and abroad.
- **The Astana Financial Services Authority (AFSA):** The AFSA is the independent regulator of the AIFC, responsible for overseeing the organisation's financial services and related activities.
- **The International Arbitration Centre (IAC):** The IAC provides an alternative to court litigation for settling disputes.
- **The Green Finance Centre (GFC):** The GFC develops and promotes green finance in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region by providing initial assistance to potential issuers, investors and market players on preparations for the issuance of green bonds on the AIFC Exchange.
- **The Bureau for Continuing Professional Development (BCPD):** The BCPD provides international professional certification preparatory courses.
- **The AIFC Authority:** The AIFC Authority ensures all necessary conditions for the activities of other AIFC bodies, employees, and participants in spheres unrelated to financial services regulation.

- **The Expat Centre:** The Expat Centre is designed to create favourable conditions for entry and residency of expatriate professionals.
- **The Fintech Hub:** The Fintech Hub was created to bring together key participants in the financial technologies industry to stimulate the development of innovative technologies.
- **The Academy of Law:** The AIFC Academy of Law is an educational platform within the JSC “AIFC Authority”, established to provide legal educational programs on the AIFC Law.

It provides a common law court system that operates to the highest international standards. This is the first time that a common law framework has been introduced into the post-Soviet region.

All judges were appointed by a special decree from the President of Kazakhstan. The first Chief Justice of the AIFC Court was **Lord Woolf**, a British peer who served as Lord Chief Justice of England & Wales from 2000 until 2005. **The AIFC Court is now chaired by The Rt. Hon. Lord Mance, former Deputy President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.**

Astana International Exchange (AIX)

Launched in November 2018, the AIX is a modern trade platform created with the use of modern trading technologies. Its strategic partners and shareholders include global leaders of the exchange industry – the Shanghai Stock Exchange,

the Silk Road Fund, Nasdaq, and Goldman Sachs – and its regulations are in line with international standards.

The exchange serves as a platform for implementing the programme for privatization of state-owned companies, as well as for issuing and trading in government and corporate securities.

Astana Finance Days

The AIFC organises annual Astana Finance Days, a series of forums, which gather together hundreds of experts and thousands of participants to discuss finance and markets.

The 2018 forum focused on the establishment of the AIFC, while the 2019 forum looked at how to build the AIFC's standing among the international business and investment community.

AIFC, OneWeb

To bring next generation satellite technology to Kazakhstan

The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and with London-based global communications company OneWeb signed in early 2020 an agreement to cooperate to accelerate broadband connectivity in Kazakhstan and to enhance implementing the Digital Kazakhstan programme and other initiatives.

“I am very pleased that AIFC and OneWeb have become strategic partners and we see this as the foundation to build and evolve a wider partnership with Kazakhstan. The government of Kazakhstan, like

OneWeb, sees the importance of bridging the digital divide and enabling the digitisation of its economy using innovative and modern satellite technology,” said OneWeb CEO Adrian Steckel.

OneWeb plans to engage local telecom operators among its distribution partners to provide universal, high-speed, fibre-like broadband connectivity across the private and public sector, including businesses, schools, hospitals and civil services.

“I am pleased to sign the memorandum of understanding with OneWeb and AIFC is looking forward to bringing innovative projects to Kazakhstan by offering the best environment for setting up business and helping drive inward investment. This is the first step of many that will help to develop our economy,” said AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov.

The partnership seeks to provide the country’s first low-latency satellite broadband and establish a technical hub to support OneWeb’s communication service delivery across Central Asia. The Kazakh hub will be one of the projects under consideration enabled by the existing space communications infrastructure. OneWeb is considering setting up a joint venture within AIFC’s jurisdiction.

The company is committed to supporting Kazakhstan’s ambition to digitise its economy to become a pioneer of new satellite communications technologies and developing its reputation as an innovative country, especially in new space technology and its satellite communications sector.

OneWeb launched its first batch of low earth orbiting satellites in February 2019. More than 30 satellites were launched at a time in February 2020 from Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome to build the company's first phase constellation of 650 satellites, followed by further phases to deliver additional capacity and meet customer demand through a network of global gateway stations and range of user terminals.

The Kazakh government intends to provide high-speed broadband across the country by 2022 as part of Digital Kazakhstan. It is planning to expand telecommunication networks and provide satellite broadband access to 6,600 rural areas.

Samruk-Kazyna and Its London Office

The Samruk-Kazyna Sovereign Welfare Fund of Kazakhstan was founded in 2008 with the goal to improve and **protect the welfare of the people of Kazakhstan and support the modernisation of the national economy.**

Playing a special role in economic development and diversification, Samruk-Kazyna, drives progress through effective management of its investment portfolio.

In 2018, the Fund approved a new strategy and defined new development horizons. Samruk-Kazyna is now focusing its efforts on creating a diversified high-yield portfolio of investments and assets both in Kazakhstan and abroad. Its main emphasis is on developing new industries in Kazakhstan and in investing jointly with

industrial investors and funds. In order to carry out investments abroad, the Fund intends to establish partnerships with leading sovereign funds and investment companies, **with its London office playing a key role.**

The economic diversification, digital and technological modernisation, achievement of high standards of corporate governance, transfer of assets to a competitive environment and improved approaches to investments for the framework for further development of the Fund.

In addition, Samruk-Kazyna, is playing a pivotal role in Kazakhstan's economic development, acting as a vehicle in attracting investments to the country. Managing the largest

**“Samruk-Kazyna”
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Baiterek, meaning “a tall poplar” in Kazakh, is a monument and observation tower in Nur-Sultan. Since its unveiling in 1997, it has become emblematic of the Capital city and a symbol of post-independence Kazakhstan. The monument is meant to embody a folktale about a mythical tree of life and a magic bird of happiness: the Phoenix-like bird, named Samruk, had laid its egg in the crevice between two branches of a poplar tree.

Samruk-Kazyna Principal Companies

KazMunayGas – oil and gas company producing 27% of Kazakh oil and condensate

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy – the sole owner and operator of Kazakhstan railway infrastructure

KazAtomProm – leading uranium producer, with a global market share of more than 20% listed on LSE

Air Astana – Kazakhstan's flagship airline, a joint venture between Kazakhstan and UK-based BAE Systems

Samruk-Energy – largest energy generating company, producing 30% of electrical energy in Kazakhstan

KEGOC – the sole electricity distributor in Kazakhstan, responsible for overall management and operation of the country's energy system

Kazakhtelecom – leading telecommunication operator, with a dominant market share of 35%

Kazpost – national logistics company with postal, financial, agency, brokerage and electronic services, and a large branch network

Tau-Ken Samruk – mining company that extracts and produces gold, copper, zinc, lead, iron ore, chromium and tin

United Chemical Company – producing high-end, export-oriented and innovative petrochemical products

Samruk-Kazyna Invest – deals with direct financing of investment projects aimed at creating competitive goods and services with the purpose of qualitative increase of local content.

state assets of Kazakhstan from various industries – mining, transport and logistics, energy and telecommunications – **the Fund contributes in implementation of the Belt and Road programme.**

The assets currently managed by Samruk-Kazyna exceed US\$67 billion, covering the main sectors of Kazakhstan's economy.

Air Astana

Air Astana is the flag carrier of Kazakhstan, based in Almaty. It operates scheduled, domestic and international services over 60 routes from its main hub, Almaty International Airport, and from its secondary hub, Nursultan



For the eighth consecutive year, Air Astana, the flag carrier of Kazakhstan, has been recognized for 4 Star service excellence, retaining the accolade of “Best Airline in Central Asia and India” in the Skytrax World Airline Awards.

Nazarbayev International Airport. It is a joint venture between Kazakhstan's sovereign wealth fund Samruk-Kazyna (51%), and BAE Systems PLC (49%). It was incorporated in October 2001 and started commercial flights on 15 May 2002.

Peter Foster, a former executive of Cathay Pacific Airways, was appointed as the airline's president on 1 October 2005. Long-term development plans and management structures were established that have remained largely unchanged since then. The airline has been consistently profitable and was listed in the **top 20 most profitable airlines** in terms of net margin in the world for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012, according to Airline Business and Air Finance Journal, which ranked it **20th in its 2015 survey of global airline financial ratings**, with a score of BBB-.

Awards

- Skytrax 4 Star Airline, 2010 to present.
- Skytrax World Airline Awards, Best Airline Central Asia and India, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019.
- Skytrax World Airline Awards, Best Staff Service Central Asia and India, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017.
- Air Transport World Industry Awards, Global Market Leadership Award, 2015.
- UK New Year's Honours List 2015, Peter Foster appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to British aviation in Kazakhstan.
- Tripadvisor 2018 Travelers' Choice Awards, Best Regional Airline.
- Five Star Airline Rating in the Major Regional Airlines category at the APEX Awards 2018.

Air Astana's codeshare agreements

- Air France (SkyTeam)
- Air India (Star Alliance)
- Asiana Airlines (Star Alliance)
- Bangkok Airways
- Cathay Pacific (Oneworld)
- Etihad Airways
- KLM (SkyTeam)
- LOT Polish Airlines (Star Alliance)
- Lufthansa (Star Alliance)
- S7 Airlines (Oneworld)
- Turkish Airlines (Star Alliance)
- Ukraine International Airlines

Air Astana was described by the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation in January 2012 as having **“performed better in its first decade than just about any other start-up carrier”**. In an article on BAE Systems' offset programmes, The Financial Times stated, **“BAE's 49 percent stake in Kazakhstan's Air Astana became one of the company's highest-yielding investments”**.

Air Astana was the “Official Air Carrier of EXPO-2017” and the official carrier and general partner of the 2017

Winter Universiade, which took place from 29 January to 8 February 2017 in Almaty.

Today, the Air Astana airline's fleet is the youngest in Europe and consists of over 30 Western-made aircraft. In January 2018, the company adopted the **first Airbus A321neo in the post-Soviet countries**. In June 2018, the fleet received a second Airbus A321neo. In December 2018, the airline's fleet was replenished with Embraer 190-E2 – first in the post-Soviet countries.

In November 2018, the airline announced its plans to launch **its own low-cost airline, called Fly Arystan**. Fly Arystan began

operations on 29 March 2019 with the first flight being on 1 May 2019.

Air Astana's some 60 routes include most of the major cities in Kazakhstan and an increasing number of neighbouring Central Asian and Russian cities. Its long haul growth has been towards south and east Asia, with flights to Delhi, Seoul, Beijing, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Ho Chi Minh City. Air Astana operates daily services from Nur-Sultan to **Frankfurt**, three weekly services to **Heathrow** and three weekly services to **Paris**. The European services are connected with Air Astana's **extensive domestic services** as well as regional services in South Russia, Central Asia and China.

Air Astana has **interline agreements with over 50 airlines**, including with British Airways, Lufthansa, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Qatar Airways, etc.

Air Astana Call Centre

Tel.: +44 (0) 1293 - 874910

Tel.: +44 (0) 1293 - 874911 Nomad Club Members Only

Opening Hours: 08:00 – 20:00 Daily (except Christmas Day)

E-mail: lhr.reservations@airastana.com

Airport Ticketing Office

c/o ASC Handling Limited (UK)

London Heathrow, Terminal 4

Departure Level, Ticket Pod 2, Zone A

Tel.: +44 (0) 208 745 6432

Opening hours: 3 hours prior to departure

(Air Astana Flight Days Only)

E-mail: lhr.ticketdesk@airastana.com

Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy and Strategic Partnership with the UK

Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy: Prudence, Pragmatism and Multilateralism

Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has consistently strengthened its position in the international arena as a peace-loving and open-minded nation and a reliable partner in global and regional affairs. It has established diplomatic relations with over 183 countries.

Kazakhstan's foreign policy is multi-vector, pragmatic and proactive and the country views itself as a middle power making a significant contribution to the formation and implementation of the global and regional agenda in the field of security, cooperation and development.

Kazakhstan is a member of United Nations, Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking states, Organisation of Economic Cooperation, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Asia-Europe Meeting inter-regional dialogue process as well as International Monetary Fund, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Asian Development Bank, International Finance Corporation, Islamic Development Bank and many other international organizations and institutions.

In 1992, with the goal to promote peace and security in the entire Asian region, Kazakhstan initiated **the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)**, a unique pan-continental security forum, to implement confidence-building measures, forge and enhance political dialogue and interaction to promote peace and stability in Asia. Today CICA, which stretches from Cairo

to Seoul, unites 26 countries from various sub-regions of the entire continent.

Convinced that spiritual and religious leaders play a significant role in fostering interethnic and interreligious harmony and mutual respect, in 2003, Kazakhstan convened and since has hosted six high-level meetings of the **triennial Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions**. The Congress provides a platform for dialogue between religious and political leaders for the sake of peace.

Based on the reach and success of the country's multi-vector foreign policy, Kazakhstan became Central Asia's first-ever country elected to serve as **a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2017–2018**.

Kazakhstan has been a staunch proponent of multilateralism, which it views as aimed at forging the international community's collective vision and effective approaches to solving global and regional problems based on multilateral consultations and agreements. The country has long recognised the inextricable nexus between security and development at the national, regional and global levels and has called upon the international community to develop integrated approaches to respond to cross-border security challenges and threats, conflict resolution, peace building in post-conflict countries.

In 2018, it was elected host to the headquarters of the newly established **Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS)**, which seeks to strengthen cooperation among member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to ensure food security for its member states and develop the Kazakh agricultural industry. The initiative to establish the IOFS was put forward by First President Nursultan

Nazarbayev at the 38th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers back in 2011.

The country has participated in **UN peace missions** for several years, albeit on a small scale as part of the UN mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The arrival of 120 Kazakh troops to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in October 2018 was the country's first ever significant contingent of troops and firmly placed it within the ranks of important contributors to UN peace missions.

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has acceded to many major international conventions and became a



Mukhtar Tleuberdi Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mukhtar Tleuberdi was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2019. Prior to that, he served as First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Switzerland from 2009 to 2016, concurrently serving as Ambassador to the Principality of Liechtenstein, Vatican City, the Sovereign Military Order of the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta. In 2004–2009, he served as Ambassador to Malaysia, concurrently serving Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of the Philippines.

member of the **World Trade Organization** in December 2015 expanding its trade and commerce worldwide.

In 2015, Kazakhstan signed the **Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) with the European Union**, which governs trade and economic relations between the EU and Kazakhstan. After ratification by all individual Member States, the agreement entered into force on 1 March 2020.

As a founder member of the **Eurasian Economic Union** in 2015 it opened up a potential market of some 190 million consumers for Kazakh and Kazakh-based industries.

The same year, the country embarked on a **programme of structured co-operation with the OECD**, which supported the country's reform efforts and provided the framework for carrying out several dozen OECD projects. Under the programme, Kazakhstan has also adhered to a growing number of OECD instruments. The new agreement, which runs until the end of 2022, provides a framework for further co-operation and reflects the commitment of both the OECD and Kazakhstan to build on the success of the Country Programme.

Kazakh-British Strategic Partnership

In 2020, Kazakhstan and the UK celebrate 28 years of diplomatic relationship, which continues to flourish and strengthen with trade and investment central to that growth.

Kazakhstan and the UK established diplomatic relations on 19 January 1992, with the British Embassy in Kazakhstan opening the same year. The Embassy of the Republic of

Kazakhstan has operated in the UK since February 1996. Since February 2017, Erlan Idrissov has served as the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Court of St James's; and Michael Gifford has been Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan since January 2018.

Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom have established a **relationship of mutual trust** that is facilitated by regular visits at all levels. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, First President Nursultan Nazarbayev made nine visits to the UK (1991, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2012, 2013 and 2015). Members of the British royal family who have visited Kazakhstan include: Their Royal Highnesses Princess Royal (1993); Prince of Wales (1996); Duke of Gloucester (2000, 2017); Duke of York, the then UK Special Representative for Trade and Investment (2003, 2006, 2007 and 2010); and Prince Michael of Kent (2009).

In 2013, **UK Prime Minister David Cameron became the first sitting British prime minister to visit Kazakhstan.** The visit resulted in a Joint Statement on Kazakhstan-UK Strategic Partnership and a number of landmark agreements and trade deals. On 2–4 November 2015 First President Nursultan Nazarbayev paid a major official visit to the UK. During the visit, the Kazakh President held bilateral meetings with the UK's top officials and signed bilateral agreements on the implementation of joint projects worth about \$9 billion.

In 2016–2018, there were several bilateral contacts between President Nazarbayev and UK Prime Minister Theresa May, including during the 2016 G20 Summit in Hangzhou, China, and on the fringes of the 2018 Asia-Europe Meeting in Brussels.

The annual Kazakh-UK Strategic Dialogue is a major mechanism for political consultations between the two countries, whose foreign policy priorities are largely aligned as outlined in the new Foreign Policy Concept of Kazakhstan for 2020–2030.

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union presents a major opportunity for the two nations to rearrange and upgrade their existing trade and investment agreements. Kazakhstan and the UK are currently negotiating a major Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement designed to provide a solid legal foundation for their future relations in trade, investment, business, technology, and other areas.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Kazakhstan in the British Parliament is chaired by Colonel Bob Stewart MP. On 30 May–2 June 2018, an APPG delegation led by Colonel Stewart visited Kazakhstan and held a number of meetings with the leadership of Kazakh Parliament, Foreign Minister, and the leaders of major Nur Otan and Ak Zhol political parties. On 25 February–1 March 2019, Kazakhstan's parliamentarians paid a return visit. The delegation included deputies of the Mazhilis – Beibit Mamrayev, Zhambyl Akhmetbekov and Daniya Yespaeva – as well as Senators Yerbulat Mukayev and Ansar Musakhanov.

The two countries have long been natural partners in education. 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the 1994 Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Education, Science and Culture between Kazakhstan and the UK. The UK's top universities have long been welcoming recipients of the prestigious Bolashak scholarship programme.

The British-Kazakh Society was founded in 2002 to promote the growing relations between the United Kingdom and Kazakh-

The British-Kazakh Society

Mr Rupert Goodman DL, Chairman

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stan and has played an important role in highlighting trade and investment opportunities as well as promoting cooperation and understanding between government and industry at all levels. It also places great emphasis on establishing and maintaining cultural and educational exchange between the two countries. First President Nursultan Nazarbayev serves as the Society's patron; the Ambassadors of Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom are its Honorary Presidents.

Kazakh-British Trade & Economic Partnership

The trade turnover between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom in January-October 2019 amounted to \$2.7 billion, including the import of services in Kazakhstan. The

2020 Kazakhstan Investment Forum

By expanding its economic and investment horizons, Kazakhstan has made good use of its capacity for solid international partnerships. The October 2020 Kazakhstan Investment Forum, held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic, brought together policy officials, business and investment leaders to discuss Kazakhstan's investment potential.

Kazakhstan, a rapidly-evolving economy strategically located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, is emerging as a valuable new commercial partner for the post-Brexit UK, and making connections there is essential.

The unique forum, the third of its kind, was co-hosted by New Statesman Media Group, Samruk-Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, Kazakh Invest, and the Embassy of Kazakhstan in the UK. The virtual event involved more than 600 participants from all over the world, including representatives of companies from manufacturing, agricultural, chemical, mining, and financial sectors, as well as metallurgy, logistics, green and digital technologies.

The forum was dedicated to Kazakhstan's vast and emerging business and investment opportunities despite the pandemic, which has changed the entire system of the world economy, but has also presented an opportunity for Kazakhstan to place itself at the heart of the new global economy and accelerate its digital transformation. The event embraced such topics

as Kazakhstan's role of in the post-Covid world and its relations with the UK, the 'how to' guide to doing business in Kazakhstan for foreign investors, the privatisation of state assets, as well as investment opportunities in financial services, mining, digitalisation and tech.

The key speakers at the opening of the forum included Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan; Akhmetzhan Yessimov, Chief Executive Officer of Samruk-Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, Sir Suma Chakrabarti, External Adviser to the President of Kazakhstan on Economic Development and Strategy; Baroness Emma Nicholson, UK Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Kazakhstan; and William Russell, Lord Mayor of the City of London.

The November 2019 Kazakhstan Investment Forum was organised by Financial Times and fDi Magazine in partnership with Kazakh Invest and Samruk-Kazyna and produced a high-level gathering that explored the vast business opportunities in Kazakhstan and provided an update on the exciting developments that have taken place in the country, including the election of a new president and a smooth political transition which was already well underway.

Lively discussions were moderated by Courtney Fingar, Editor-in-Chief, fDi Magazine, Jacopo Dettoni, Deputy Editor, fDi Magazine, and Kimberley Long, Asia Editor, The Banker. Over 150 senior executives from across such sectors as manufacturing, agro-industry, financial services, chemicals, mining

and metallurgy, alternative energy and clean tech, infrastructure, logistics, and digital industries, as well as financiers, private equity investors and those from financial and professional services firms joined the event to hear practical insights into doing business, and networking with key stakeholders in Kazakhstan's economic development. The 2019 Kazakhstan Investment Forum was held alongside the third meeting of the Kazakh-British Business Council.

United Kingdom remains firmly in the **top ten largest trade partners of Kazakhstan** in terms of trade turnover. As one of the **six largest foreign direct investors in Kazakhstan**, UK investment in Kazakhstan totalled more than \$13 billion over the past 13 years.

Primary export materials include non-ferrous metals; ferroalloys; chemical products; coal; crude oil and oil products; and cereals. Import materials include cranes; engines; industrial equipment; electrical equipment; optical and medical devices; medicines; aircraft and repair parts; steel structures; chemical products; and antiques.

Kazakhstan offers significant opportunities for UK businesses with a wide range of greenfield investment projects announced or launched in the country. Among them are opportunities to invest in power, transport, communications and agricultural sectors. UK companies have invested more than \$950 million in such projects over the past five years.

More than 800 British legal entities are registered in Kazakhstan. The largest companies, like Royal Dutch Shell

and Ernst & Young, are members of the Foreign Investors' Council under the President of Kazakhstan.

The UK was one of the first countries to officially confirm its national pavilion at the EXPO-2017 specialised exhibition. The UK Pavilion with the theme of 'We Are Energy' was designed by Asif Khan. The installation was a great example of UK's creative excellence and was inspired by a traditional Kazakh dwelling – the yurt. The British national pavilion at EXPO 2017 won the silver award for exhibition design and provided an excellent platform for a comprehensive business and cultural programme. **His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester** represented the UK at the British National Day; **The Lord Mayor of the City of London** led a large financial services business delegation.

The Kazakh-UK Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) is the principal platform aimed at providing a senior government-to-government dialogue for stronger business engagement. The establishment of this Commission was initiated during Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to Kazakhstan in 2013. The IGC focuses on five areas of economic activity: oil & gas, mining, health, education and financial services. Since its launch in 2013, there have been 6 sittings of the Commission. Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Almas Aidarov and UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for International Trade) Ranil Jayawardena MP serve as co-chairs of the Commission. The Seventh IGC meeting will take place on 8 December 2020 in an online format. It is expected that the meeting will also discuss the expansion of the focus areas to include agricultural and aero-industrial sectors.

The Kazakh-British Business Council is the primary vehicle helping companies from the UK and Kazakhstan to grow

and develop their businesses and build networks promoting trade and investment. Its third meeting took place in November 2019 alongside a major Kazakhstan Investment Forum co-organized by the Financial Times. Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne and Chairman of the Management Board of Samruk-Kazyna Fund Akhmetzhan Yessimov are the co-chairs of the Council.

Town Partnerships and Interregional Cooperation

There is a range of “town partnerships” between Kazakhstan municipalities and foreign cities, including in the United Kingdom. Some are formal arrangements with



L to R: Ambassador Erlan Idrissov, Aberdeen Lord Provost Barney Crockett and Deputy Governor of Atyrau Region Alibek Nautiyev at the World Energy Cities Partnership meeting in Aberdeen in 2019

regularly scheduled events; others are informal exchanges of students or business leaders.

Benefits that towns in Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom acquire from these horizontal partnerships are as simple as a cultural or student exchange or as complicated as getting a major business contract that comes about as the result of this relationship.

These relationships take a long time to build and have to be tested but they surely foster friendship and understanding among the cultures of the two countries and encourage trade and tourism.

The informal 'twinning' of Kazakh and British cities, including between Aberdeen in Scotland and Atyrau on the Caspian Sea shore, has been based on shared similarities and revolves around business, cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Atyrau – Aberdeen

Like Aberdeen in the UK, Atyrau is the centre of Kazakhstan's national oil and gas exploration and production activity and Central Asia's most enterprising energy capital.

An updated **Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation** between the oil capitals of the two countries, Atyrau and Aberdeen, was officially signed in 2018 by the Governor's Office of Atyrau Region and Aberdeen Mayor's Office.

The Memorandum has since spurred official and business exchanges, including a visit of an Atyrau Region delegation led by Deputy Governor Alibek Nautiyev to Aberdeen

in September 2019 where he held productive meetings with Aberdeen Lord Provost Barney Crockett, officials and businesses.

A pivotal event for the partnership was the appointment of **Mr William Young on November 21, 2019 as an Honorary Consul**. Mr Young provides important services both to the government which he represents and to Kazakh citizens and businesses. Most importantly, Mr Young's appointment helps ramp up direct business contacts as well as horizontal interregional ties.

The signing of the Memorandum was preceded by meticulous work resulted in an adoption in the spring of 2019 of **a Road Map** to facilitate further development of bilateral relationship between the two regions.

The Road Map's major directions included:

- acquisition by Atyrau Region of up to 1,000 livestock pedigree animals, genetic materials of the Aberdeen-Angus beef cattle and development of a joint Kazakh-Scottish programme;
- application of British technologies and expertise in Kazakh fish farming and processing projects intended for export;
- establishment of partner relationships between higher education institutions of the two regions (e.g. between Kazakh colleges and the Aberdeen University or the Robert Gordon University) given the fact that some 50 scholarships are awarded annually by Atyrau Governor's Office to Kazakh citizens who wish to pursue Master degrees abroad with an concentration in the oil and gas industry;

- a field study of the Scottish experience in utilisation of solid household waste as well as the usage of Internet platforms for cattle trading.

Additionally, there is a strong interest of the Kazakh side in launching a number of joint Kazakh-British seawater desalination projects and construction of water treatment facilities in Atyrau Region.

Cooperation between Mangystau Region and Hull & Humber region

One of the promising avenues for strengthening Kazakh-British interregional cooperation can be achieved through formation of strategic international business links between Mangystau Region in the west of Kazakhstan and Hull & Humber. Both regions have a number of similar industrial and commercial interests in the field of green energy and port industry. An important development for ratcheting up bilateral links between businesses of the two countries was the appointment in 2019 of **Mr Alan Spence as Kazakhstan's Honorary Consul in the Hull & Humber region.**

Kazakhstan is interested in forming partnership between the University of Hull and the Caspian State University of Technology and Engineering by launching a project to create a joint laboratory of strategic logistical research. Such a laboratory, under a working name "The Eurasian Institute of Logistics", could conduct research in the field of regional industry development and development of the city and port of Aktau – the administrative centre of Mangystau Region – as a "logistical crossroad" of Eurasia. Other research areas could include optimisation of port infrastructure and coordination of processes to increase cargo flow capacity as

well as raising education quality in logistics and consulting services.

If implemented, this project could significantly contribute to further development of Mangystau Region as a connecting centre along the North-South and the East-West transport corridors. Additional benefits may result in further attraction of foreign direct investment, including in the Aktau Seaport Special Economic Area. The implementation of such a project could serve as a catalyser to intensified economic ties between Mangystau Region and Hull & Humber.

Leeds, Yorkshire – Almaty

Kazakhstan's largest city and the financial hub of the Central Asian region, Almaty, is poised to grow into a significant transport, logistics and tourism hub on the New Silk Road. Unsurprisingly, it shares a lot of similarities with the UK's second largest financial centre and one of its largest industrial regions, Leeds.

Capitalising on the positive dynamics of Kazakh-British relations, intensive contacts at the high and highest levels, and the presence of effective mechanisms for bilateral interaction, a visit of a Kazakh delegation to Leeds was organised in November 2019. At the meetings with Lord Mayor Eileen Taylor, representatives of the Yorkshire Trade and Commerce Chamber and Leeds business leaders, the sides discussed opportunities to develop direct interregional cooperation, including through "business twinning" of Leeds and Almaty.

Given the specifics and the structure of the economy of Leeds, Almaty is seen as an ideal candidate to be paired with this British hub. It will encourage human contact and

business and cultural links. Almaty also represents significant opportunities for British businesses for setting up joint high-tech enterprises. Additional benefit for British businesses is in Almaty's geostrategic location, which is viewed as a linchpin for trade and transport links on the Eurasian continent, especially for China's "Belt and Road Initiative" and beyond, the region's production and agricultural resources as well as the country's export potential to the Eurasian Economic Union market.

Another facet for the twin relationship lies in the field of cinematography: Almaty region's natural landscape is unparalleled and the country's new legislation in the field of film and TV industry provides for the reimbursement of up to 30% of the cost of filming inside the country.

Other promising partnerships for interregional cooperation

Currently, a work is under way to connect **Cardiff, Wales** with **the City of Almaty**, including through horizontal partnerships between Welsh universities and universities in Almaty with a focus on journalism studies. Cardiff is also home to Kazakhstan's Honorary Consul and former Australian Ambassador to the country Douglas Townsend.

Interregional cooperation with **Northern Ireland** represents another promising opportunity to facilitate business and people-to-people ties. An appointment of Kazakhstan's Honorary Consul in Northern Ireland from amongst prominent political and business leaders of the region is in the works.

Society & Education

Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan

The year 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, a supra-national political body established on 1 March 1995, by a forward-thinking decision of Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev. It is a 350-member advisory body designed to represent all of country's ethnic minorities.



A national dance ensemble performs on stage on 1 May, Kazakhstan People's Unity Day in Nur-Sultan.

Consisting of delegates of the regional associations, the Assembly's task is to represent the various ethnic groups that make up the population of multi-ethnic Kazakhstan at the national level. The supreme body of the Assembly is its annual Session, whose decisions, by a special law, are mandatory for consideration by the government. The Assembly advances its work through Cultural Centres across the

country. Integrating over 820 ethno-cultural associations, the Assembly is an important link between civil society and the government.



Members of a song and dance company dressed in traditional folk costumes of different ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan are getting ready to perform during Kazakhstan People's Unity Day festivities.

In 2007, the Assembly was conferred the status of a constitutional body and granted a constitutionally guaranteed representation in the Parliament. Under a 2007 constitutional amendment, nine deputies of the 107-member lower house of Parliament, Mazhilis, are elected by the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan to serve five-year terms.

The establishment of the Assembly was driven by **Kazakhstan's founding values** and conviction that by preserving minority languages and nurturing ethnic cultures and traditions the country is laying the foundations for lasting peace and stability. A unique institution, the Assembly's work is guided by the **values of respect, interethnic and**

interfaith tolerance. Since its creation, the Assembly has been advancing **Kazakhstan's fundamental values of independence, freedom, unity, and peace.**

Over the past twenty-five years, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan has justifiably become the **Kazakhstan Model of Public Harmony**, which strives to build bridges between the national government and cultural centres to better serve Kazakhstan citizens.

Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is a groundbreaking global interfaith conference launched by the Government of Kazakhstan in an effort to promote



The Palace of Peace and Reconciliation in Nur-Sultan, also known as the Pyramid, designed by Foster and Partners, with a stained glass apex and windows. It was constructed to house the triennial Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

a global dialogue across cultures and religions, foster tolerance, and, in the process, help counter the forces that fuel radicalisation and extremism.

History

As the world was recovering from the aftermath of 9/11, Kazakhstan responded to international grievances of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and many others by convening a Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. Launched in 2003 and endorsed by public figures such as Margaret Thatcher, Kofi Annan, George Bush, Jiang Zemin, Nelson Mandela, and Mikhail Gorbachev, the Congress has become a full-fledged platform for multi-track discussions on most pressing issues of international religious affairs.

From 2003 to 2018, Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan hosted six high-profile gatherings of senior clerics from Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism and other faiths. The 2003 inaugural Congress convened religious leaders from 13 countries in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The Second meeting was held in 2006 and gathered 43 delegations from 20 countries. In 2009, the Third Congress was attended by 77 delegations representing 35 different states, and the Fourth meeting convened 87 delegations from 40 countries in 2012. Over 80 delegations from 42 countries participated in the Fifth meeting, and the Sixth Congress in 2018 was attended by 82 delegations from 46 countries.

Each triennial meeting featured a series of panel discussions and roundtables covering diverse topics and culminated in the adoption of a declaration reaffirming commitment to

promote universal values of justice, humanity, and tolerance, and to counter extremism, terrorism and other forms of violence.

The Congress, which gathers every three years, will hold its seventh meeting in Nur-Sultan, on 15–16 June 2021.

Importance

A secular state with a predominantly Muslim population in the heart of Eurasia, Kazakhstan has been working to promote tolerance and interreligious dialogue since the first days of its independence.

There are a few thousand religious organisations in Kazakhstan representing 18 major confessions. Out of 3,464 places of worship across the country, 495 are Protestant churches and prayer houses.

Kazakhstan prides itself on its national trait of religious tolerance and long-standing tradition of inter-confessional accord. A nation of over 100 ethnic groups and diverse religious associations, **Kazakhstan is widely recognized as a champion of international religious dialogue.**

Kazakhstan strongly believes that in a time of continued violence and extremism, there is an urgent need for a global effort to counter the ideology of hatred and religious intolerance utilising interfaith cooperation as a key diplomatic strategy globally. The Congress is a concrete example of how interreligious leaders and politicians can work together to promote peace and development across national borders, and provides tools to undercut the lethal message of extremists.

Structure

The Council of Religious Leaders, composed of prominent religious leaders is a governing body of the Congress. Its powers are to coordinate the work of the Congress and expand interaction and cooperation with forums and international organizations working to promote a dialogue of cultures and religions. *The Secretariat*, housed in the Palace of Peace and Accord in Nur-Sultan, is a working body, and serves as a forum to discuss Congress agenda and consider practical steps to promote interreligious understanding and tolerance.

Participants

In different years, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, King Abdullah II of Jordan, President of Finland Sauli Niinistö, President of Israel and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shimon Peres, Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir bin Mohamad, former Prime Minister of Canada Jean Chrétien, former Prime Minister of Japan Tsutomu Hata, and others attended the Congress.

The United Kingdom has been a staunch supporter of the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, and the **Church of England** has regularly participated in the workings of the Congress. The Right Reverend Nicholas Baines, Bishop of Croydon, served as an active member of the Congress Secretariat since its inception until 2012 when he was succeeded by the Right Reverend Richard Atkinson, the Bishop of Bedford. In late 2019, the Right Reverend Dr. Jo Bailey Wells was appointed to serve as a representative of the Church of England in the Congress Secretariat.

Education

From the very outset of its independent existence, Kazakhstan sought to create a highly educated workforce to drive the country forward as a sovereign nation.



Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools principals have demonstrated an impressive commitment to achieve high teaching standards, expanding access to skills development in natural sciences with advanced laboratories; introducing robotics courses to engage their STEM students in complex, strategic problem-solving – all with a trilingual approach in English, Russian and Kazakh.

Kazakhstan's leadership has always recognised that there is a strong link between the quality and depth of investments made into human capital and the competitiveness of a nation. Its government has invested heavily in education at all levels, especially higher education with an emphasis on graduates and post-graduates honing knowledge and skills, which can be mobilised in the country's future development.

One of the earliest initiatives was the establishment on November 5, 1993 of the **Bolashak International Scholarship**, a merit-based scholarship programme designed to train future leaders at best foreign universities, including in UK, Europe, US etc.

With the purpose of early support of talented youth, a flagship educational programme called the **Intellectual Schools** network was launched on March 12, 2008, to serve the gifted and talented pupils of Kazakhstan.

In 2010, **Nazarbayev University** (NU) was founded with the aim to be a world-class research university combining quality education, influential research and visionary innovation in service of the country and society.

The Bolashak Presidential Scholarship

The Bolashak (“Future”) International Scholarship was established on November 5, 1993 by the Decree of President Nursultan Nazarbayev and since inception has enabled more than 12,000 of its best and high-performing students to study at the world’s top 100 universities. Many of Bolashak graduates have returned to Kazakhstan to **occupy leadership and strategic roles** in government and industry and become drivers of the country’s economic success, strengthening the technical capacity of the civil service and helping to design and implement technocratic economic reforms.

The scholarship designed to train future leaders in business, international relations, law, science, engineering and other key fields is offered by the Ministry of Education

of the Republic of Kazakhstan and administered by the Centre for International Programs. The generous financial package covers tuition fees and living costs for the duration of a postgraduate qualification, either Masters or PhD as well as internship for engineering, medical and teaching staff.

Over the years the programme was adapted in order to contribute to achieving key economic, political and social objectives of the government, in particular in the context of improving governance and administration in Kazakhstan.



Bolashak alumni at a forum marking the 25th anniversary of the country's landmark scholarship programme.

In 1994–1997, Bolashak scholarships were granted primarily to the graduates of Kazakh universities holding degrees in economics and humanities. At that time, the number of graduates of technical faculties among scholarship holders was quite small mainly due to the lack of proficiency in English.

However, later on, the rules were changed and applicants with technical and engineering degrees were permitted to partake in the competition for the Bolashak scholarship regardless of the foreign language proficiency requirement.

In the first years of the programme, scholars studied in four countries only – the United Kingdom, the United States, France and Germany. Later, the geography of the countries was expanded first to 13 countries and now the programme works with hundreds of recommended universities in 25 target countries in Europe, Asia, and North America. Countries and universities are selected in accordance with their expertise in areas important to Kazakhstan.

In 2005, the JSC Centre for International Programs was established to administer the Bolashak Programme and a range of other international programmes on personnel training, retraining and qualification upgrading abroad. The Centre currently has representative offices in the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Russian Federation.

Since 2001, the training of bachelors, for which content was previously defined in co-operation with the employer and the Centre, was discontinued and a new programme-targeted approach was introduced for training specialists in accordance with specific requests from an employer.

Since 2014, the requirements for language proficiency have been increased, pursuing the aim of improving the quality of the selection process. In addition, arts and mass media professionals have been established as new categories for master programmes. At the same time, the requirements for foreign host universities, defined in terms of minimal positions in international university rankings, have been raised.

Since 2015, candidates with Kazakh Master/PhD degree can access foreign Master/PhD programmes. The new Split-PhD programme has been integrated in the educational process of Kazakh universities chosen for training professionals.

At the VIII International Going Global Conference organised by the British Council in Miami in 2014, “Bolashak” was named the **best among 11 academic mobility programmes**.

Today Bolashak graduates return with substantial and valuable knowledge and extensive professional networks. They are the community of most progressive and perspective young professionals of the country.

The UK’s top universities have been proud to welcome recipients of the prestigious Bolashak scholarship programme. Over 65 British universities have been vetted and approved to accept Bolashak-funded students for courses in the priority fields of study.

Intellectual Schools

With the purpose of early support of talented youth, a flagship educational programme called the Intellectual Schools network was launched on March 12, 2008, to serve the gifted and talented pupils of Kazakhstan.

President Nazarbayev envisaged the Intellectual Schools as one of major educational institutions to help to build the intellectual capacity of the nation and contribute to the prosperity and competitiveness of Kazakhstan.

Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) is a network of schools for exceptional students of age 5 to 18 throughout

Kazakhstan. The Intellectual Schools are called to become an experimental platform for the development, monitoring, research, analysis, approbation, introduction and implementation of modern models of educational programmes by level, and by implementing innovative educational programmes and research projects and drive new and modern forms of governance in education, and develop an academic freedom and autonomy. The special status anointed by a 2011 presidential degree grants the Intellectual Schools a right to approve own educational curricula, establish requirements for entrance exams, ongoing moni-



A new cohort of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) graduates pose for a photo in front of the school.

toring of progress, interim and final certification and more. The principle of academic freedom helps to accelerate the development and approbation of new programmes and the modernisation of secondary education.

Previously, each school focused primarily on a specific set of subjects: either physical sciences and mathematics, or chemical and biological sciences, as well as foreign languages. Although this division is still represented in the names of schools, most schools share the same curriculum based on **Cambridge O Level and A Level**, except for NIS in Nur-Sultan. Instruction is trilingual, in Kazakh, Russian and English, shifting to exclusively English by the junior year.



NIS have maintained a special focus on sporting talent development.

The programme was initially set up with the assistance of faculty members from the **University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education**. Subsequently, Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools partnered with the **University of Cambridge**

Faculty of Education on curriculum development; **Cambridge Assessment** on design of the assessment system; **CiTO**, Netherlands on the testing and measurement; and **Johns Hopkins University** on working with talented youth.

Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools and **the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education** have been successfully collaborating since 2008.

Later **the Education Reform and Innovation** team at **the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education** was formed from the Kazakhstan Programme, and has worked in the country since 2011. The Education Reform and Innovation Team, in cooperation with NIS, supports an ambitious and far-reaching programme of educational reform in Kazakhstan through training, research and consultancy all designed to build local capacity.

Currently there are a number of **projects that NIS and the ERI are engaged with**, including:

- *Reforming Teachers' Continuing Professional Learning* project is carried out in cooperation with the Centre of Excellence of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools programme to support the development of young people in Kazakhstan to become critical thinkers and independent learners able to use digital technology to support their learning. With this purpose, teams of Cambridge trainers have been working in country with Kazakh educators to develop a cascade training model. This 'train the trainers' programme supports expert teachers and lecturers who have been nominated to become trainers of the other Kazakh teachers. The trainers are prepared at three different levels to then develop the learning and expertise of teachers in the comprehensive school system. All

teaching sessions delivered by Cambridge trainers are carried out with the support of expert interpreters who translate simultaneously. Written materials are shared on a project wiki and are made available in three languages (English, Russian and Kazakh) to all participants.

- *Classroom Action Research* project has been carried out in cooperation with NIS leaders and teachers since 2013 to develop collaborative action research and reflective practice with the aim to establish the culture and infrastructure required to underpin this approach to teacher learning and growth. While maintaining a focus on educational values, the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education team has progressively provided a basis for teacher engagement in the processes of curriculum review.

This work is developing the capacity of those leading action research at NIS schools (Teacher Research Coordinators) to take ownership and develop their own vision for the work and how to take it forward. In parallel, it continues supporting new NIS schools embracing collaborative action research for the first time. The Faculty of Education has facilitated two-week internships for NIS pedagogical staff at schools of the SUPER network since 2014.

An important and timely social, political and economic initiative, the Intellectual Schools are charged to act as a motor for reforming the education system in general. The Intellectual Schools work to develop an innovative education model that integrates best Kazakhstani and international practices.

Graduates of these schools successfully complete studies at Nazarbayev University and at other prestigious national and international universities. As they enter the labour market, Intellectual Schools' graduates are the lifelong

learners who co-operate and innovate in order to build the economic, political and social fabric of the nation.

Nazarbayev University

Nazarbayev University (NU) was founded by the first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, in 2010. The University aims to be a world-class research university combining quality education, influential research and visionary innovation in service of the country and society.



Nazarbayev University students enjoy world-class resources and facilities at their university library.

Throughout its history, NU has established values and standards to achieve educational and research excellence, meet

both the local and global community's expanding needs and challenges, and prepare graduates ready for the future.

In December 2018, the Supreme Board of Trustees approved a new Strategy of Nazarbayev University for 2018–2030. The Strategy intends to prepare NU for change in the age of globalisation and technological disruption while also building on the foundation already created.

A Partnership with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education

The University of Cambridge Faculty of Education has been involved in a support and advisory role at Nazarbayev University since the first idea of a Graduate School of Education was initiated in 2011. A three-way partnership was subsequently established, with the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education as the third party, to work on the creation of the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University and to engage in joint research activity. In October 2011, as a result of a feasibility study undertaken by the Faculty, the ambitious notion of a Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University was developed. This School would – within five years – become **a prestigious faculty of education in Eurasia**, offering high-quality courses at Masters and doctoral level, and developing innovative and pioneering research in collaboration with its international partners.

Subsequently, the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education has been centrally involved with appointing the senior staff of the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE); advising on the academic framework for the school and on the development of learning support facilities and resources; and supporting the evolution of staff development policies.

In relation to the curriculum, the Faculty has supported NUGSE in developing and planning detailed curricula for the one-year and two-year Masters programmes in Educational Leadership and in Multilingual Education, offering recommendations for doctoral programmes, and monitoring student selection and admissions. As part of the Partner agreement with NUGSE, both Cambridge University and UPenn enjoy hosting a number of NUGSE doctoral students for six weeks a year. This generally takes place once NUGSE students have passed the proposal stage of their studies. The experience involves students being paired with a relevant Faculty of Education supervisor who supports the students exactly if they were a full-time PhD student at Cambridge. During their stay, NUGSE students are also free to join in with all the other opportunities afforded to students at Cambridge. The relationship with their Cambridge supervisor continues after the student returns to NUGSE up to the point of thesis examination and provides ways of working with not only the students themselves but also between our extended team at the Faculty and academics at NUGSE.

NU's vision is to give Kazakhstan and the world the scientists, academics, managers, and entrepreneurs needed to prosper and develop. Its mission is:

- a) to be a model for higher education reform and modern research;
- b) to contribute to the establishment of Nur-Sultan city as an international knowledge, innovation, and medical hub; and
- c) to prepare students for a world of increased volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.



Nazarbayev University is home to the country's leading researchers in bioengineering and regenerative medicine.

When establishing the University, the Government of Kazakhstan gave NU the mandate to imbue Kazakhstan's higher education system with global standards and

BUILDING BLOCKS OF NU'S ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Academic integrity: zero tolerance for disciplinary, academic and research misconduct.
- Merit based admission and progression: rigorous admission and progression requirements reflecting international standards.
- Core curriculum: undergraduate core curriculum includes mandatory ethics, digital literacy and entrepreneurship courses.
- Integration of teaching and research: students' engagement in research related tasks in classes, involvement in faculty-led research projects, and participation in research competitions and international conferences as co-authors when possible.
- Student-centred environment: curriculum, instructional methods and technology are designed to liberate students' talents and create opportunities for exploring new ideas.
- Educational technologies: extensive use of digital solutions to meet contemporary teaching and learning needs.
- Multicultural environment: interaction with international faculty and exposure to various backgrounds and cultures to develop intercultural competences.
- Study abroad opportunities: expansion of horizons and enrichment of the learning experience by integration into international academic community.
- Inclusion: NU offers an environment for all qualified students irrespective of their special needs.

systems by sharing of NU's experience and lessons learned with other universities in Kazakhstan. NU has been a core element of Kazakhstan's broader education reform agenda.

NU is also a pilot site for innovative educational and research projects, the successful results of which are to be transmitted to the country's higher education system with the Graduate School of Education (GSE) leading this task. In support of the higher education governance reform initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science, GSE has been training top executives of local universities to help them manage the complex process of transformation in higher education. In 2018 more than 270 participants, including 160 university top and mid-level managers and faculty took part in the GSE professional development courses in the framework of sharing NU's experience. GSE provides training courses on the following topics: strategic planning and corporate governance, inclusive education, per capita financing, project and innovation management, and human resource management.

Dissemination of NU's experience and best practices to education stakeholders is one of the priority institutional tasks for NU. This is done through training programmes, seminars, workshops, including the annual Eurasian Higher Education Leaders' Forum. In 2017 NU created a special Office for Experience Sharing.

Students are the top priority for NU. The University strives to attract the most talented students from Kazakhstan and beyond. Merit-based admission and progression policies, academic integrity as DNA, and critical thinking skills have ensured the success of the graduates. Continuing to grow while preserving quality, NU intends to increase the student population to 8000 by 2025, with the goal of increasing the share of international students to 10%.

Strategic Academic and Research Partners

The model for the strategic development of Nazarbayev University (NU) is primarily based on partnership with the top-ranking universities in the world. Each of the NU Schools and Research Centers is being developed in cooperation with the following leading universities and research institutions (in alphabetical order):

- o **Colorado School of Mines** (USA) – partner for the School of Mining and Geosciences
- o **Duke University**, Fuqua School of Business (USA) – partner for the Graduate School of Business
- o **The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory** (USA) – partner for the Private Institution “National Laboratory Astana”
- o **The National University of Singapore**, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (Singapore) – partner for the Graduate School of Public Policy
- o **The Oak Ridge Associated Universities** (USA) – partner for the Private Institution “Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation System”
- o **The University of Cambridge** (UK) – partner for the Graduate School of Education
- o **The University of Pennsylvania** (USA) – partner for the Graduate School of Education
- o **The University of Pittsburgh** (USA) – partner for the School of Medicine
- o **The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center** (USA) – partner for the National Research Oncology Center

- o **The University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA)** – partner for the School of Sciences and Humanities

Strategic Partners that have contributed to the development of NU:

- o **The University of Warwick (UK)** – partner for Nazarbayev University Foundation Year Program between 2015 and 2016.
- o **University College London (UK)** – partner for the Nazarbayev University School of Engineering and Digital Sciences and University Preparatory Certificate Program between 2010 and 2015.

NU places a high premium on faculty excellence and diversity. NU is building an internationally competitive research-active faculty with many winners of awards and members of honorary and professional societies. Its diverse faculty hails from 56 countries. Top 10 countries of origin are the UK, the USA, Canada, Greece, Italy, South Korea, Russia, Australia, Turkey, and India. NU faculty and teaching community consists of 477 faculty (including 28 postdoctoral scholars) and 82 teaching assistants. Faculty are recruited through an internationally competitive hiring process.

The Kazakhstan PhD Association in the UK

The Kazakhstan PhD Association in the UK is a non-profit interdisciplinary organisation of Kazakhstani PhD researchers

in the UK, aiming to facilitate the interaction of scientists of the two countries, as well as foster the implementation of the best practices in the field of innovation, science and sustainable development with a focus on the needs of Kazakhstan.



Ambassador Erlan Idrissov meets with the members of the Kazakhstan PhD association in the UK.

Founded in 2017, the Association today is the **largest association of Kazakhstani scientists abroad** who are studying for a PhD programme at the best universities in the UK and Ireland. The members of Association include over 100 Kazakhstani PhD Candidates whose research areas span over Investment, Artificial Intelligence, Biotechnologies, Chemistry, Business Management, Medicine, Blockchain, Finance, Economics, Petrochemistry, Agriculture, Engineering, Law, Education, Robotics, Geology and IT. Since 2020, the Association also includes members from Canada, Australia, the U.S. and other European countries.

Association members are active participants in various research conferences and symposia. In 2018, the Associa-

tion founded an **annual Scientific Forum on Sustainable Development and Innovation** with the goal to support project development in Central Asia.

The Association has been at the forefront of organising **annual Job Fairs**, which serves as a top graduate recruitment exhibition for Kazakhstani graduates of the UK's top universities and a **brain drain solution**. It is also

engaged in providing training and master classes with the purpose to share best practices in the field of research methods.

The Association successfully contributes to the establishment of Kazakh-British partnership, and one of its core objectives is to establish institutional ties between Kazakhstan and British research centres, industries and business structures. Since its inception, the Association has helped and is helping to establish contacts between Kazakhstani organizations, British universities and specialists.

The Association works closely with the Embassy of Kazakhstan in the UK and with the British-Kazakh community. It maintains working relationship with the Department of Trade and Industry Scottish Enterprise, and compatriots

UK-based Kazakh & Student Societies

Kazakh-British Society UK
LSE Student Union Kazakh Society

UCL Kazakh Society
Aberdeen Kazakh Society
Lancaster Kazakh Society
Manchester Kazakh Society
Warwick Kazakh Society
Reading Kazakh Society
Cardiff Kazakh Society



<https://www.kpauk.org>
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working in global corporations, such as Google, Facebook, Siemens, Total, Shell, GE, etc., as well as founders of startups.

Aliya Sembayeva is the Founding President of the Kazakhstan PhD

Association in the UK and a Co-Chair of the Research Committee of the British-Kazakh Society. She is currently a final year PhD student at the University of Liverpool. Her research project is related to polymer mechanochemistry, namely the development of new polymers with self-healing properties. Ms Sembayeva is a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry and the American Chemical Society.

Kazakh British Young Professionals (KazBritYuppies)

The Kazakh British Young Professionals (KazBritYuppies) is a networking association of young and creative professionals from Kazakhstan who work in the United Kingdom.

KazBritYuppies members are active on Facebook where they maintain a group, however, they focus more on organising networking events which over the years have become extremely popular. The inaugural year alone saw some 30 networking events and a significant increase in membership.

Founded in 2016, it unites some 300 members aged between 25–35. One of KazBritYuppies' founders is Ms Rustina

Temir. She is an auditor at Deloitte and an Oh My Guide! travel platform blogger. When setting up the group Ms Temir envisioned KazBritYuppies as a creative platform to unite Kazakhstanis from various professional fields working in the UK.

The Group's cofounder Artur Tkhyia who works as a consultant at Bloomberg says KazBritYuppies is for like-minded professionals who strive for success.



Contact information:

Ms Rustina Temir: rustina.temir@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1013646432086294/?ref=bookmarks>

Instagram: [@kazbrityuppies](https://www.instagram.com/kazbrityuppies)

Visit Kazakhstan

We welcome you to discover **four facets of Kazakhstan's tourism – the 4 E's: Eco, Ethnic, Entertainment and Events.** Experience untouched nature and magnificent landscapes, unwind in authentic nomadic culture and gastronomy, try numerous entertainment options and enjoy vibrant festival and events of Kazakhstan.

Although suspended until 1 November 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the visa-free regime for UK citizens with all types of valid passports for a stay of up to 30 days was introduced in 2017. This welcome change has made life much simpler for both business and leisure travellers. It also opens up this beautiful country to you whether you wish to take a holiday entirely devoted to Kazakhstan, or are looking for an interesting and enjoyable experience en-route to your final destination.

EXPLORE KAZAKHSTAN

Whether you are a first-time visitor or returning to explore more of Kazakhstan, the brief overview of the 14 regions and three major cities of Kazakhstan below provides a great way of exploring different destinations and understanding how they fit together.

Kazakhstan is a country that is so vast that one visit is never enough! It truly has some great places to explore. Every region is different and has so much to offer.

Akmola Province



Burabay is a lake that gave the name to the Burabay National Park in Akmola Province. It features a rocky mushroom-shaped island, Zhumbaktas (A Mysterious Stone), that reaches an elevation of 20 metres (66 ft) above the water.

If you happen to visit the capital of Kazakhstan – Nur-Sultan, at least for a few days, be sure to explore its surroundings. Only in a few hours' drive, you can visit the **north-ernmost habitat of pink flamingos** or enjoy **trekking** or rock-climbing among the **beautiful lakes** and **mountains** covered with pine-tree forests, while staying at one of the spa-hotels.

Where to start?

- **Burabay National Park.** There are at least 14 lakes, surrounded by mountains and evergreen forest. The best view to the lakes is open from the top of Bolektau Mountain, which is very easy to climb. In addition to trekking,

climbing, swimming in lakes, boating, and other outdoor activities, you can visit a tourist centre with a yurt village to learn more about the culture of nomads, or Botai Museum, which demonstrates dwellings of the tribes, who first domesticated horses about 6000 years ago.

- **Korgalzhyn Reserve**, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The reserve attracts birdwatchers, especially in spring and autumn during seasonal migration of birds. The reserve is one of the few places where you can see pink flamingos in the wild.
- **ALZHIR Memorial Museum**, established in the location where Akmola concentration camp for the wives and children of 'motherland traitors' functioned during Soviet times. ALZHIR stands for the Akmola Labour Camp for Wives of Traitors of the Motherland.



A statue of a female prisoner at a Stalinist prison camp for the wives and children of men accused of betraying the Soviet state, now a memorial museum, is symbolically called Struggle and Hope

From May to October the weather is beautiful and warm, with an average of +25°C. In winter, they may be quite cold, but this does not stop those who love snow adventures – ice fishing, ice skating, skiing, snowboarding and many others.



The cliffs and capes of the northwestern and southern coasts of Lake Burabai create a unique landscape.

For more information, please visit: visitaqmola.kz.

Nur-Sultan

Named as the **'Singapore of the Steppes'** by Lonely Planet, Nur-Sultan is the first introduction to Kazakhstan for many travellers. **The world's youngest capital**, formerly known as Astana, it has already reinvented itself as one of the most innovative cities.

The city is constantly changing and rapidly expanding: new buildings appear every year and every time you visit, the city may seem quite different from what you remember from the last time.



Nur-Sultan sunlit by the setting winter sun.

From futurism to classic

New centre of Nur-Sultan, with wide avenues and unusual buildings, was built from scratch on the left bank of the Esil River (also spelled as Ishim); whereas the right bank of the river, with its calm and cosy atmosphere, still preserves the memory of the past.

During sightseeing on the left bank, you can visit:

- **Baiterek Tower**, with a viewing platform at 97 meters. The building embodies a legend about a mythical tree of life and a magic bird *Samruk*.
- **Khan Shatyr**, the largest tent-shaped building in the world, is a shopping mall, with restaurants, entertainment, and even an indoor beach; built in a neofuturist style, it was designed by **UK architect Norman Foster** and **UK engineers Buro Happold** led by Mike Cook.



The Kazakhstan Pavilion and Science Museum is the iconic, high-performing centerpiece of 2017 EXPO international exposition, which ran from June 10–September 10, 2017. The site has transformed into a post-expo development with cultural facilities, offices, research parks, and residential components.

- **Nur-Alem**, Future Energy Museum in the form of a sphere, each floor of which demonstrates different sources of energy.

The other part of the city contrasts quite noticeably with the left bank: old buildings and sights of the XIX century and Soviet period seem to take you in to the past; however, there is also a new district with the same unusual views and wide streets as on the left bank.

Some of the sights worth seeing are:

- Saken Seifullin Museum (the oldest building in the city), First Muslim School (today the building of a bank), trading house of merchant Matvey Kubrin (today Astana

shop), merchant Vasily Kubrin's house (State Archive), merchant Moiseyev's house (a hospital), etc., which were all built more than 100 years ago;

- 'Old square' on the right bank, and Beibitshilik avenue for a taste of the Soviet history;
- The snow-white mosque Hazret Sultan, the largest mosque in Central Asia, or the Palace of Peace and Accord in the form of a sparkling pyramid, also designed by **UK architect Norman Foster**.

We would also recommend to visit **The Astana Opera** and **The Astana Ballet** theatres, multi-genre repertoires of which are constantly enriched with masterpieces of world classics and modern performances.

This is only a few of the activities that the capital of Kazakhstan has prepared for you. We definitely recommend staying here for longer in order to discover more.

For more information, please visit: www.welcometonur-sultan.com.

Karagandy Province

The province is spread from Lake Balkhash to the Ulytau Mountains, having captured the vast territory of Central Kazakhstan. It is famous for its hidden gem – **the Karkaraly National Park** – a small, forested oasis-like mountain group surrounded by the endless steppe. You can also immerse in medieval history here at a **Mausoleum of Jochi, Genghis Khan's first-born son**. With **KarLag**, one of the largest GULAG camps, organised during the time of mass politi-

cal repressions in the USSR, this region is famous for dark tourism.

Historical sites of Karagandy province:

- **Karlag**, one of the largest branches of the GULAG camps, where the victims of political repression were sent during Soviet period. KarLag Museum is located in the former administrative building of the KarLag camps in Dolinka village, Karagandy province.
- Blue domed mausoleum of **Juchi Khan**, the eldest son of Genghis Khan, located in **Ulytau**. Other mausoleums worth visiting are Alasha Khan mausoleum and Dombaul mausoleum.
- **Petroglyphs** of Zangyrtas and Terekty-Aulie or ancient city Kent and Beskamyr settlement if you wish to explore earlier history of this region.



Coloured chalk formations in Akzhar Mountains in Central Kazakhstan.

Ideal places for trekking and taking photos:

- **Karkaraly National Park.** Trekking up to the mountains through pine forest to the mystical lake Shaitan-Kol and Bassein, finding a Buddhist monastery in the mountains, and much more.
- An alien landscape of the **Bektau Ata mountain range**, located on the northern shore of Lake Balkhash, is a destination for unusual photos and bouldering.
- **Kyzylarai mountains with the Aksoran summit** – the highest peak of Central Kazakhstan. Stay at guesthouses, meet locals and learn about life in small villages of Kazakhstan at Shabanbai bi village, located at the foothills of the Aksoran.



Lake Balkhash is one of the largest lakes in Asia and 15th largest in the world.



The Karkaraly National Park is famous for its lakes, rivers, and forests, striking in their beauty. Located on a territory of more than 90 hectares, it is home to five massive mountain ranges: Airtau, Buguly, Kent, Maten, and Shankoz.

Almaty Province

This region boasts the best of country's national parks with absolutely stunning landscapes. While heading to turquoise glacier lakes, find yourself venturing on a round of hiking or horse riding or simply unwinding into a warm welcome of local guesthouses.

The beauty and the natural diversity of Almaty province is difficult to compare with any other places: it amazes with contrasting combinations of marvellous landscapes, which replace one another almost every hundred kilometres. It is absolutely real to experience 4 seasons of the year – from winter to summer – in one single day!



A young girl swings over the magnificent Kim Assar gorge in the Zailiiski Alatau.

10 must-see places that will make you fall in love with the nature of Kazakhstan:

- Incredibly **picturesque lakes**, such as **the Kaindy Lake**, with its ‘submerged forest’, or **the Kolsai Lakes**, located among the mountains. Be sure to stop at Saty village in one of the guesthouses to get the warm welcome from locals and authentic experience.
- **The Charyn Canyon**, one of the oldest canyons in the world. Here grows the relic Ash Tree Grove, which survived the Ice Age.
- **The Big Almaty Lake**, a turquoise lake, which has become the landmark of Almaty.
- **Singing sand dunes in the Altyn Emel National Park**: during dry weather, a low rumble spreads across the steppes, resembling the sound of an organ. Among other ‘wonders’ of the national park are alien landscapes of the Aktau and the Katutau mountains.



The Charyn Canyon National Park is home to a dense concentration of natural arches.

- **A 120-meter waterfall Burkhan-Bulak**, hidden in a picturesque green gorge.
- **Turgen waterfalls** – the walking route to the waterfalls passes through a trout farm, an ostrich farm and an ethnic village (a tourist centre), making your adventure even more interesting.
- **The Assy Plateau**. Extremely beautiful plateau, where you can find nomadic yurts during summer.
- **Tamgaly Tas Tract** is famous for its ancient rock paintings – petroglyphs – as well as a popular rock-climbing destination.
- **Lake Tuzkol** – a salt-water lake attracts travellers with its impressive colours and a view to the Khan Tengri peak.
- **The Shalkode Valley** – another place with nomadic yurts in summer: horses, yurts, spectacular national games, and breath-taking scenery of mountains around...



Big Almaty Lake is natural alpine reservoir located at 2,511 metres above sea level.



The Valley of the Castles in the Charyn Canyon National Park takes its name from the shapes of the rock formations of orange-grey clays, marl, gritstone, and sandstone.

Almaty province seems to have gathered absolutely everything that a traveller may wish for. Here you can feel the history, merge with the nature, or even have an adventurous experience, such as hiking, horse-riding, rafting, etc.

For more information, please visit: zhetysu.travel.

Almaty

A beautiful buzzing city with a rich gastronomic scene and vibrant nightlife, it is charming and fabulous at any time of the year! It is virtually the only megalopolis in the world with a **world class après-ski resort**, which can be reached in just 30 minutes from the city centre! The city is located in the mountainous area of south-eastern Kazakhstan near the border with Kyrgyzstan in the foothills of the **Trans-Ili Alatau** at an elevation of 700–900 m (2,300–3,000



The Shymbulak Ski Resort is a great place for all levels of skiers.



The Shymbulak Ski Resort is the biggest and most modern ski-resort of Central Asia.



Soaring over the city's skyline, the Almaty Television Tower, a 371.5-metre-high steel tower, is located on high slopes of Kok-Tobe mountain, south-east of downtown Almaty.

feet), where the Large and Small Almatinka rivers run into the plain. In winter, it is incredibly cosy here: a lot of fluffy white snow covers huge spruces in the streets of Almaty, making the city look more like a decoration for Christmas movies. In spring and summer, Almaty will wrap you up with warmth, the scent of pine needles and mouth-watering smells coming from summer cafes and coffee shops. There is plenty of entertainment options here and absolutely for every taste!



With their imposing presence, the Zailiysky Alatau mountains are popular with Almaty city dwellers and tourists, offering incredible opportunities for hiking and trekking in the summer and skiing in the winter.

What to see and do in Almaty?

Some of the must-see locations in Almaty:

- **28 Panfilov Guardsmen Park** and the **Zenkov Ascension Cathedral**; Green Bazaar, where you can taste and buy local food; **Kok Tobe Park** on the top of the hill, where

you can get on a cable car and enjoy a stunning view of the city. Also, walk through Zhibek Zholy avenue and Panfilov street; visit the new square, admire the beauty of the local architecture. It is also worth visiting the old square or the Abay Square – something interesting is always happening there.

- City entertainment: choose any among many shopping centres, cinemas, restaurants, clubs and other entertainment places.



With its eye-catching golden domes and kaleidoscopic colour scheme, the Ascension Cathedral, a Russian Orthodox cathedral in Almaty, is made out of wood but without nails. Completed in 1907, its height is 56 meters tall, and it is one of the tallest wooden buildings in the world.

- Outdoor activities: **Medeu**, the highest skating rink at 1691 m above sea level, where you can experience skating in the open air with beautiful high mountains around; or the **Shymbulak Ski Resort**, ideal place for skiing both for

beginners and professional skiers, especially if you do not want to travel far from the city.

- Trekking outside the city: **Big Almaty Lake, Kok-Zhailau** or **Charyn Canyon** – incredible natural landscapes not far from Almaty, will be your best impression about your trip to Almaty.

At any time of the year, Almaty will welcome you with open arms – there is no bad weather here. Almaty is literally created for travel, so try to give it as much of your time as possible. Believe us, it is worth it!

For more information, please visit: visitalmaty.kz

Turkistan Province

The region's most prominent historical attraction is **the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi** inscribed into UNESCO's World Heritage List. The province is one of the most popular among travellers in Kazakhstan, with many ancient cities and ruins to explore the past of the **Great Silk Road**, mountaineering opportunities in the **Western Tien-Shan mountains**, variety of delicious national food offered in local restaurants, a spa-resort popular in the neighbouring countries, and exceptional hospitality shown to every guest.

The centre of the province, a city of **Turkistan** is an ancient capital of Kazakh Khanate, with 1500 years of history. The architecture of some preserved buildings is so amazing, that everyone might start to wonder – how could people create such beauty without modern tools?



The Aksu-Zhabagly National Park is located in the north-west of Talasski Alatau and the south of Karatau in the West Tien Shan. It is famous for its show of wild tulips in spring and is also a hot spot for birdwatchers.

Turkistan is considered as sacred for Kazakhs because of the **Khoja Ahmed Yasawi Mausoleum**, located in the city. Khoja Ahmed Yasawi was a poet and Sufi, a founder of Turkic Sufi order in Islam and is highly respected among believers.

Interesting sights and activities in Turkistan province:

- **Khoja Ahmed Yasawi Mausoleum**, built in XIV century, is a magnet for travellers in Turkistan. The mausoleum, an ancient city wall, the Hilvet underground mosque, the mausoleum of Rabiga Sultan Begim, an ancient bath and others, located nearby, are historical monuments, included the Azret-Sultan Museum-Reserve and protected by the museum. There is another site built in honour of the spiritual mentor of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi,

Arystan bab – **the Arystan bab Mausoleum** – located near the ancient settlement **Otrar**, about 60 km from Turkistan.

- **Ancient settlements** worth visiting are **Otrar** and **Sauran**. The Otrar settlement is one of the most ancient cities in Central Asia, which was a centre of trade, craft, arts and was of a significant diplomatic, military and strategic importance in those days. The Sauran settlement was mentioned in written sources from the X century. Thanks to restoration works being carried out in these settlements, travellers can explore the history of the Great Silk Road and imagine life in Central Asian cities many centuries ago.



The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmet Yassawi is an Islamic religious monument built in the Timurid architectural style famous for intricate geometric designs and turquoise and blue tiles. One of the most grandiose and best-preserved in the region, it is set in the centre of what once was the old city of Turkistan.



The Akmesht Cave, an unusual spot with captivating views accompanied by legends, is located 90 kilometres north of Shymkent and is perfect for a pilgrim's journey.

- **National parks and reserves**, such as the Sairam-Ugam National Park, the Aksu-Zhabagly Reserve and the Karatau Nature Reserve, with their canyons and rivers, wild tulips blooming in spring and other interesting plants and wildlife may be your wonderful eco-destination.
- **The Akmesht Cave** is a natural miracle of the Turkistan region and another location worth visiting. The cave has its own microclimate inside it: it is always cool and fresh inside the cave despite the hot weather outside, and there is mulberry bush growing right in the middle of the cave.
- **Trekking and hiking** in mountains, alpinism, rafting, fishing and other outdoor activities are also popular among travellers in Turkistan province.



One of the holiest places in Turkistan Province is the Mausoleum of Arystan Bab, built in the 12th century atop of the grave of Arystan Bab, a celebrated Turkic Sufi, poet and spiritual mentor of Khoja Ahmet Yassawi.

Shymkent

An ancient city on the **Silk Road**, the famous trading route from China to Europe, the city's trading history is still reflected in bustling bazaars. Shymkent welcomes those who would love to discover authentic flavour of Central Asia. Known from ancient times as a flourishing city on the Great Silk Road, nowadays Shymkent is the largest city in Kazakhstan in terms of area and is known as a heart of Southern Kazakhstan. The city's name is translated as 'a garden city', and if you come here, you will definitely understand why: the city is a real oasis in the middle of vast steppes.

What to do and see in Shymkent:

Entertainment in the city

There are seven huge shady parks, where you can see many animals and birds in their natural habitat. Be sure to visit the Arboretum, a favourite place for leisure walks, among not only travellers, but also locals.



A 10-metre statue of Baidibek Ata, an emblematic historical figure and warlord of South Kazakhstan, towers over Shymkent. Baidibek Ata was famous for his peace-building actions and for uniting the nomadic tribes of Kazakhstan in the early Middles Ages.

Supporting ‘the oasis city’ concept, Shymkent is famous for a huge number of water parks, where you can swim in pure and refreshing water, take a ride on a water slide or enjoy hydromassage. After such an active day, you will definitely want to eat – feel free to visit any restaurant serving quite rich, but incredibly delicious local treats: prices in Shymkent are very reasonable, and the food is varied.

Traditional dishes that you must try here are golden and crumbly, authentic local Pilaf, aromatic Lagman, Samsa, and much more.

Feel the history

After such a rich programme and entertainment, be sure to visit iconic and historical places in Shymkent, in order to feel the atmosphere of the ancient city as best you can:

- The ancient settlement **Sairam** is the birthplace of the great philosopher and theologian **Khoja Ahmed Yassawi**, and one of the largest administrative and commercial centres of the Middle Ages;
- Shymkent Museum of Local History and Museum of Victims of Political Repression;



The Shymkent Golden Eye is the largest observation wheel in Central Asia with a diameter of 50 m.

- **Ken-Baba Ethnopark**

It is also convenient to take sightseeing tours from Shymkent to the ancient sights of Turkestan province:

- Mausoleum of Arystan-Bab and Khoja Ahmed Yassawi Mausoleum;
- the Ancient city of Otrar;
- Akmeshit Cave, and many more.

Be sure to visit as many cultural and historical sights as possible, as Shymkent is a city with a rich history and past.

For more information, please visit: shymkent.gov.kz

East Kazakhstan Province

The Mysterious Altai Mountains and breath-taking natural wonders, clear blue lakes and magnificent snow-covered peaks make this place a perfect 'escape' destination for those seeking peace of mind and personal reflection.

The nature of East Kazakhstan combines all types of landscape that can be found separately in other parts of Kazakhstan: mountains, steppes, deserts, and even the taiga. The biggest cities in the province are Semey and Ust-Kamenogorsk (Oskemen), otherwise called "the gates of the mountainous Altai" because of its convenient location at the intersection of transport routes.

Depending on your preferences, you can visit one or several of these locations, popular among travellers in East Kazakhstan:

- **The Katon-Karagay National Park**, with its numerous waterfalls and beautiful lakes with spectacular views is definitely a destination for digital detox.



Built in 2007, the Andreyev Russian Orthodox Cathedral has become an architectural landmark of the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk.

- **The sacred mountain Belukha**, covered with eternal glaciers, is the highest summit of the Altai Mountains. The mountain attracts thousands of climbers every year.
- Other places to connect with nature are Ridder city and **the West Altai Reserve** or **Lake Markakol** with crystal-clear water in the **Markakol Reserve**.
- One of the most unusual landscapes in the province is **Kiin-Kerish clay canyons**. Also called as the “City of Spirits”, this alien landscape resembles red flames coming from the earth.
- **The Semipalatinsk Nuclear Testing Site** attracts those who are interested in Soviet Union history and the dark sides of the past. Be sure to take all necessary precautions and get a professional guide if you are planning to visit the site.



Stronger than Death monument in Semipalatinsk was unveiled on August 29, 2001 in memory of victims of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site and the 10th anniversary of its closure.

- **Lake Alakol**, known for its black beaches and healing waters, is an attractive birdwatching destination during seasonal migration of birds.



Belukha, a three-peaked mountain massif of the Altai Mountains, rises along the border of Kazakhstan and Russia.

For more information, please visit: toureast.kz.

Atyrau Province

Be it Lake Inder, surrounded by salty shores and limestone hills, creating a mind-blowing view, or the Kigach river valley, **the northernmost point of lotus blooming**, – Atyrau, despite its image of oil region, has definitely got something to offer.

Atyrau province is an inexhaustible storehouse of impressions for a traveller who craves for amazing and unearthly landscapes. The centre of the province – Atyrau city is located on the northern coast of the **Caspian Sea** and is divided into two half by the powerful **Ural River**. From here, you can start your trip to the interesting sights of the province, described below.



The equestrian statues of Issatai and Makhambet, who led an uprising against Tsarist colonial policies in 19th century and today are the symbols of freedom and patriotism, stand in the centre of the namesake square in Atyrau.

Exploring unusual landscapes:

- **Akkergeshen plateau**, incredible forms of chalk deposits. Wandering among these snow-white rocks you can

stumble upon the remains of ancient animals, literally imprinted in the rock.

- **Besshoky Hill** – the picturesque relief of gypsum mounds, dotted with huge karst caves, up to 150 meters in diameter.
- **Inder Mountains.**
- **Munayly-Mola field** – smooth huge black stone balls have created a great futuristic landscape for photos.
- **Lake Inder** is fed from many saline sources, its water and mud contains many high-quality salts, therefore, it is believed to have healing properties.
- **River Kigach**, where you can enjoy blooming of pink lotus starting from mid-July.



The Inder Lake, a large drainless salt lake located 10 km east of the Ural River and 150 km to the north of the Caspian Sea coastline, attracts visitors to the scenic view of its emerald water surface. Its mud and salty water are believed to relieve joints, asthma, bronchitis and gynaecological diseases.

Mangystau Province

Millions of years ago the Tethys Ocean covered this land. Its remnants, fossils of long extinct species, are easy to find today. Vast clay deserts, salt pans, limestone mountains... You will remember these unearthly landscapes for years to come.

Anyone who has ever had a chance to explore Mangystau province, unanimously confirms that this peninsula with its breath-taking landscapes is very unique. It has its own special energy, most landscapes seem to be intended for shooting space movies with aliens and other planets. 5 million years ago, this place was hidden in the depths of the ancient ocean of Tethys, the waters of which created such bizarre cliffs and caves of beautiful colours. You must come here at least for a week in order to have time to see all the sights of the province.



Waves crash against the rocky shore of the Caspian Sea.

What to see and do in Mangystau:

For a comfortable journey through the local beauties during summer, you will need an off-road vehicle, plenty of water, light clothing and everything that protects you from the scorching sun. There are no shady groves and forests, as in other parts of the country, but there is something much more interesting!

Fantastic landscapes you will never forget:

- **Chalky mountains of Bozjyra** (also spelled as Boszhira) are two sharp peaks, from the base of which you can admire the quaint castle wall.
- **The 'Valley of Balls'** – a valley covered with huge spherical rock formations striking by their unearthly appearance.



Seemingly coming out of sci-fi movies or otherworldly adventures, Mangystau is the region where an ancient ocean, Tethys, once seethed and reigned.



Alien landscapes of Mangystau Province are filled with chalk mountains, along the huge salt marshes, cut by the wind and water in the form of magnificent temples and palaces.



The vast Caspian Sea, the largest landlocked body of water in the world, is the gateway between Europe and Asia. Nature abounds here and many visitors flock to explore the habitat for rare and interesting species.

- Other locations worth considering are the **Sherkala Mountain** – snow-white rock, which changes its appearance, if you go around it; the **Kapamsai Canyon**, where you can see a real workshop, where tools during the Stone Age era were made; **Zhygylgan** – ‘the fallen ground, etc.

Historical and power places:

The pearls of Mangystau are underground mosques – Beket-ata, Shakpak-ata, Shopan ata, Sultan-epe and others, which attract many believers and travellers from all over Kazakhstan and the world.

Do not be afraid of the lack of ideal roads to many sights, hot weather, the need to walk several kilometres and staying in camps in steppes – all these are the traveller’s daily life and they pay off in full for unforgettable impressions that Mangystau leaves in the heart of every traveller.

For more information, please visit: visitmangystau.kz.

Kyzylorda Province

If you are fascinated by the universe and like to travel off the beaten track, then be sure to come to this region. There is the **Baikonur Cosmodrome**, the world’s first and largest spaceport, which you can visit with a guided tour.

Located in the hot southern region of Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda province pleases travellers with three hundred sunny days a year, unusual natural landscapes and historical heritage.

From Kazakh steppes to the Space

One of the main places, which attracts large tour groups, is the Baikonur Cosmodrome. This is the first and the largest spaceport in the world, and a historical place, from where the spaceship with the first man to go to space onboard was launched. Travellers can witness space launches and experience unforgettable emotions in the place full of history, mystery and adventure.

Other places of interest in Kyzylorda province:

The vanishing **Aral Sea** is another 'attraction' for travellers, particularly for those, who are interested in history, environmental and dark tourism. A remote town of Aralsk,



Kyzylorda Province is home to the Baikonur Cosmodrome, the world's first spaceport for orbital and human launches and the largest operational space launch facility.



A beautiful sunset over the Aral Sea, where fish are present again in sufficient numbers for some fishing to be viable.



A rocket launches from the Baikonur Cosmodrome.

which used to be the main fishing port, a local museum, displaying the shrinkage of the Sea, abandoned ships in the desert... Nowadays, thanks to the **Kokaral dam**, which regulates the water level of the Northern Aral Sea, the distance between the Sea and Aralsk has decreased from 100 to 25 km. Nevertheless, there is still vast area of desert and strolling camels in the place, where there used to be a sea, and flourishing fishing industry.



Cumulus fluffy clouds float over the vast steppes of Kyzylorda province.

The location of the province in the southern parts of Kazakhstan means that it is relatively warmer here in winter than in other parts of the country, but keep in mind when planning your trip in summer: in July the temperature in the sun may reach 50°C (122°F).

Kostanay Province

Its relict pine forests and crystal-clear lakes draw outdoors lovers. The incredibly rich fauna makes this region a hotspot for hunting and fishing. Locals have always known this place as a destination for hunting, fishing and relaxing outdoor recreation in the picturesque area.

What to do while travelling in Kostanay province?

- Engage in outdoor activities: **hunting and fishing** and much more.
- Visit historical sites: **the Ekdirin monument of VIII-IX centuries**, buildings for ritual ceremonies, or **the Torgai geoglyphs**, huge ground-based drawings made up of burial mounds, which are 2 to 10 thousand years old in average.
- Explore the beauty of the local nature: **Naurzum Nature Reserve**, with its 1000 years old relict pine forest and endemic birch trees and the Amankaragay pine forest.

In summer, there are no record temperature fluctuations in Kostanay province, on average it does not exceed 30°C, which is quite suitable for travelling in any month from May to October. In winter, the entertainment circle is narrower, but for lovers of hunting and ice-fishing, snow and frost only add to the enthusiasm.

For more information, please visit: visitkostanay.kz

North Kazakhstan Province

This place is a land of myriad lakes, rivers and birch forests. Thousands of years ago, **horse was first domesticated here** launching a new era in the history of mankind.



A beautiful house of merchant Alexei Yuzefovich was built in 1909 and today is home to the Museum of Fine Arts in Petropavlovsk.



Pine forests on the mountain slopes of the Kazakh Uplands in North Kazakhstan.

Completely different from the southern parts of Kazakhstan, in terms of climate, nature and historical sights, North Kazakhstan province will make you feel the contrast and diversity in the country.

What to see and do in North Kazakhstan province?

- **Imantau and Shalkar Lakes** are located in a picturesque area not far from each other, surrounded by pine-tree forest and granite low hills. Trekking in the forest, camping on lake shores, while enjoying the beauty of nature might be a perfect holiday during summer.
- **Abylai Khan Residence Museum**, the great Kazakh ruler, who united Kazakh tribes in XVIII century against foreign invaders, is a must-see for those who wish to learn more about the history of the region.
- **Astrophysical Observatory**, where you can observe the starry sky, even during the day.



A colourful winter sunset over the frozen Yessil River in North Kazakhstan.



North Kazakhstan is home to the most beautiful birch tree forests in the country.

For more information, please visit: visit.sko.kz.

Pavlodar Province

Drive along a steep serpentine road and admire the landscapes of the **Bayanaul National Park**: mountains covered with evergreen pine tree forest, picturesque valleys and azure lakes, with **Lake Jasybay** being the crown jewel of the region.

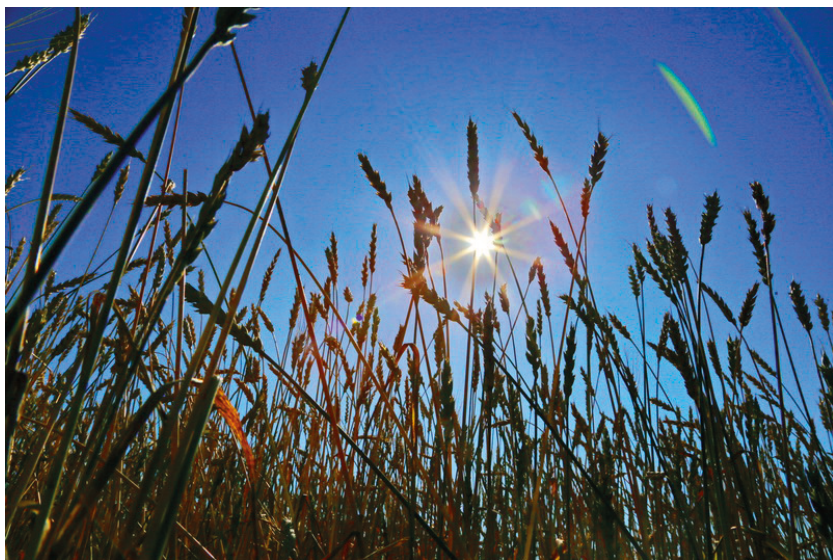
With picturesque nature destinations like Bayanaul or some industrial places like Bogatyr coal mine, open for tourists, Pavlodar province may be attractive for travellers with various interests.



"Kempirtas" (Witch Stone) is one of the landmark rock formations of the Bayanaul National Park.



The Bayanaul National Park is famous for its fresh healing air and landscapes of incredible beauty with high cliffs, dense pine forests and clear lakes.



The sun shines through ripe wheat ears in Pavlodar Province.

What to see and do in Pavlodar province

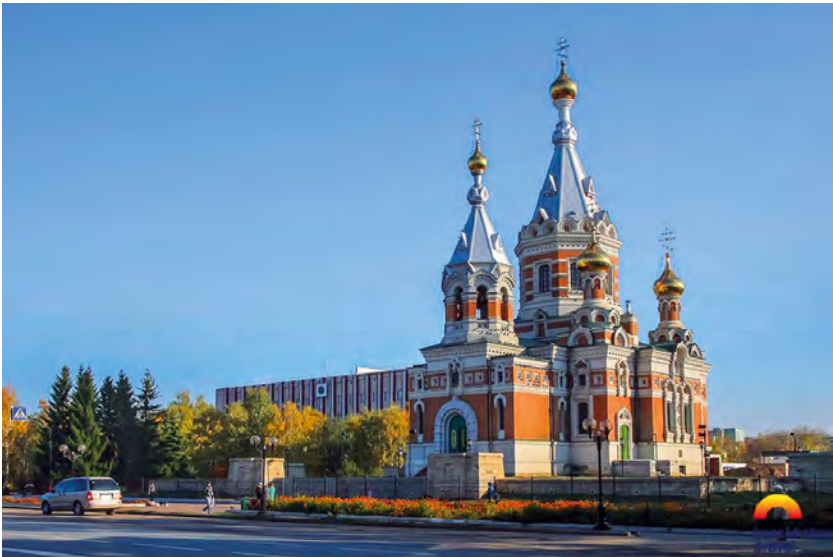
Start your travel in Pavlodar province with a visit to Bayanaul National Park. Mountain ranges, covered with evergreen pine-tree forest in the middle of Kazakh steppes, four lakes with azure surface at the foot of the mountains, the fantastic views that opens up from a serpentine road.... This is a true miracle of nature; no one would ever wish to leave this place.

It will also be interesting to go on a sightseeing tour to Ekibastuz, to see the Bogatyr open-pit coal mine. This is the largest coal mine in the world, which produces up to 50 million tons of coal each year.

For more information, please visit: pvl14.kz.

West Kazakhstan Province

Sitting at the border with Russia this part of the country is sandwiched between Europe and Asia for centuries serving as a trade hub. Monuments and local museums will tell you the story of the province, particularly of the vibrant XIX century events.



The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Oral was consecrated in 1907. In Soviet times, the church was turned into a museum of atheism and a planetarium was organized under one of the domes. After a November 1990 rally demanding the reopening of the church and resumption of religious services, the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church.

We would recommend to start your trip in West Kazakhstan province from its administrative centre, Uralsk (also spelled as Oral), founded in 1584. Frequent economic and cultural interactions with Russia in the past left their mark on the city, leaving behind a huge number of architectural

monuments of the time, museums and other historically significant places. The impressions from the trip to the western part of Kazakhstan will be created by a touch of history, mysticism and fascination with wild nature.

What to see and do in West Kazakhstan province?

- **Bokey Horde Museum** is one of the most visited museums in Western Kazakhstan, organized right at the site, where one of the last Kazakh khans, **Zhangir Khan**, had his residence in XIX century. Almost all the buildings erected two centuries ago have been restored and now they tell the story of one of the most progressive rulers in Kazakh steppes and the time he lived.
- Also you might consider visiting the Museum of History and Ethnology, the Zhangir Khan Museum, the estate of Yemelyan Pugachev, a leader of a popular insurrection during the reign of Catherine the Great, as well as many other cultural centres in the city of Uralsk.
- Some of the nature attractions of the province include **the Akkum Desert**, which is believed to have been preserved since the ice age; **the Sarkyrama Waterfall**, which is known as the smallest waterfall in Kazakhstan, etc.

Aktobe Province

Landmark of the region is a snow-white mountain ridge composed of limestone and vast steppes covered with wild tulips during spring. Aktobe is also a homeland of Dimash, young singer who won the hearts of people across the world.

For those who love traveling by car, or, are just in the eternal search for adventure, Aktobe province prepared a lot of surprises.

Beauty of the nature is different here:

- Aktolagay Plateau. Stay here for at least 1–2 days to go around and explore as many bizarre snow-white rocks and caves as possible, search for fossils, and enjoy the views of the Chess Pieces Valley.
- While traveling in the province during the spring (April – early May), be sure to stop in the steppe to see the flowering of wild tulips. Two species are most common here: *Bieberstein and Schrenk tulips*, both listed in the Red Book.



Stretching for 90 km, chalk cliffs and ledges of Plateau Aktolagai in Aktobe province once formed the bottom of the brackish Sarmatian Sea that some 15 million years ago covered the territory of the Aral-Caspian basin.



The Aktobe area produces numerous phosphatized shark teeth and fish bones, as well as remains of marine reptiles. Scientists believe that abundant fish resources likely attracted pterosaurs – the flying reptiles – that may have spent some of their time around the coastline.

If you love and admire **Dimash Kudaibergen** as much as we do, in his homeland you can visit the places where he studied, and maybe meet those who know the famous singer in person. Other tourist attractions in the city of Aktobe are the Park of the First President, the Aktobe Museum of Local History, Nurdaulet and Nur-Gasyr mosques, etc.

Add to all this diversity a very pleasant fact: in the summer it is rarely very hot here, usually the temperature does not exceed +25°C. In winter, it is quite warm too, with the lowest temperature in January -14 degrees.

For more information, please visit: www.visitaktobe.kz.

Zhambyl Province

In spring, here you can see a wonderful phenomenon: **the flowering of wild tulips** of various shapes and colours. The province is one of the highlights of Kazakhstan, for those who are into ecotourism, as well as wishing to explore **history of the Silk Road**.

Local travel guides can offer excursion routes through the mountain gorges and sand dunes. Many historical places and cultural attractions in the province, add colour and impressions of such a rich journey.

Nature of Zhambyl province

- **The Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve**, is an ideal place for ecotourism. This region is considered as **the birthplace of tulips**. Tulips of various shapes and colours, many of which are listed as endangered in the Red Book of Kazakhstan, grow here in the wild.
- **The Koksai gorge**. Located in the Reserve, the gorge and the canyon are highly popular among travellers.

Historical sites

- **The Akyrtaş Palace** is a historical monument of the VIII-IX centuries.
- Many mausoleums, each of which has its own beautiful, sometimes even sad story that has come down from the depths of the centuries: mausoleums of Aisha-Bibi and Babaji-Khatun, Karakhan, Dautbek and Shokai Datka mausoleums.
- The architectural complex **Tekturmas**.
- **The Kali-Yunus bath** in Taraz, built in XIX century.

For more information, please visit: taraztour.kz.

History & Culture

A BRIEF HISTORY

Kazakhstan is best known historically as a cross-roads of people and cultures. Over the centuries the Kazakh steppe saw some of the world's greatest conquerors, including Alexander the Great, Timur, and Genghis Khan. It was neighbour to the Safavid Empire of Persia, the Mughal Empire of India, and the many great Chinese dynasties, while forming part of the Mongol Empire, the Timurid Empire, and the Russian Empire. The civilisations that prospered in Kazakhstan over the centuries were among the most powerful and progressive of their eras.

The Kazakh khanates emerged in the centuries after the Mongol Empire fell away, as the people of Central Asia consolidated their land and created the outlines of the first Kazakh nation. The Kazakh Khanate was founded by Sultans Kerey and Zhanibek in 1465. The Khanate was located roughly on the territory of present-day Kazakhstan and was the first sovereign state of the Kazakhs.

The formation of the independent Kazakh Khanate began when several tribes under the rule of Sultans Kerey and Zhanibek departed from the Khanate of Abulkhair Khan. The sultans led their people toward Mogolistan, eventually settling in the area between rivers Chu and Talas in modern-day south-eastern Kazakhstan and founding an independent state.

Between the 17th and 19th centuries the Kazakh people fought numerous wars against Chinese and Dzhungar tribal confederations but survived intact. Kazakhstan was fully incorporated into the Russian Empire in late 19th cen-

tury and became the second largest republic of the Soviet Union of the 20th century. On 25 October 1990, Kazakhstan declared itself a sovereign state, and on 16 December 1991, Kazakhstan proclaimed its full independence.

SEVEN FACETS OF THE GREAT STEPPE

Since Kazakhstan has become a modern, independent and increasingly self-confident nation, the country has led a concerted drive to study and promote its history and culture.

Modern Kazakhstan is undoubtedly connected to, and developed from, the historical societies and civilisations which used to inhabit the territory now known as Kazakhstan. Any understanding and appreciation of modern Kazakhstan must involve an understanding of its ancient history, for several reasons:

- a) the quasi-state nomadic associations which grew before the formal formation of Kazakhstan are a key element of modern Kazakh identity.
- b) many cultural achievements of the nomadic civilisation which have spread across the world have their foundation in this region.
- c) the ancestors of Kazakhstan had a connection to the most advanced technological innovations of their time.
- d) the names and origins of a number of Kazakh tribes and clans are hundreds and hundreds of years older than the term 'Kazak', suggesting that a history of 'Kazakhstan' is a comprehensive history of the region – the Sakas, the Huns, and the Proto-Turkic ethnic

groups all had a role in the ethnogenesis of modern Kazakhstan.

It is against this understanding that First President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the concept of ‘Seven Facets of the Great Steppe’. It is a drive to identify and celebrate – both within Kazakhstan and across the world – the rich history of the country and its people as well as the part played by the region in global civilisation.

These efforts stem from recognition that a greater knowledge and understanding of shared roots and values is critical for the health of a nation. As seen across the world, such knowledge helps bind a country and its people together. It can also provide, if nations escape the trap of becoming prisoners of this past, a powerful springboard for success in the future.

There is, as Seven Facets of the Great Steppe demonstrates, a huge amount to celebrate in Kazakhstan’s history, a common history of the many ethnic groups which have lived in the territory of Kazakhstan for many hundreds of years. The domestication of the horse and the advanced production of metals, both of which can be traced back to these lands, are unquestionably hugely important in human development.

By placing these initiatives firmly within the broader ‘Ruhani Zhangyru’ (“The Spiritual Re-Birth of the Nation”) programme launched in 2017, First President Nazarbayev, however, showed that the focus should remain firmly on the years ahead. He believes, no matter how rich the past of these lands, the decades to come hold even more promise. It is this increasingly peaceful and prosperous future that he wants for the country to achieve.

Seven Facets of the Great Steppe

Many objects which now form an essential part of modern life and culture originated in Kazakhstan. The ancestors of the Kazakhs repeatedly changed the course of political and economic history over vast areas of Eurasia.

1. **Culture of horsemanship:** The domestication of horses first took place in the territory of modern Kazakhstan, as did the culture of horsemanship which developed. The ancestors of Kazakhstan were the first to create protective armour for the horse and the rider from armour plates.
2. **Ancient metallurgy of the Great Steppe:** With its vast metal deposits, Kazakhstan was one of the first centres for the establishment of metallurgy, including the production and smelting of bronze, copper, lead, iron, silver and gold.
3. **Animal style:** The use of images of animals in everyday life was a symbol for Kazakh ancestors of the interrelation of man and nature, pointing to the spiritual guides of the Steppe people. These images were often produced using the highest production techniques of the time, including the smelting and casting of copper and bronze, and the complex manufacturing of gold sheets.
4. **Golden Warrior:** In 1969, 'Kazakhstan's Tutankhamun' was discovered in Issyk. The skilful craftsmanship of the golden warrior revealed a rich mythology, reflecting power and aesthetics of the Steppe civilisation.

5. **Cradle of the Turkic world:** Altai is of great importance for the history of the Kazakhs and other peoples of Eurasia. These majestic mountains not only decorated the lands of Kazakhstan, but were also the cradle of the Turkic peoples.
6. **The Great Silk Road:** The unique location of Kazakhstan, in the centre of Eurasia, has contributed to the emergence of transit 'corridors' between different countries and civilizations since ancient times. These routes were transformed into the Great Silk Road system - a transcontinental network of trade and cultural ties between East and West, North and South of Greater Eurasia.
7. **The birthplace of apples and tulips:** The foothills of the Alatau are the historic homeland of apples and tulips, and Kazakhstan is the keeper of the world's original apple tree — the Sievers apple tree. Around the world, there are now more than 3,000 varieties of cultivated tulips, most of which are descendants of ancient Kazakh local flowers.

The Botai Settlement and Domestication of Horse

It is a well-established fact that the Great Steppe gave the world horse breeding and the culture of horsemanship. Not coincidentally it is also here, in the great steppes of Kazakhstan, that horses transitioned from prey to domestic pets around 3500 B.C.



The Botai settlement excavation site in Akmola Province has provided persuasive evidence that horses were first domesticated in the Great Steppe of Kazakhstan some 6,000 years ago.

In 2009, archaeologists announced that semi-sedentary people of the Botai settlement in Akmola region in the north of Kazakhstan appeared to have been the first to tame, harness for work and ride horses between 4,000 and 6,000 years ago, a millennium earlier than previously thought.

The Botai sites are located in the centre of the natural dwelling range of the tarpan (meaning “wild horse”, “mustang” in Kazakh), also known as Eurasian wild horse, that was the likely ancestor of the domestic horse.

Bones and artefacts excavated at the sites show the Botai people’s close relations with horses since they left behind fewer bones from other animals. As a matter of fact, no other prehistoric culture was so dependent on a diet and economy based on the horse.

Unlike earlier hunters who had small temporary camps, the Botai people lived in large, permanent settlements (over 160 semi-subterranean houses made of adobe and roofed over with saplings and clay were uncovered at Botai).



The settlement of Botai had over 160 pit houses where ancient sedentary pastoralists once dwelled.

Archaeological excavations of ample horse bones and artefacts at Botai provide persuasive evidence that horses were first domesticated in the Great Steppe of Kazakhstan:

- first, bones found at Botai belonged in equal numbers to male and female horses. Bones unearthed at other hunter sites were mainly of female horses because mares are easier to hunt.
- second, archaeologists uncovered large numbers of full skeletons at the Botai sites, which may indicate the horses were slaughtered at the site rather than killed out on the steppe then cut into pieces and carried back to

the site. Moreover, the size and shape of the Botai horse skeletons were strikingly different and significantly slimmer than those of wild horses.

- third, archaeologists found marks on the horses' teeth and damage to jawbones similar to that found on horses who use bridles and could have been caused only by bit wear.
- fourth, Botai pottery yielded another strand of evidence: residues of carcass fat and fatty acids in the clay pots likely came from mare's milk.

Domestication of horses has long been acknowledged as a seminal event in the history of humankind. Unlike other domesticated animals such as dogs, cattle, sheep and pigs, horses are notable for their multifaceted roles in people's lives. The Botai excavations placed an earlier time for the horse-man relationship, a relationship that has had a tremendous social, economic and geopolitical importance, promoting communications, locomotion, ploughing, dairy and meat production and warfare. The domestication of the horse gave the ancient people on the Kazakh steppes incredible superiority.

Worth noting is the fact that archaeologists uncovered remains of chariots at a site called Petrovka, 400 miles to the east on the Yessil River, also in northern Kazakhstan. Thus, inhabitants of the Petrovka settlement whose culture flourished between 1700 and 1500 B.C. appear to be the first people to develop chariots during the Bronze Age.

Finally, the breakthrough discovery of the Botai culture and an early date for horse domestication have important implications for fixing the period of migrations of preagricultural Eurasian societies into Europe and elsewhere as well as the spread of Indo-European languages.

Oldest Known Pants Originated in Central Asia

Scholars have found evidence that first pants were invented over 3,000 years ago by nomadic horse-riders of Central Asia. The most ancient pair of trousers have been extracted from the mummies at the Yanghai cemetery in the Tarim Basin, in western China, a region which was historically a part of the Silk Road route between the West and the East.



The oldest known 3,000-year-old pair of pants with woven leg decorations belonged to nomadic horsemen in Central Asia.

Until now, the oldest known trousers which are roughly 2,500 years old were of Scythian nomads. The Tarim Basin pants are dated to the period between the 13th and the 10th century B.C. and are believed to be a predecessor of modern riding trousers.

Before the invention of trousers, ancient people wore gowns, robes, tunics, or togas. But once horse-riding was mastered in the Great Steppe, it came with trousers. The Tarim Basin discovery supports previous work suggest-

ing that the invention of pants is related to a revolutionary epoch of horse-riding ushered in by the nomads of Central Asia.

The birthplace of pants is hardly a surprise. Trouser-making should have come shortly after domestication of the horse, which happened around 3500 B.C. also in the Great Steppe as evidenced by the Botai settlement excavations in northern Kazakhstan. It is here, in present-day Akmola region, that semi-sedentary people of the Botai culture first tamed and rode horses. Ancient pants from this region, however, are not likely to have been preserved because of its wetter climate than that of the Tarim Basin.

As mobile pastoralism spread across Eurasia, so did this ground-breaking achievement in the history of cloth-making. The origin of the pants is confirmed by the DNA of the Tarim mummies which show they were of a Caucasian physical type, with closest affiliation to the Bronze Age nomadic pastoralists of Kazakhstan, Central Asia and Southern Siberia.

Additionally, hordes of bronze weaponry and tools, together with horse gear as grave goods, were recovered in the Tarim tombs, and these striking artefacts have a resemblance to a series of Bronze Age discoveries found on the Central Asian steppes belonging to what is called the Andronovo Culture. All this supports the idea that trousers were brought to the Tarim Basin by horse-riding peoples of Central Asia.

Decorated with embroidery, the world's oldest pants were sewn together from three woven pieces of fabric, one piece for each leg from waistband to hemline at the ankle and a cross-shaped piece for the crotch bridging the gap between

the two side-cloths. The garment parts were shaped on a loom so the tailoring did not involve cutting. The pants provided bodily protection and freedom of movement and were undoubtedly made for horse-riding and mounted warfare.

Noteworthy is the fact that the Tarim mummies were completely dressed and wore a pair of boots. The boots might have been made specifically for horse-riding since they appear to be very uncomfortable for walking. This find seems to support a long-held assumption that it is ancient Turkic nomads who invented boots and then carried them to China, India, Russia and Europe.

Ancient Metallurgy of the Great Steppe

Four thousand years ago, ancient masters turned the Kazakh land, rich in metal ores, into one of the first centres of metallurgy. By doing so they basically changed the course of civilisation and produced copper for local needs but also as traded metalware along the Silk Road.

Traces of ore smelting and ancient mines uncovered by archaeologists near the present-day town of Zhezkazgan in central Kazakhstan provide ample evidence of the grand scale of the ancient metallurgy flourished in the Great Steppe. The heart of ancient metallurgy was the city of Milykuduk. Kazakh ancestors discovered the secrets of smelting ore benefiting from the rich mineral resources found in the heart of what is now Central Kazakhstan.

Through daily observations, the ancient people discovered copper ore's property to melt. Stones placed around hearths

melted by heavy fire and left incrustations whose traces can be observed even today. The abundance of ore-rich stones and barrel-copper became the key to the success of the first ancient metallurgists of the Great Steppe.

Metallurgy of that era was a secret art. First copper products were so striking for the ancient man that they acquired special, sacred significance and were owned exclusively by shamans. Some of the burials of the people of the Copper-Stone and early Bronze age found and uncovered in the present-day Kazakhstan have traces of rituals of worshipping the metal. Pieces of copper ore, slag, copper ingots were placed in the tomb of the deceased smelter.

Scientists first learned of the ancient copper production in Kazakh steppes in 18th century when an academic expedition led by a German-born historiographer Gerhard Miller visited the region. Archaeologists discovered well-preserved remnants of an ancient furnace with a slag. Later many more ancient metallurgic sites were discovered in the Ulytau steppe in Central Kazakhstan. First melting was carried out on fire and only much later in special furnaces which were found in the Zhezkazgan area during the excavation of copper-smelting centres. They stretched along the channels of the Kengir and Zhezdy rivers at intervals of 3 to 8 km.

The main city of ancient Kazakh metallurgists, Milykuduk, was located 12 km south-east of the centre of modern Zhezkazgan in the valley of the Zhezdy River, stretching for 700 m. It was a settlement where remains of residential and business buildings, workshops and warehouses were unearthed.

Excavation of Milykuduk produced rich material for researchers: masons' hammers, large animal blades used as scoops for raking ore as well as ore-crushing tools. Pieces of oxidized copper ore, porous burnt stones, rough chip-pers, pickles, small grains of copper were found in 1-meter deep pits.

The ancient masters of the Great Steppe never stopped perfecting the production of new, more durable metals, which opened up opportunities for them to accelerate technological progress. This is indicated by the 15 round copper-smelting furnaces of the Bronze Age, with a diameter of up to 2.5 and a depth of up to 2 meters, found during excavations. They also point to a high technological development of the steppe civilizations that existed on the land of Kazakhs in ancient times.

The Atasu I Settlement

The Atasu I Settlement is located some 300 km north-east of the town of Zhezkazgan in Karaganda region. Surrounded by mountains on three sides, the settlement was erected on an elevated site on the left bank of River Mynbasai, the Atasu's right tributary. The total area of the settlement is more than 15,000 square metres.

Excavation works at Atasu started in early 1970s and over the years archaeologists unearthed 25 copper-smelting complexes which contained furnaces with flue ducts and various additional structures used in metallurgic processes, from roasting to smelting and founding. Research teams uncovered hundred-meter-long open-casts suggesting that mining there had continued for several centuries.

The Atasu settlement became the first site in Kazakhstan where monuments of the full metallurgic cycles and chaîne opératoire of the ancient smelting process were uncovered: from furnace design, tools used, charging, to smelting and founding and other operations.

Excavations showed that casting and further refinement of finished products had been carried out within the settlements, as evidenced by the numerous finds of foundry moulds, crucibles, and smelting ladles. Main items were cast in single-leaf or double-leaf forms.

The copper-smelting furnaces discovered at Atasu differ from those found in other areas across Eurasia in design, size and functional use. The Atasu furnace is a conical structure of the so-called shaft type with its main and working sections on the continental ground. They were made from local material using fireclay and marble slabs. Researchers also found traces of inner coating and air blast pipes. Furnaces were of single use and that is why needed application of inner coating before each smelting. Atasu furnaces must have operated with powerful artificial air blast: air blast pipes, at times 10 or more metres long, produced draft and helped to dry vessels faster.

Finds at the settlement show that Atasu foundry craftsmen had excellent knowledge of the performance of alloys and ligatures, product functions and alloy compositions, which implies not only their professional skills, but also specialisation.

Copper-smelting complexes and tools found in the Atasu multilayer settlements testify that mining and metallurgy in Central Kazakhstan were the region's permanent feature. The total amount of ore mined in the ancient mines of

Central Kazakhstan is still unknown. However, the most conservative calculation of geologists says that only in ancient Dzhezkazgan no less than 1 million tons were mined. These colossal amounts of mined ore and smelted copper indeed make Central Kazakhstan one of the world centres of ancient metallurgy, with Atasu being its very heart.

Animalistic style

For millennia, the ancient people of the Great Steppe lived in harmony with their surroundings. They developed sophisticated culture and art, with the most impressive element of their heritage being animal motifs engraved on metal and moulded and carved on wood, bone or leather.

The most outstanding pieces that belonged to Saka art were recovered in the 17th–19th centuries and now are part of the collection at the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia. Later excavations of a number of kurgans throughout Kazakhstan unearthed a great number of gold objects, as well as bronze, iron, silver artefacts of compelling beauty. Those were mainly arms and jewellery that were used to decorate horse harnesses, leather belts and personal clothing.

The uncovered objects engraved in the animal style demonstrate the keen observation of nature, realistic depictions of animal forms and movements by the ancient steppe people. They attest to the knowledge and mastery of metal casting, plastic shaping and decorative techniques by the ancient inhabitants of Kazakhstan. The animal style developed by them was fashioned in a new and characteristically their own manner. Many decorative objects they produced were made of precious materials and of superb workmanship.



Belt buckles with representation of a pair of deer made of gold made in 5–3 century B.C. were found at the Zhalauly cemetery, Almaty region.



A belt tip with representations of argali made of gold and turquoise (5–3 century B.C.) was uncovered at the Zhalauly cemetery, Almaty region.



The artistic style of nomadic tribes that roamed present-day Kazakhstan was distinctive for its strictly limited set of canonical poses of the animals: particularly impressive were figures of hoofed animals represented in a crouching position with legs tucked beneath their bodies and depicted with astonishing skill.

The most prevalent representations were of the following four groups of animals:

- cattle (pigs, deer, moose, argali, horse);
- predatory beasts (big cats, wolves);
- birds;
- fantastic / mythical beasts and other imaginary creatures.

The images of steppe art carried ideas which were easily understood by the entire ancient society; they were simple yet nuanced. The artistic style of nomadic tribes that roamed present-day Kazakhstan was distinctive for its strictly

limited set of canonical poses of the animals: particularly impressive were figures of hoofed animals represented in a crouching position with legs tucked beneath their bodies or feline predators curled up in a ball and depicted with astonishing skill.

There is a consensus of opinion among researchers regarding the sacral meaning of these images since the overwhelming part of major objects made in the Saka animal style was found in burials and is associated with funeral and commemorative cults.

Golden Warrior

The Golden Warrior is a find from about the 5th century B.C. that was discovered in 1969 by Kazakh archaeologists in a unique Saka burial mound about 60 km east of Almaty, near the Yessik (Issyk) River.



The image of the Golden Warrior, with his trademark conical headgear, riding a winged snow leopard, decorates the monument to the country's Independence in Almaty.

The burial mound was 60 meters in diameter and 6 meter high. Surprisingly, the remains of what is believed to be a Saka warrior in a golden suit were discovered intact together with over 4,000 separate gold pieces, many of them finely carved with animal motifs. The suit was covered with magnificent gold-embroidered armour. That number of gold objects is the greatest ever found in a burial, except the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun.



The Golden Warrior has become modern Kazakhstan's favourite national symbol and heritage once the country became independent.

The warrior was interred wearing a 70 cm-high cone-shaped crowning hat bearing skyward-pointing arrows, a pair of snarling snow leopards and a two-headed winged mythical beast. The golden earrings and rings from the grave are presumed to also belong to the warrior. Researchers estimate the Golden Warrior, nicknamed the “Tutankhamun of Kazakhstan” by scientists, can be dated to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age.

The findings at the Golden Warrior’s kurgan demonstrate that the ancient people that roamed the steppes of present-day Kazakhstan produced and processed gold. The suit itself was created with superb workmanship by using battering, stamping, carving and granulation techniques. Beautiful patterns of animal style ornamented the shields, the belt and the hat. There are representations of snow leopards, deer, mountain goats, horses and various birds on the golden ornaments of the armour. Scientists discovered that along with the gold processing technology Saka people also valued culture and secret codes.

Another scientifically significant yet mysterious find from the Golden Warrior’s mound was a silver cup with 26 letters inscribed upon it. Until the discovery of this cup, scientists had believed that Saka tribes had no alphabet.

To this date, the text of the inscription has not been deciphered but scholars believe these Saka proto-runes to be the linguistic ancestor of the classic Orkhon-Yenisei script. The Issyk inscription, as it has become widely known, is the oldest inscription in Turkic alphabet and the oldest writing ever found in Central Asia.

The two lines of this Saka inscription inside the silver cup discovered inside the Golden Warrior's mound have changed view on the entire history of the Turkic people.

The conventional wisdom is that the human remains found inside the mound was that of a young Saka prince killed in battle. However, since they have been too badly damaged for the gender of the Saka warrior to be determined, some archaeologists suggest that the Golden Man was in fact a Golden Woman. They argue that other goods and precious funerary artefacts found at Issyk such as a bronze mirror, many beads, a spindle whorl might have belonged to a woman. Indeed, some 20 percent of all kurgans with armaments from the Saka and Scythian cultures were of women. It is hoped that future DNA testing might be able to solve this most intriguing mystery around the Golden Warrior.

The Golden Warrior has become modern Kazakhstan's favourite national symbol and heritage once the country became independent. The image of the Golden Warrior, with his trademark conical headgear and riding a winged snow leopard, decorates the monument to the country's independence in Almaty. He appears atop other monuments throughout the country.

In 2006, during his official visit to the U.S., Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev unveiled a statue of the Golden Warrior in front of the country's Embassy in Washington, D.C. The original is on display at the State Museum of Gold and Precious Metals and Stones in the capital city Nur-Sultan.

Over the years since Kazakhstan gained independence, archaeological excavations executed around Kazakhstan have uncovered several burials of other "golden men",

including at Araltobe Kurgan in Atyrau region in the west of the country, at Shilikty Kurgan in East Kazakhstan region, at Talgy mound in Karaganda region in central Kazakhstan and other places. Altogether, there have been seven “golden people” discovered in Kazakhstan since the Golden Warrior was found in the Issyk Barrow in 1969.

The Araltobe “Second Golden Man”

In 1999, Kazakh archaeologists found remains of a 2nd-century BC Sarmatian chief in one of the burial mounds at Araltobe Barrow, 200 kilometres away from the city of Atyrau. The chief, widely known today as Kazakhstan’s Second Golden Warrior, was inferred in a gold-plated tunic together with his wife, two horses, an eagle and clay jars.

Archaeologists unearthed a sword, a dagger, a spear, a quiver with arrows, a leather vessel and an iron staff covered with gold and decorated with griffon protomais by the chief’s side. The research team also uncovered hundreds of golden ornately shaped plates. Only chieftains, the nomadic elite or religious persons were inferred wearing burial costumes bedecked with golden ornately shaped plates. The researchers sought to reproduce a holistic picture but were able to reconstruct only the remains of the chief.

The burial mound initially was of a round stone structure, 2 meters tall and 40 meters wide. The round shape of the structure was typical for Sarmatians who venerated a god of fire to who they offered horses in sacrifice. This is confirmed by a hearth with traces of deep calcine found in the centre of the burial mound.

The Sarmatians were a people originally of Iranian stock who migrated from Central Asia to the Ural Mountains. Closely related to the Scythians, they were highly developed in horsemanship and warfare. Unmarried Sarmatian females, who took arms alongside men, may have inspired the Greek tales of the Amazons.

The Valley of Tsars and the Baigetobe Golden Man

The Shilikty Valley is one of the most unique places of Kazakhstan. Nicknamed the Valley of Tsars, Shilikty, located at the extreme east of the country in the Altai mountains on the border with Russia, Mongolia and China, is home to barrows which hide the secrets of past epochs, long gone rulers and cultures.

The grandiose royal barrows of the Shilikty Valley consist of 51 burial mounds, some of them are 100 metres in diameter and 8–10 meters high. It is home to various cultures and monuments, including of the Bronze Age, early, middle and late Sakas, and ancient Turks.

It is here, in 2003, inside the Baigetobe Barrow, where a team of archaeologists discovered remains of a “Golden Man”, a third after the first Golden Warrior found at Issyk in Almaty region and the Sarmatian chief unearthed at Araltobe in Atyrau region.

The Baigetobe Barrow is the oldest known royal burial mound dating back to the 8th century B.C. It is 8-meter-high and 100 meters in diameter. The burial mound has three layers: the clay layer, the stone layer and the tomb. The stone

layer is 4.1 meters high and its axial length is 67 meters. Inside archaeologists discovered a 3-meter high wooden crypt cut in a form of a pyramid and covering a territory of 34 square meters. Researchers believe this “matryoshka” structure was dictated by mythological ideas of the ancient society and is typical of ancient structures across the globe.

Inside the tomb, archaeologists found the remains of a man who was inferred there alone. The man was buried dressed in a beautiful gown, which was decorated with 4,303 plates made of native gold. Most of the plates were smelted in forms of steppe animals bedecked with small turquoise stones in places of eyes, ears, nostrils or hooves. There are figurines of leopard, argali, deer, mountain goat, bear, wolf, eagle, gryphon and others. Unfortunately, the grave was looted back in antiquity, and the royal person was missing his golden crown, sword, dagger and ritual staff.

The size of the barrow, the clothes and the jewellery of the golden man clearly speak to his royal status. Unlike jewellery found at other barrows, the Baigetobe jewellery was not sham or burial items but the ones the chief actually wore during his lifetime.

One of the most fascinating finds is a five-pointed star made of gold and blue malachite. The star is bone encrusted with a horn affixed in the centre. In ancient times, star was a symbol of power. Archaeologists also found wood planks with representations of deer drawn with oil paints.

A chapel of ancient Saka aristocracy and warriors, the Shilikty burial mounds are like portals that tell us the stories of our ancestors, their religious beliefs but also demonstrate their impressive knowledge of construction technologies and production of luxury items and weaponry.

The Saka Priestess of Urdzhar

In 2013, Kazakh archaeologists discovered an ancient grave of a young woman in a 1.7-meter-deep barrow in Urdzhar district in Eastern Kazakhstan during road repairs. The woman's remains were interred in an elaborate and tightly closed stone sarcophagus, which helped preserve them undamaged. The Urdzhar woman lived in 4th–3rd centuries BC and was 40–45 years old as evidenced from her well preserved teeth.

She was clearly a prominent figure, judging by the treasures buried with her, most notably her gold ornamented conical headdress topped with arrowheads. It was richly embellished with plant patterns and zoomorphic ornaments and is similar to the one worn by Kazakhstan's most famous archaeological find, the Issyk Golden Warrior interred wearing some 4,000 separate gold pieces. It is believed that this type of headwear was part of a ceremonial dress of Sakas.

The royal woman's head was shaven and there was a wig by her side. She lay on a layer of grass and flowers holding a twig of maidenhair fern in her hands.

The grave also contained ceramics, the bones of a sacrificed argali, and a stone sacrificial altar – an indispensable apurage for communication with gods in those ancient times – by her side. The burial mound did not contain any arms or objects symbolizing power. But archaeologists found crockery for grinding herbs. Scientists believe the woman not only was of a high social status in the Saka society but also might have been a keeper of ancient knowledge in medicine and herbology.

Using latest technologies, researchers were able to reconstruct the priestess' dress and headwear which they believe were made of red silk.

The Urdzhar find finally provides an unequivocal supporting evidence that a large share of gold buried in Saka barrows belonged to women testifying to women's high social status in the ancient societies of the Iron Age on the territory of Kazakhstan.

The Yeleke Sazy Golden Man

For over 2,800 years, ancient burial mounds in the remote Tarbagatai mountains in Eastern Kazakhstan have kept the secrets of the Saka civilization. In 2018, a team of Kazakh archaeologists uncovered remains of a Golden Man at the Yeleke Sazy plateau located at an altitude of 1,500 meters above sea level and only accessible by helicopter.

Dating circa 7th-8th century BC, the skeleton belonged to a young man aged 18 who was 165–170 centimetres tall. When buried, he was originally dressed in clothes heavily embroidered with gold beads and bedecked with gold-made objects and jewellery, including a massive golden torc around his neck, a golden quiver for arrows and a dagger in a golden quiver. All this suggests his noble origin and important social rank. Scientists have classified appearance of the Saka nobleman as European with an admixture of Mongolian genes.

The research team also unearthed over 6,000 burial objects and jewellery in the form of patterned plates, beads, bell-shaped earrings, necklaces with precious stones and exquisitely crafted figurines of deer with horns. The objects and weapons of the Tarbagatai kurgans were relatively well-preserved and made of 22K gold (the fineness of 920). Archaeologists were impressed by the level of technologi-

cal development in gold jewellery crafting that the pieces showcase.

Excavation works in the Tarbagatai started in 2016 as part of the state-funded Program for the Development of Research Works in Archaeology. To date, researchers uncovered over 300 burial mounds at Yeleke Sazy and unearthed thousands of items made of gold and precious stones. Yeleke Sazy, one of a kind kurgan in the entire Kazakhstan, might have the largest number of historical monuments and it is expected that excavation works will last for at least five more years.

Kultegin

Kultegin was an 8th century outstanding military leader and commander of the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate. Hailing from Ashina, a tribe and the ruling dynasty of the ancient Turkic peoples, Kultegin was born in 685 in Otuken on the banks of the Orkhon River, a legendary capital city in Turkic Khaganate which had an important place in Turkic mythology and Tengrism.

He was a younger brother of Bilge Kagan who ruled the Khaganate in 716–734. Kultegin helped his brother to ascend to the throne and was then appointed to be Left Wise Prince and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, which made him second most powerful person in realm.

Kultegin never became a kagan but he achieved fame as a heroic warrior and participant of various military campaigns which ensured the hegemony of Turkic tribes in Central Asia. He is credited with subjugating and uniting numerous nomadic groups in the name of the Turkic

empire and under the blue flag. A fearless military leader from the age of 16, he managed to subdue the Oghuz tribes, Khitans, Tatabs, Tabgachs, Kyrgyz, Turgeshs, Sogdians and other ancient peoples of Central Asia.



A replica of the Kultegin stela at the Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Nur-Sultan.

In honour of the two brothers, Kultegin and Bilge Kagan, two large memorials were erected in the Kosho Tsaidam

valley along the Orkhon River. They are the largest and most impressive monuments among other memorials to ancient Turkic khans, lords or aristocrats found scattered across present-day Mongolia.



Kultegin's head, broken in two pieces, with a bird featured on the front of his crown, as found at one of the old Turkic ancient monuments at Kosho Tsaidam site.

First discovered and excavated in 1889 by Russian explorer Nikolai Yadrintsev, it was a large memorial complex comprising of a courtyard surrounded by a moat, a shrine, the Kultegin stela, statues of people, lions, rams, and some 200 balbals (stelae) of defeated enemies. The shrine had

walls covered in white clay bricks with red ornaments and moulded masks of dragons. The walls on the inside were decorated with coloured murals. Fragments of the statues of Kultegin and his wife as well as altars were found inside the shrine.

The most significant artefact of the memorial is the Kultegin stela, a huge, vertical stone tablet, originally erected on a stone turtle and inscribed with the distinctive Old Turkic runic-like script. These ancient texts, also known as the Orkhon inscriptions, were first deciphered by Danish linguist and Turkologist Vilhelm Thomsen in 1893 and are a source of valuable historical data and rich linguistic material.

The scripts are the earliest form of a Turkic language. These texts are a heroic and historical poem glorifying military campaigns of the legendary warrior and commander of the Turkic Khaganate as told by his older brother Bilge Kagan. Authored by Bilge Kagan's nephew, Yollug Tigin, the poem chronicles the legendary origins of the Turks, the golden age of their history and extols Kultegin as an invincible and valorous warrior and one of the most famous Turkic personalities.

Khoja Ahmet Yassawi

Khoja Ahmet Yassawi was a renowned Turkic Sufi leader, poet and thinker. He founded the first Turkic Sufi order which quickly proliferated throughout the Turkic-speaking world. Yassawi is widely credited with helping to spread Islam in Central Asia.



The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmet Yassawi in Turkestan, a 14th-century construction and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, continues to draw pilgrims from across the region and has come to epitomize the Kazakh national identity. Its conic-spherical dome is the largest in Central Asia.

Born to a Sufi mystic at the end of the 11th century in the ancient city of Sayram in the south of what is now modern-day Kazakhstan, Yassawi was raised by a local spiritual leader, Arystanbab. His personality becoming is associated with the city of Turkestan, once known as Yassy, hence his name.

Yassawi studied Sufism in Bukhara alongside several prominent Arab and Central Asian Islamic scholars but returned to Turkestan when he quickly developed a tremendous following. His disciples helped to propagate Yassawi's teachings in Turkestan, across the Volga River, Khorasan, Azerbaijan and further in Asia Minor. Yassawi

retired to a life of contemplation aged 63 by digging himself an underground cell where he spent the rest of his life until his death in 1166.

The importance of Ahmed Yassawi cannot be overestimated. He set a new direction for the development of new Islamic civilization among medieval Turkic people by imbuing Islamic rituals with ancient Turkic practices and customs.

Yassawi helped to turn the city of Yassy, already one of the most important commercial and political hubs along the Silk Roads, into a major centre of learning of the Great steppe. He was the earliest known Central Asian poet who composed poetry in Middle Turkic whose literary dialect flourished during the rule of the Karakhanid dynasty. In his poems Yassawi combined elements of Islamic mysticism, shamanism, and early Turkic cultural traditions of Tengri-anism and established a new form of religious folk poetry that shaped the Central Asian literary and folk traditions.

His extant work, “Divan-I Hikmet” (“Book of Wisdom”), which preached honesty, justice, goodwill and patience, and was heavily sourced from shamanic songs of Turkic nomads, resonated among Central Asians and was passed on by word of mouth, down for generations. Today “The Book of Wisdom” is a common heritage of all Turkic-speaking nations.

Tamerlane the Great, a Turco-Mongol Persianate conqueror and the founder of the Timurid Empire, erected an architecturally elaborate mausoleum on the site of Yassawi’s grave. Located in the north-eastern section of the city of Turkestan in southern Kazakhstan, the Yassawi’s mausoleum has emerged as a symbol of Kazakh national identity and remains one of the most popular pilgrimage sites for Muslims.

Considered to be an outstanding example of the Timurid design that contributed to the development of Islamic religious architecture, the mausoleum is constructed of fired brick and contains thirty-five rooms that accommodate a range of functions. **A conic-spherical dome, the largest in Central Asia**, sits above the Main Hall. Other notable attributes include fragments of original wall paintings in the mosque, alabaster stalactites in the intrados of the domes, glazed with tiles featuring geometric patterns with epigraphic ornaments on the exterior and interior walls, fine inscriptions on the walls, and texts from the Qu'ran on the drums of the domes.

The Turkic Empire and the Great Silk Road

The Great Silk Road, a network of trade routes crossing Eurasian continent and connecting the East and the West, reached the peak of its heyday in the 5th – 8th centuries. It is around this period that Turkic tribes from Inner Asia expanded their territories into Zhetysu (“the Seven Rivers”) and Central Asia and formed Turkic Khaganate, the first Turkic polity to use the name “Turk” politically.

The Ili, Shu and Talas valleys in the Zhetysu region linked power centres that drove the trade along the Silk Roads. The ancient Turkic people understood the unique geographical location of the region of “the Seven Rivers” where Sogdians controlled most of the trade flow between China and the west. They formed an alliance with local merchants and with its ever-increasing military power took over control of most important segments of the Great Silk Roads in Eurasia. As a result, trade stations of Sog-

dian merchants, handicraftsmen and farmers whose commercial interests were protected by Turks proliferated into Siberia, Mongolia, northern China, and in the west to the Crimean Peninsula.



The settlement of Kayalyk, largest urban centre of the Ili Valley situated on the banks of the Ashybular River in 190 km from modern city of Taldykorgan.

Along the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, a 5,000 km section of the extensive Silk Roads network, the trade route stretched from Chang'an, a Chinese capital during the Han dynasty rule, to Zhetysu in the Great Steppe. In the west, caravans went from Syria through Iran, Turkmenistan, South Kazakhstan, the Talas River valley, the Shu River Valley, the Issyk Kol Basin and further to the oasis of East Turkestan. Silk and other fabrics, samite, jewellery, glass and leather products were streaming from China to the Byzantine Empire and

back. This route was a major transcontinental trade artery along the Silk Road until the 14th century.



Archaeological excavations at the Kayalyk settlement site have revealed two mausoleums, one Buddhist temple, and one mosque.

Mutually interdependent nomadic Turks and settled farmers and merchants facilitated far-reaching exchanges in trade, religious beliefs, cultural traditions and practices. The burgeoning trading activities on this massive dynamic channel linking civilizations and cultures fostered prosperous and thriving towns and tradecraft cities, especially in Zhetysu.

One of the most important trade centres on the Silk Roads was the city of Talas (the site of the modern-day Kazakh city of Taraz). Built and populated by the ancient Sogdians, Talas flourished as a city as political and economic ties linked to the Silk Roads strengthened. It is here that inscriptions written in the Talas alphabet, a variant of the runic Turkic Orkhon script and named for the city, were discovered.

As the Turkic empire expanded its hegemonic power across the Great Steppe, it fostered an environment of global trade, economic exchanges and allowed the exceptional flow of ideas, beliefs and innovations.

With its unique location, the Great Steppe and its Turkic rulers bore an exceptional witness to traditions of economic and cultural exchanges and communications across Eurasian continent.

The Ancient City of Taraz (Talas)

Taraz, one of the oldest cities in Kazakhstan, was built as a fortress some two thousand years ago. Its first written mention under the name of “Talas” was made in 568 CE by a Byzantine historian Menander Protector. The city flourished at the intersection of two cultures of sedentary agrarians and nomadic pastoralists, and this circumstance determined the formation of a unique steppe civilization in Kazakhstan.



The mysterious palace of Aqyrtaş, 40 km away from the city of Taraz, is rectangular in plan, covering an area of some 4 hectares.

Taraz was a political and cultural centre of early states of Turkic people, Karluks and Türgeshs, and later the capital of the Karakhanid state. Turkic tribal federations living in the Talas valley during from the 5th-7th centuries left later generations a remarkable inheritance of runic written monuments: the Talas runes. A variant of the Turkic “runiform” Orkhon script, the Talas alphabet containing 29 identified letters has been named for the city.

Located on fertile lands irrigated by River Talas, the medieval city of Talas developed as a major trade centre and craftsmanship along the Silk Road. It was also home to one of the most ancient mints.

Talas secured a place in history by virtue of the Battle of Talas (751 CE) fought between the Abbasid Caliphate against the Chinese Tang dynasty. Resulting in a Tang rout, the battle had huge geopolitical significance marking the end of Tang’s westward expansion. One of its indirect outcomes was transmission of paper-making technology to the west via the Arab capture of Chinese prisoners.

In Middle Ages, the ancient city of Talas was glorified in their poems by Hafiz, Omar Khayyam, and Rumi. Outstanding architectural masterpieces – mausoleums to Aisha-bibi, Karakhan and Babaji-khatun – were erected in the vicinity of the ancient city.

Archaeologists have found evidence of a peaceful dialogue of religions and confessions that coexisted in Taraz. Religions such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Manicheanism, Islam, Tengrianism and Shamanism gained traction here. Written artefacts suggest that Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists and others fleeing persecution from elsewhere found refuge in Taraz and were welcomed by its tolerant dwellers.

The city reached its highest level of economic development and prosperity by the 12th century but was razed by the Genghis Khan army in 1220.

Taraz celebrated its official United Nations recognized 2000th anniversary in 2001.

Saraishyk, the Ancient City of the Golden Horde

The ruins of the once magnificent and ancient city of Saraishyk are located 52 km north of Atyrau in the Turan Depression along the lower Ural River. The city was one of the most prominent commercial centers which lay on an important northern trade route of the Great Silk Road. Strategically located at the juncture connecting Europe, Central Asia and China, Saraishyk flourished between the 13th and the 16th centuries.

There is no documented evidence about the exact period when the city was founded but archaeologists believe the city might have been built on the ruins of a 10th-century medieval town of Saksim mentioned in Arabic sources. The legends have it that Saraishyk was erected during the initial years of the Jochi Khanate, later known as the Golden Horde, which included the territories of most of Eastern Europe from the Urals to the Danube River, and extended east deep into Siberia.

Well documented in Arabic and Persian sources dated to the 13th-14th centuries as a large trade centre of the Golden Horde, Saraishyk had a very developed culture. Archaeologists unearthed vessels with inscriptions as well as artefacts showcasing the mastery of Saraishyk's metallurgists and

potters. The excavated finds also included marble pieces and tiles as well as burial jewellery and gold, silver and bronze coins. In 2000, Kazakh archaeologists uncovered a manse at the peripheral site of the city testifying to its grandeur.

In 1334, an Arab traveller and merchant Ibn Battuta visited the city and described in his books the glitter of the khan palaces, a vast number of mosques and hotels as well as the usage of advanced technologies such as water-piping and sewerage made of ceramic pipes. He also wrote about bustling ferries across the Ural River that reminded him of Baghdad. In 1335, a Florentine banker Francesco Balducci Pegolotti in his “*Pratica della mercatura*” described his travels through the city. The suburbs of the city were likened to a resort centre where nobility from all over the Golden Horde would come to hunt and fish.

Like many other Golden Horde cities, Saraishyk was destroyed in 1395 by the army of Timur, a Turco-Mongol Persianate conqueror and founder of the Timurid Empire. It was, however, rebuilt in the 15th century and became the capital of the Nogai Horde khans and later of the Kazakh Khanate and existed until the end of the 16th century. In 1580, Saraishyk was routed and burned by anti-tsarist “thievish” Cossacks; its people were forced to migrate to Khiva and the city became completely desolated.

Saraishyk, a sacred place in the psyche of Nogais and later Kazakhs, was a religious centre of Islam, a first in the north-western sector of what used to be the Mongol Empire. Seven khans who ruled in Saraishyk between 12th and 16th centuries were buried here. The city was not only a sacred place for the burial of rulers and eminent people but also played an enormous role in the destiny of the Kazakh people.

In 1999, a memorial complex called “Khan Ordaly Saraishyk” was built at the site of the ancient city. The memorial includes the site of the ruins and fortress walls of the ancient city, a museum and a pantheon with seven tombstones in honour of the seven khans buried in Saraishyk.

Apples Are from Kazakhstan

Scholars have confirmed the foothills of the Dzhungar Alatau, a mountain range that lies on cross borders between Kazakhstan and China, to be the birthplace of all apples. The Sievers apple, or *Malus sieversii*, that is native to this region, is believed to be the 6000 years-old wild ancestor and progenitor of the domestic apple.



Scholars have confirmed the foothills of the Dzhungar Alatau, a mountain range that lies on cross borders between Kazakhstan and China, to be the birthplace of all apples.

The issue of the ancestor of domesticated apples had been long-debated in the scientific community but was finally settled in 2010. After having sequenced the complete genome of the apple, scholars announced that they had found proof that *Malus Sieversii* was the wild ancestor of the domestic apple.

The Sievers apple is named after a German-born botanist Johann August Carl Sievers who explored Central Asia, Siberia, and other Asian regions of the Russian Empire at the end of the 18th century. Sievers was first to describe *Malus Sieversii* when he discovered an apple tree forest in the valley of the Urdzhar River in the southeast of Kazakhstan.



*The Sievers apple, or *Malus sieversii*, that is native to this region, is believed to be the 6,000 years-old wild ancestor and progenitor of the domestic apple.*

The Sievers apple tree possesses astonishing properties: it has very long roots and thereby can resist cold and wildly fluctuant temperature, going from -40°C during winters up to 40°C in the summer. In addition, the tree is very

drought-tolerant and disease-resistant and can live up to 300 years. Its fruits are small, round and bright coloured, usually yellowish green tinged with red and vibrant pink and they taste sour-sweet.

Originated in Kazakhstan, the tree would have been dispersed east to China and west to Europe with the caravans travelling along the Silk Road. With the development of new trade routes through the Great Steppe, the Sievers apples, its seeds and even grafts would have been transported in all directions. Alexander the Great, for example, is credited to have discovered dwarf varieties of apples in Kazakhstan in 328 BC.



A native of Almaty and entrepreneur, Andrey Kim, poses for a photo holding an Almaty Aport in his hand. Together with his business partner, Timur Takabayev, he owns a modern, organic apple orchard and sells its apples mostly via Facebook.

Not surprisingly, that a medieval settlement *Almatu* that grew and developed in the apple's ancestral home along the Silk Road derived its name from the Kazakh word for "apple" (*alma*). Today it's called Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest metropolis, trading and cultural hub which until 1997 served as the country's capital. Almaty prides itself on its high-quality fruit, *Aport*, a variety of the apple with delicate aroma, large in size weighing as much as a kilogram (2.22 pounds) each. The *Aport* apple is the symbol of the city and has recently been used as a promotional campaign by the Almaty municipal and tourist authorities.

Tulips Are from Kazakhstan

Many people mistakenly associate the origins of tulips with Holland. Tulips, however, are native to Kazakhstan. From here they are believed to gradually spread to the north and south, east and west, expanding their range from the steppes of southern Siberia to the deserts of Iran, from Mongolia to the mountains of southern Europe.

Tulips were first brought to Western Europe only in the second half of the 16th century from Turkey where they had been grown by skilful plant breeders in the gardens of Ottoman sultans. Only then cultivation of tulips turned into a horticultural industry, with a speculative frenzy, also known as Tulip Mania, peaking in the 17th century Holland over the sale of tulip bulbs. The majority of today's Dutch species were actually introduced much later, also from Asia and specifically from Kazakhstan.



Kazakhstan is indeed the heart of the tulip species diversity where less-common wild species still grow today.



Out of over 3,000 different varieties of cultivated tulips registered today, around 300 are direct “descendants” of Kazakhstan’s most famed Tulipa Greigii.

Scholars believe tulips first appeared some 10–20 million years ago in the steppes and hills of the Tian Shan mountain range in the south of Kazakhstan. Today there are around 100 varieties of wild tulips around the world, of which 37 are native to Kazakhstan.

Out of over 3,000 different varieties of cultivated tulips registered today, around 300 are direct “descendants” of Kazakhstan’s most famed *Tulipa Greigii* and about 200 of *Tulipa Kaufmanniana*. The country is indeed the heart of the tulip species diversity where less-common wild species still grow today.



Tulipa kaufmanniana.

A symbol of spring, tulips provide a mesmerizing sight with their vibrantly coloured flowers. In early springs, *Tulipa greigii* flourish in the valleys from the Arys River to the Kordai Pass; the low-growers *Tulipa albertii* bloom in the Betpak-Dala desert, the Karatau ridge and the Shu-Ile moun-

tains; *Tulipa ostrowskiana* open wide from around Almaty to Merke in Zhambyl region; *Tulipa schrenkii* inhabit the steppes from the Oral River in the west to the Kazakh capital city of Nur-Sultan. The wild tulips of Kazakhstan are very varied in colour but red is still prevalent. Those with mainly yellow petals such as *Tulipa behmiana*, *Tulipa lehmanniana* and *Tulipa borszczowii* grow around the Balkhash Lake, the Karakum stony desert, the Aral Sea region and the Betpak-Dala desert.



Tulipa ostrowskiana.

Another endemic species of Kazakhstan, *Tulipa regelii*, is one of the strangest and rarest of all wild tulips. With ribbed leaves and white flowers, it blooms the earliest in the tough growing conditions of the Shu-Ile rocky mountains. Here *Tulipa regelii* sears hot by day and freezes at night. Like 18 other tulip species of Kazakhstan, *Tulipa regelii* is included in the Red List of Threatened Species.

Al-Farabi

Abu Nasr al-Farabi was one of the preeminent philosophers of the medieval Islamic world. He was regarded by his contemporaries as the greatest philosophical authority after Aristotle.

The great thinker was born circa 870 in Farab, also called Otrar, one of the most ancient cities of Central Asia. The city was located on the Jaxartes (Syr Darya) in the south of Kazakhstan in the vicinity of present-day Turkestan. In the 9th-10th centuries, the city of Otrar was a major political, cultural and commercial centre and a nodal point of the caravan routes of the Great Silk Roads, which connected medieval Europe and Asia.



L to R: Dr Farhan Nizami, Director of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and Ambassador Erlan Idrissov speak at a symposium on Al-Farabi's life and legacy on 17 July 2020.

Al-Farabi is believed to have descended from a privileged caste of Turks as evidenced by the title “Tarkhan” in his

full name: Muhammad ibn-Muhammad ibn-Tarkhan ibn-Uzlag al-Farabi al-Turki, although scholars have disputed his ethnic origin.

Al-Farabi completed his earlier education in Otrar where he lived until the age of 20. Here Abu Nasr perused books and manuscripts of the largest library of antiquity, comparable only to the famous Great Library of Alexandria. He later moved to Baghdad where most of his works were written. He spent the last years of his life in Cairo, Aleppo and Damascus and was highly respected. In December 950, at the age of 80, al-Farabi died in Damascus.

Al-Farabi has left no autobiography which is why relatively little is known for certain about his life. His philosophical legacy, however, is large. His philosophical thinking was nourished in the heritage of the Arabic Aristotelian teachings of the 10th-century Baghdad and it is with good reason he was known to the Arabs as the “Second Master”. Al-Farabi mastered several languages and also contributed considerably to science, logic, sociology, medicine, mathematics and music. Al-Farabi’s works had a great influence on the philosophy of Europe and the Middle East.

The author of over 200 treatises, Al-Farabi is unquestionably one of the greatest intellectuals and scholars in history. It is therefore, eminently appropriate for Kazakhstan’s top institution of higher learning, the al-Farabi Kazakh National University, to bear his distinguished name. There are also streets in various cities of Kazakhstan that bear the name of the scholar. The Kazakhstani currency, tenge, features an image of al-Farabi’s head.

In 2020, the country officially marks the philosopher’s 1,150 anniversary with commemorative and festive events.

Abai

The great Kazakh poet, composer and philosopher Abai (Ibrahim) Qunanbaiuly was born on August 10th, 1845, in the present-day Eastern Kazakhstan's Karauyl village near the Shyngystau mountain range. The brightest representative of the 19th century Kazakh intellectual aristocracy, Abai is widely considered the father of the Kazakh written literature. He was also a cultural reformer and thanks to his translations of the Russian and European classics acted as a vital bridge between Kazakh and Russian and European cultures. Abai's literary, moral and aesthetic heritage is the national pride of the Kazakh people.

Early years and education

Abai descended from a renowned family of clan rulers and judges. His father Qunanbai was an elected district elder, a brutal but fair person. His mother Ulzhan, Qunanbai's second wife, was a talented storyteller. Ulzhan and his grandmother Zere affectionately called him "Abai", meaning "careful, thoughtful", and this nickname stuck for the rest of his life. These two women played instrumental role in cultivating Abai's love for Kazakh folklore and poetry.

Abai's education started at home but he was later sent to a madrasah in Semei where he also attended a Russian school. Five years later at the age of 13 at the insistence of his father Abai returned to the village, where he began to delve into the judicial service and governing responsibilities as the future head of the clan. Here he honed his skills as an effective orator and mastered techniques of oral arguments. Abai often went against his father's interests, making fair and impartial decisions.



A statue of Abai stands at the head of Abai Avenue in the centre of Almaty

Due to his experience of inter-clan litigations, quarrels, and machinations, Abai eventually became disillusioned with politics. As a result, already at the age of 28, Abai withdrew from political activities and devoted the rest of his life to self-education.

Works

Over the following 20 years, Abai's poetic genius flourished and he gained extraordinary reputation, continuing prestige and popularity not seen before in the Kazakh steppes. Aqyns (improvising poets and singers) and composers flocked to Abai, while talented youth crowded around him leading to the creation of social, philosophical and literary schools.

Abai wrote around 170 poems and authored 56 adapted translations as well as philosophical treatises, including his

major work *The Book of Words*. But it was not until he turned 40 that he embraced his call as a poet and civil leader. Only then, for example, Abai acknowledged his authorship of the poem *Summer* which he had previously ascribed to his friend Kokpai Zhantasov.

In his poems written between 1882 and 1886, Abai turned his attention to social and moral issues facing the Kazakh people in the 19th century. He ruthlessly scourged antagonism between the people and the ruling elite, protested against inter-clan feuds, and criticized vanity, feudal mores and spiritual poverty of society. In those works, he called upon Kazakhs to choose “the right path” of civilized development. The idea of building a society where a person is elevated by “reason, science, will” becomes central in Abai’s works. For the first time in Kazakh literature, he puts forward a new, fresh look at the role of the family, a parental duty of educating young people, the need for a sensitive attitude toward women in the 19th-century Kazakh society.

Abai also pioneered the theme of poet’s mission and masterfully combined elements of landscape and love lyrics with philosophical generalizations and ideas of enlightenment and humanism. A lot of his poems are written in the form of lyrical monologues, with most famous being *I am sending you my greeting, Qalamqas*. In those monologues, Abai glorified woman – mother and wife – as the pillar of family and argued for women’s equality in the Kazakh society. In other poems such as *You are the pupil of my eyes, And blush, and grow pale, The language of love is a language without words*, Abai depicts the power of love and the beauty of a woman. In 1887 he wrote dastans *Iskander, Masgud, The Legend of Azim*, whose plots were inspired by Oriental classical

literature. These works display the remarkable range of Abai's genius as a lyrical poet.

In the mid 1970s Abai resumed the study of the Russian language and classics. He spent a lot of time in Semei, a 19th century centre of Tsarist Russia's political exile, where he interacted with Russian political exiles. Among them, for example, were ethnographer Yevgeniy Mikhaelis, member of the Russian Duma Nifont Dolgoplov, and Polish revolutionary Severin Gross who shaped Abai's political views and played an important role in unfolding his poetic genius. They helped Abai to better understand Russian literature and arts and, through Russian, introduced him to European authors, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, George Byron and others.

Abai's transformative encounters with Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Ivan Krylov and others and his efforts at the cultural adaptation of their works helped the poet to discover an authentically Kazakh literary voice. In his translations, he subtly conveyed the spirit and creatively rendered the message in Kazakh so that the meaning of the original was preserved. His most notable and successful adaptation was Pushkin's *Yevgenii Onegin* into a traditional Kazakh song form.

Death and burial place

Abai's popularity and authority were a cause of jealousy among the ruling establishment which was displeased with his satire and criticism as well as with his close ties to Russian political exiles. His ill-wishers tried to poison his relations with his relatives, prevent dissemination of his works. Abai's spiritual and physical health was further

By indulging in envy and frivolity, by allowing yourself to be influenced by the words of others and momentary passions, you may forfeit your strength of character. Learning will be of no avail if the vessel that receives your knowledge is not sound.” (Word Thirty-Two, *The Book of Words*)

“To attain your goal and be faithful to your duty, you should foster constancy of purpose, determination and strong will, for these help preserve the sobriety of your reason and the purity of your conscience.” (Word Thirty-Two, *The Book of Words*)

“If you have succeeded in your pursuit of a truth, do not turn back from it even on pain of death. But if you are not convinced of your knowledge, do not imagine that someone else will appreciate it. If you do not value your own knowledge, how can you expect recognition from utter strangers?” (Word Thirty-Two, *The Book of Words*)

“If you want to be rich, learn a trade. Wealth diminishes with time, but a skill does not.” (Word Thirty-Three, *The Book of Words*)

“A common man renowned for his cleverness is greater than a king who has been raised up by good fortune.” (Word Thirty-Eight, *The Book of Words*)

“Man’s strength resides in his reason and in his knowledge” (Word Thirty-Eight, *The Book of Words*)

“There are three things that can cause disgrace to the whole of humankind, things you ought to avoid, and these are ignorance, sloth and wickedness.”

(Word Thirty-Eight, *The Book of Words*)

“Ignorance means lack of knowledge, in the absence of which nothing can be achieved; lack of learning makes man no better than the beasts.” (Word Thirty-Eight, *The Book of Words*)

“Sloth is the enemy of all the arts of the world. It breeds indolence, lack of will power, shamelessness, and poverty.” (Word Thirty-Eight, *The Book of Words*)

“Wickedness is the enemy of humankind: by doing evil to others, man alienates himself from his own kind and becomes like a wild beast.” (Word Thirty-Eight, *The Book of Words*)

“The ability to preserve human dignity even at the time of great trials ennobles man.” (Word Thirty-Eight, *The Book of Words*)

“He who seeks the right path will find treasure,
but he who seeks greatness will find woe.” (Word
Thirty-Nine, *The Book of Words*)

“There is a measure to everything on earth, the good things of life included. It is a great blessing to have a sense of measure.” (Word Forty-Three, *The Book of Words*)

“Reason distinguishes the beneficial from the harmful; yet even the force of reason cannot vanquish evil. Only he who unites in himself the force of reason with the force of will can succeed in that.” (Word Forty-Three, *The Book of Words*)

“If you do not preserve the purity of your heart, the mirror of your soul will grow dim, and everything will be blurred and distorted in it and your notions of this world will be warped.” (Word Forty-Three, *The Book of Words*)

“He is the most miserable among men who has no aspiration.” (Word Forty-Four, *The Book of Words*)

“He who is swayed by the feelings of love and justice is a wise man and a learned man. Unable to invent science and learning, we can only behold and perceive the created world and understand its harmony by our reason.” (Word Forty-Five, *The Book of Words*)

“The source of humanity is love and justice. They are omnipresent and determine everything.” (Word Forty-Five, *The Book of Words*)

shattered by premature deaths of his sons, Abdrakhman and Magauya. Abai refused to receive treatment. He died at the age of 59 and was buried near his winter quarters in the Zhidebai valley. Today Abai's burial place is a national park and a site of pilgrimage for Abai's fans and admirers.

KAZAKH LITERATURE IN ENGLISH: Cooperation with Cambridge University Press

Anthologies of Contemporary Kazakh Literature

In 2018, the National Bureau of Translations of Kazakhstan and the University of Cambridge launched a new collaboration with partnership projects to publish **two Anthologies of contemporary Kazakh literature** featuring a collection of modern classics of Kazakh poetry and prose.



“An Anthology of Contemporary Kazakh poetry” and “An Anthology of Contemporary Kazakh prose”, each containing about 500 pages and selected works of 30 Kazakh authors, were launched at the British Library in 2019.

“An Anthology of Contemporary Kazakh poetry” and “An Anthology of Contemporary Kazakh prose” each contains

about 500 pages and includes the selected works of 30 Kazakh authors. Launched in 2019 at the British Library, the pieces which were carefully selected for these anthologies depict a diverse range of themes, including life under Soviet rule, the country's history, tradition, and Kazakhs' intimate links with the nature and nomadic landscapes. These evocative works provide insight into the culture, connections, and aspirations of Kazakhstan as the nation rediscovers its past and forge a new path to the future.

These are the first ever English publications of Kazakh literature of this grand scale and are part of the country's 'Ruhani Zhangyru' (**The Spiritual Re-Birth of the Nation**) programme. **The British Council** served as the strategic partner of the project through providing expert support. Cambridge University Press (CUP) was the key partner and publisher in the project. In partnership with the National Bureau of Translations, CUP implemented the full range of works on literary editing of linear translations, typesetting, printing, distribution, as well as presentation and promotion of the publications in English-speaking countries.

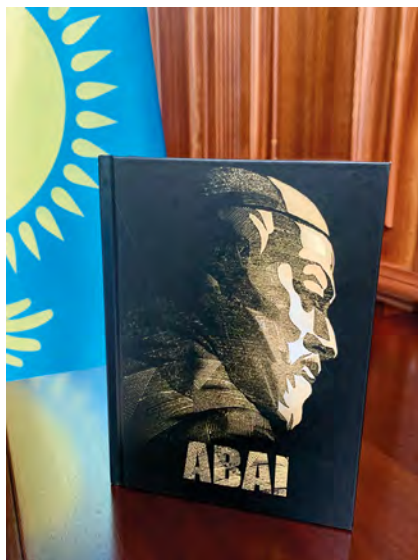
The translation of the anthologies was carried out by British specialists in literary translation. The forewords to the anthologies were written by distinguished representatives of modern British academic circles. **Sir Ciarán Devane**, Chief Executive of the British Council authored the foreword to the anthology of contemporary Kazakh prose, and **Professor Jason Harding** of Durham University wrote the foreword to the collection of contemporary Kazakh poetry.

The books are accessible for free, including at <https://kazakhstan.cambridge.org/>, via links to PDFs and audio formats. In addition to English, the books have been published in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

ABAI – The First Ever English Translation of Complete Works of Abai

The National Bureau of Translations of Kazakhstan and Cambridge University Press have completed two new major projects aimed at bringing the best of Kazakh literature and culture as a whole to the English-speaking audience.

The expertise and positive partnership built during the Anthologies facilitated translation and publication of complete works of Abai, a 19th century Kazakh poet, philosopher and enlightener who is widely considered to be the founding father of Kazakh written literature.



Launched in late autumn 2020, ABAI is the first complete English-language volume of works by the greatest Kazakh poet, philosopher, and enlightener Abai Kunanbaiuly. For the first time in history, Abai's works were translated directly from Kazakh into English.

The book published and launched in November 2020 with the print run of 3,000 copies will be delivered to the libraries in 18 countries around the world.

This is the first translation of Abai's complete works in English; although there are two prior collections of Abai in English; the first was translated by Soviet translators from Abai's Russian translations. Another attempt to articulate Abai in English was made in the 1970's by a British translator Richard McKey, also using Russian translations as a source. Both translations had their merits and shortcomings, but the approach of translating from a translation did not prove to produce the most faithful translations.

The significance of this publication is that a new (presumably the first) generation of Kazakh into English literary translators joined their efforts with **professors John Burnside** and **Sean O'Brien**, both highly regarded British poets, in an attempt to produce translations that are true to the original.

Selected Works by Chokan Valikhanov

Cambridge University Press, in partnership with the Embassy of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom and with the support of the Akimat of the Kostanay Region and the Chokan Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology are delighted to present the first ever English-language collection of selected works by **Chokan Valikhanov**, a 19th century Kazakh scholar, ethnographer, historian and participant in The Great Game.

In his short lifetime of only 29 years, Valikhanov contributed immensely to oriental studies, while also increasing

awareness of Kazakh cultural heritage both for his compatriots and for those from further afield.

To date there has only been a single publication of Chokan Valikhanov's writings in English. Published in 1865 by Edward Stanford, *The Russians in Central Asia, Their Occupation of the Kirghiz Steppe and the Line*

of the Syr-Daria is in fact a compilation of writings that, in addition to Valikhanov, includes contributions from M. Veniukov, E. Kuhlewein and others. There are four chapters from Valikhanov in the book, which compares with the five dense Russian-language volumes that make up his collected works that were published in Kazakhstan in 1984.

It is hard to overstate the importance of Valikhanov. A fourth-generation descendant of Ablai Khan, the ruler of Middle Horde, **Valikhanov is widely considered the father of modern Kazakh historiography and ethnography.** Trained as a Russian army officer, he worked as an ethnographer, collecting information and historical facts during two substantial expeditions, the first to Issyk-Kul Lake and to Kulja on the Ili River in Chinese Turkestan and the second, in 1858, to Kashgar, an oasis city in Xin-



Chokan Valikhanov during his visit to Saint-Petersburg in 1860.

jiang and China's one of the westernmost cities, near the border with Afghanistan.

Valikhanov was first to recognise the importance of the Manas epic poem, which he was able to collect and codify. He was also an able artist and produced excellent drawings and watercolours of both landscapes and of individuals. Little of this is known by Western audiences, who are mostly unfamiliar with his writings. Even academics barely know his work, except for very specialised scholars.

The project has been launched in partnership with CUP and the **Chokan Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology** in Almaty, which has provided the original manuscripts in Russian.

The works have been translated by the **prominent translator Dr Arch Tait** who holds a PhD in Russian literature from the University of Cambridge. The volume also includes an essay by Dr Ziyabek Kabuldinov, Director of the Valikhanov Institute and a preface by **Nick Fielding, a renowned investigative reporter** in the past and now a writer who also edited the translation.

This scholarly edition of Valikhanov's key works will certainly be a welcome contribution to **Anglophone scholarship on Kazakhstan and Central Asia**. The volume serves as an obvious need for sources on the history of Kazakhstan for students or scholars who are unable to read Russian or Kazakh. There is suggestion that the book could be envisioned being assigned in an upper-level undergraduate course and be of great interest to specialists in Central Asian history.

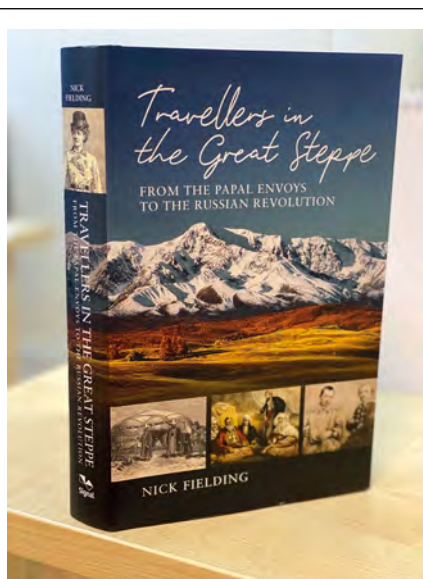
Travellers in the Kazakh Steppes by Nick Fielding

'Travellers in the Great Steppe: From the Papal Envoys to the Russian Revolution' by Britain's most celebrated investigative journalist and writer **Nick Fielding** gives an astonishing account of the various journeys made by outsiders to the present territory of Kazakhstan, from the earliest times up until the twentieth century.

Mr Fielding is a devoted explorer of Kazakhstan. He has been on numerous expeditions to Kazakhstan and authored a book, *South to*

the Great Steppe – The travels of Thomas of Lucy Atkinson in Eastern Kazakhstan, 1847–1852 (2015). Fielding's new book is the first to examine in detail the history of travel and exploration of this hugely important region.

Stretching from the Volga and the Caspian Sea in the West to the Altai Mountains and the Tian Shan Mountains in the East and South, the steppelands at the heart of Eurasia have



"Travellers in the Great Steppe: From the Papal Envoys to the Russian Revolution" by Britain's most celebrated investigative journalist and writer Nick Fielding was launched at the Royal Geographical Society on 23 September 2020.

been witness to great events and movements of peoples and ideas.

Until now few of the stories of the pioneering explorers and travellers who wrote about this vast area have been available to English-speaking readers. The book includes the stories of the early British traders such as Anthony Jenkinson and Jonas Hanway who tried to divert **the Silk Road** to the north, those who made the earliest encounters with the tribal confederations of the steppe, those scientists who travelled to solve the mystery of the great expanses of water in Central Asia and those like Thomas Atkinson who travelled simply in order to paint.

Travellers in the Great Steppe provides accounts by such **remarkable women travellers** such as Adele Hommaire de Hell, Lucy Atkinson and Marie de Ujfalvy-Bourdon who proved that exploration was not solely a pastime for men.

Businessmen – from butter merchants to copper miners – and aid workers also made their mark.

Profusely illustrated, this book provides the history and background to the exploration of a region that plays an increasingly important role in the politics and economics of the world.

Travellers in the Great Steppe is presented in chronological order, starting with the earliest accounts, including Friar Rubruck, Marco Polo and Carpini. Friar Rubruck, for example, spent more than two weeks in the town of Koilyk in Semirecheye (the Valley of Seven Rivers). The ruins of the city, which can still be seen close to Sarcand, are a UNESCO World Heritage site. It includes such travellers and

John Castle, who was certainly the first Englishman to visit the Kazakh Steppes and to record his impressions. Castle was sent as a Russian envoy to what is now north-western Kazakhstan, to the court of Khan Abulkhayir, the leader of the Junior Juz at that time.

The book includes both British and non-British travellers. So, in addition to the English writers mentioned below, it has materials on Xavier and Adele Hommaire de Hell, Alexander von Humboldt, Francois Baron de Tott, Aleksyei Levshin, Peter Simon Pallas, Michailow, Pavel Nazaroff, Eugene Schyuler, Severtsof and, of course, the Russian explorers such as Per Petr Semonov and Przevalsky.

The book is timely release for global audiences that presents a history of exploration and scientific discovery through the experiences of the travellers who travelled in what were once very remote regions. The book is available from Amazon https://www.amazon.co.uk/Travellers-Great-Steppe-Russian-Revolution/dp/1909930865/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=nick+fielding&qid=1603818339&sr=8-1.

Writing of Travellers of the Great Steppe

There have been a number of trailblazing and fascinating books written by Western authors about the Great Steppe and Kazakhstan in particular. What follows below is not an exhaustive list but it shows how many books have been written about the region and its people by the earliest travellers. Many of the books listed are available in various formats, including hardcover, paperback and e-book.

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1255	Rubruck, William of	The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55	http://archive.org/details/journey-williamr01ruysgoog	Great Steppe
1300	Polo, Marco and Rustichello da Pisa	Book of the Marvels of the World	http://archive.org/details/thetravel-sofmarc10636gut	Great Steppe
1327	Odoric of Pordenone	The Travels of Friar Odoric of Pordenone (1316-1330)	http://archive.org/details/waythither02yule	Great Steppe
1560	Jenkinson, Anthony	Anthony Jenkinson's Explorations on the Land Route to China, 1558-1569	http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/jenkinson/bukhara.html	Mangystau

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1684	Struys, Jan Janszoon	The Voiages and Travels of John Struys through Italy, Greece, Muscovy, Tartary, Media, Persia, East-India, Japan, and other Coun-tries in Europe, Africa and Asia	http:// books.google.com/ books?id=xANUAAAACAA- J&pg=PA179&lpg=PA179&q= struys+%22and+bring+them+in+ such+plenty+to+Market%22&- source=bl&ots=6SCgsoaVJP&sig=En LUz0D dJlGhOLyclY72cydH wKY&hl=en&sa=X &ei=qDZ_Uf_pN-j2iwL1rYGYB- w&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=o- nepage&q=struys%20%22and%20 bring%20them%20in%20such%20 plenty%20to%20Market%22&f=false	Great Steppe
1736	Castle, John	Into the Kazakh Steppe: John Cas- tle's Mission to KhanAbulkhayir	-	Great Steppe
1823	Nazarov, Filipp	Russianmissions into the interior of Asia	http:// archive.org/ details/ russian- missionsi00nazarich	Orenberg to Aral through Aktobe

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1840	Murchison	Murchison's wanderings in Russia	–	Great Steppe
1858	Atkinson, Thomas Witlam	Oriental and western Siberia: a narrative of seven years' exploration and adventures in Siberia, Mongolia, the Kirghis Steppes, Chinese Tartary, and a part of central Asia	http://archive.org/details/landwest00atkigoog	Zyryanovsk, Murzinka, Kishi Narym, Ülken Narym, (Werchnayan Pristan), Oskemen, Bukhtarma, (Bouloshnia), (Tulovskoj Simovee), Koch-bouchta
1860	Atkinson, Thomas Witlam	Travels in the Regions of the Upper and Lower Amoor	https://archive.org/details/region00atkigoog/page/n17	Semipalatinsk, Lepsinsk, Kopal
1865	Zaleski, Bronislas	La Vie des steppeskirghizes	https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63786094/f56.image.texteImage	Mangystau

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1863	Atkinson, Lucy	Recollections of Tartar steppes and their inhabitants	https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/atkinson/steppes/steppes.html	Semipalatinsk, Lepsinsk, Kopal
1874	J.A. MacGahan	Campaigning on the Oxus, and the fall of Khiva	https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t5w671v4h&view=2up&seq=58&size=175	Orenburg, Kazalinsk, Kyzylorda
1875	Forsyth, Thomas Douglas	Report of a Mission to Yarkund in 1873, Under Command of Sir T. D. Forsyth	http://archive.org/details/reporttamission00forsgoog	None (but mentions Almati)
1876	Wood, Herbert	The Shores of Lake Aral	http://archive.org/details/slakearal00woodgoog	Kazalinsk
1876	Schuyler, Eugene	Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja	http://archive.org/details/notesa02schugooog	Taraz (Aulie-Ata), Almaty (Vierny), Kopal, Balkash, Altyn-Emel, Koktal (Borokhudzir)

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1876	Frederick Gustavus Burnaby	A Ride to Khiva: Travels and Adventures in Central Asia	http://archive.org/details/khivatra05burngoog	Uralsk, Karabutak, Yrgyz, Terekli, Soppak, Kazalinsk (Kasala)
1884	Abbott, James	Narrative of a journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow, and St. Petersburg, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva	–	Atyrau, Uralsk
1886	Bateson, William	Letters from the Steppe written in the years 1886-87	https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-08634-A/3576	Aral Sea
1887	Lansdell, Henry	Russian Central Asia: Including Kuldja, Bokhara, Khiva and Merv	–	Pavlodar, Semipalatinsk, Sergiopol, Almaty, Al-tyn-Emel, Kopal

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1892	Jones, Herbert	From Tian Shan to the Pamirs: Experiences on the Russo-Chinese Frontier.	http://books.google.com/books?id=6aAoAQA-AMAAJ&pg=PA202&lp-g=PA202&dq=%22herbert+jones%22+%22tian+shan+to+the+pamirs%22&source=bl&ots=MKnnpCfkNr&sig=99oNavVjkqJlBiKw2KRP0kas0YY&hl=en&sa=X&ei=y1N_UeHMDo2MigLSm4Cg-Dg&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=eagle&f=false	None (but mentions Verni)
1893	Lansdell, Henry	Chinese Central Asia; a ride to Little Tibet	http://archive.org/details/chinese-centralas01llans	Otar, Uzun Agach, Almaty, Ilisk, Zharkent
1896	Brehm, Alfred Edmund	From North Pole to equator: studies of wild life and scenes in many lands	—	Semipalatinsk, Sergiopol, Arkat mountains

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1897	Mersey, Clive Bigham	A ride through western Asia	https://archive.org/details/throughwest00mers/page/258	Verniy, Iliskoe, Kopal, Sergiopol, Semipalatinsk
1898	Hedin, Sven Anders	Through Asia	http://archive.org/details/sia01hed1	Buguti-sai, Tam- di, Kara-butak, Kum-sai, Kara-sai, Irghiz, Ak-sai, Terekli, Juluz, Kon- stantinovskaya, Kamishli-bash, Ak-julpaz, Yunys- kaya, Kazalinsk, Karmakchi, Al- exandrovskaya, Semionnovskaya, Fort Perovsk, Julsk, Mesheh- uli, Yani-kurgan, Tash-suat, Turk- estan, Ikan, Na- gai-kura, Aris, Buru-jar

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1899	Jefferson, Robert	A New Ride to Khiva	https:// archive.org/details/anewwri-detokhiva00jeffgoog/page/n234	Kazalinsk
1900	Cobbold, Ralph Paterson	Innermost Asia: travel & sport in the Pamirs	http:// archive.org/details/stasiatra00cobbiala	Karabulak, Osunagach, Vierny, Chilik, Iliinsk, Balkash, Samsay, Otar
1905	Ronald-shay, Dundas, Lawrence John Lumley, Earl of	On the outskirts of empire in Asia	https:// babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt/search?q1=verni;id=inu.3000120436278;view=2up;seq=13;start=1;sz=10;page=search;orient=0	Shymkent, Verni, Altin-Imel, Kopa, Sergiopol, Semipalatinsk
1905	Pumpelly, Raphael	Explorations in Turkestan with an account of the basin of Eastern Persia and Sistan	https:// babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t30294k9b&view=2up&seq=100&size=200	Vyernyi, Iliisk, Sergiopol, Semipalatinsk
1910	Wood, John Nicholas Price	Travel & Sport in Turkestan.	http:// archive.org/details/sportintu00woodgoog	Khargos, Jarkend, Khoi Bin, Vyerni

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1915	Bury, Herbert	Russian life today	—	Petropavlovsk, Spassky Copper Mine
1916	Wardell, John Wilford	In the Kirghiz Steppes	https://www.qazaqstan.io/embeds/earliest-travelers/Book	Balkash
1916	Graham, Stephen	Through Russian central Asia	http://archive.org/details/through-russianc01grahgoog	Vyerni, Ilisk, Zharkent
1916	Fell, Edward Nelson	Russian and Nomad	https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002024435746&view=1up&seq=9	Balkash
1934	Gibson, William James	Wild career: my crowded years of adventure in Russia and the Near East	https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\$b674876&view=2up&seq=114&size=150	Almaty
1920	Sykes	Through deserts and oases of central Asia	https://archive.org/details/desertsoa00sykeuoft/page/16/mode/2up	Orenburg-Tashkent train
1925	Fox, Ralph	People of the Steppe	https://archive.org/details/dli.2015.72673/page/n5	Aral Sea

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
1928	Noble, Algermon	Siberian days: an engineer's record of travel and adventure in the wilds of Siberia	–	“Kirghiz steppe”
1929	Roerich, Nicholas	Altai-Himalaya: A Travel Diary	http://www.roerich.org/roerich-writings-altai-himalaya.php	Zaisan, Semipalatinsk
1934	Maillart, Ella	Turkestan Solo	https://www.qazaqstan.io/embeds/earliest-travelers/Book	Aral Sea
1936	Edward Murray	With the Nomads of Central Asia	https://www.qazaqstan.io/embeds/earliest-travelers/Magazine	–
1937	Krist, Gustav	Alone Through the Forbidden Land: Journeys in Disguise through Soviet Central Asia	https://www.qazaqstan.io/embeds/earliest-travelers/Book	Fort Shevchenko

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
2003	Michael Fergus, Janar Jandosova (ed.)	Kazakhstan: Coming of Age	https://www.amazon.co.uk/Kazakhstan-Coming-Age-Michael-Fergus/dp/1900988615/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=Michael+Fergus%2C+Janar+Jandosova&qid=1606242733&s=books&sr=1-1	Kazakhstan
2007	Christopher Robbins	In Search of Kazakhstan: The Land that Disappeared	https://www.amazon.co.uk/Search-Kazakhstan-Land-that-Disappeared/dp/1861971095/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=In+Search+of+Kazakhstan%3A+The+Land+that+Disappeared&qid=1606242537&s=books&sr=1-1	Kazakhstan
2008	Ariel Cohen	Kazakhstan: The Road to Independence (Silk Road Studies Program)(Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program)	https://www.amazon.co.uk/Kazakhstan-Independence-Studies-Asia-Caucasus-Institute/dp/9185937363	Kazakhstan

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
2009	Jonathan Aitken	Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan	https://www.amazon.co.uk/Nazarbayev-Making-Kazakhstan-Jonathan-Aitken/dp/1441153810/ref=sr_1_6?dchild=1&keywords=jonathan+aitken&qid=1606236712&s=books&sr=1-6	Kazakhstan
2012	Jonathan Aitken	Kazakhstan and Twenty Years of Independence	https://www.amazon.co.uk/Kazakhstan-Twenty-Independence-Jonathan-Aitken/dp/1441116540/ref=sr_1_32?dchild=1&keywords=jonathan+aitken&qid=1606236577&s=books&sr=1-32	Kazakhstan
2014	Jeremy Tredinnick	An Illustrated History of Kazakhstan: Asia's Heartland in Context(Odyssey Travel Guides)	https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/9622178529/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_hsch_vapi_taft_p1_i0	Kazakhstan

Year	Author	Title	Source URL	Places Visited
2018	Paul Brummell, Maria Oleynik	Kazakhstan (Bradt Travel Guides)	https://www.amazon.co.uk/Kazakhstan-Bradt-Travel-Guides-Brummell/dp/1784770922/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&key-words=paul+brummell&qid=1606236274&s=books&sr=1-1	Kazakhstan
2018	Dagmar Schreiber, Jeremy Tredinnick	Kazakhstan: Nomadic Routes from Caspian to Altai - Odyssey Illustrated Guides	https://www.waterstones.com/book/kazakhstan/dagmar-schreiber/jeremy-tredinnick/9789622178793	Kazakhstan
2020	Jeremy Tredinnick, Dagmar Schreiber	Kazakhstan: Land of the High Steppe	https://www.amazon.co.uk/Kazakhstan-Steppe-Odyssey-Illustrated-Guides/dp/9622178952	Kazakhstan

Theatre & Dance

The development of opera and ballet has been a cultural priority for Kazakhstan. Today Kazakhstan is home to 52 state theatres, including seven puppet theatres, four children's theatres, three opera and ballet theatres, and two satirical theatres. There are also four theatres dedicated to Uyghur and Korean musical comedy, and German and Uzbek drama. Approximately 12,000 performances are produced in Kazakhstan annually.

In 2013, the state opera and ballet theatre **Astana Opera** was founded at the initiative of President Nazarbayev. Its design

was partially made by Nursultan Nazarbayev, and the construction began on 6 July 2010 under direction of Mabetex Group. It has been built on a 9 ha site. The opera house opened with the inaugurative representation being the Kazakh opera *Birzhan and Sara*. **The acoustics of the**

Astana Opera large-scale ballet productions

- La Bayadère
- Le Corsaire
- Giselle
- La Sylphide
- Red Giselle
- Anna Karenina
- Romeo and Juliet
- Karakoz

Astana Opera notable opera productions

- La Bohème
- Madame Butterfly
- Rigoletto, Aida
- Tannhauser
- Love drink

theatre is considered one of the best in the world and it was designed by the Italian Enrico Moretti (Biobyte) and Maria Cairoli. The opera house includes two halls: the Main Hall (1250 seats), which hosts opera and ballet performances, and has an orchestra pit with room for up to 120 musicians; and the Chamber Hall (250 seats), for chamber music concerts. Many of the Astana Opera productions were conducted under the guidance of world-famous choreographers Yuri Grigorovich, Boris Eifman and Vakil Usmanov. The **leaders of world opera**, José Cura and Barbara Frittoli, and **globally renowned ballerinas**, Mélanie Hurel and Karl Paquette, participated in some of these performances.

Currently **31 state concert institutions** operate in Kazakhstan, including:

- Kurmangazy Kazakh State Academic Orchestra of Folk Instruments
- Zhambyl Kazakh State Philharmonic
- Saltanat State Dance Ensemble
- State Academic Dance Theatre
- Camerata Kazakhstan ensemble of classical music
- Astana Ballet Theatre
- Kazakh Koncert state concert organization

Talented young people of Kazakhstan proudly represent their art both domestically and abroad. Kazakh opera and ballet soloists have become laureates and award winners of prestigious international competitions and festivals.



The palatial structure of the largest theatre in Central Asia, Astana Opera, was constructed in the best classical architectural traditions.

Leading opera soloists such as Sundet Baigozhin, Baurzhan Anderzhanov, Zhupar Gabdullina, Saltanat Akhmetova, Medet Chotabayev and leading ballet soloists Madina Basbaeva, Aigerim Beketayeva, Yerkin Rakhmatullaev and Bakhtiyar Adamzhan, regularly perform at world-renowned theatres.

In 2016, the **Kazakh National Academy of Choreography**, the new multi-level academy of choreography, was opened in Nur-Sultan. It is the first institution of its kind in the Central Asian region designed to prepare students who are looking to pursue a career in ballet.

The Astana Ballet Theatre was founded in 2012. The total area of the theatre is 15.467 m². The auditorium has 783 seats (the stalls for 609 seats, 2nd balcony tier for 104 seats, 3rd balcony tier for 70 seats). The stage area, which meets

all modern standards of theatre space organisation is 536 m². The stage complex together with the proscenium, back-stage and side stages is more than 1000 m². The orchestra pit is designed for 50–60 musicians. The theatre has two rehearsal rooms, their area corresponds to the stage area, which is very convenient in the process of creating new performances. The first performance of the Astana Ballet Theatre took place in July 2013 and it was clear: the audience accepted the theatre and fell in love. Today the team has thousands of fans not only in Kazakhstan, but also abroad. The unique multi-genre repertoire of the Theatre is constantly replenished with masterpieces of world and national classics, original choreographic performances. The latest technologies of mobile and lifting-lowering mechanics are used for scene transformation. The lighting complex includes traditional theatrical devices and systems, as well as the latest innovative developments in this field. About 800 light devices allow providing high quality of art lighting. The possibilities of the scene of the “Astana Ballet” Theatre open up space for embodiment of the most daring and original ideas for producers and scenographers.

Fine Art & Fashion

Growth of modern art in Kazakhstan

While little is known to the outside world, the contemporary art scene in Kazakhstan is growing rapidly. Influenced by traditional nomadic roots and recent history, Kazakh modern art reflects both the history and the future of this fascinating country.

One such artist inspired by past and present is **Dilka Bear**. Dilka studied architecture at the Almaty University of Arts, and has since devoted herself to painting. She is influenced by the great masters of the Italian Renaissance, and also gets inspiration from modern surrealist artists. Her work has been shown in galleries in Rome, Amsterdam, Los Angeles and Melbourne.

With support from several well-established and renowned art galleries, as well as emerging art initiatives and projects, contemporary Kazakh artists are starting to gain international recognition.

In March 2013, **Sotheby's** displayed artwork by various Kazakh artists in their 'At the Crossroads' exhibition. The exhibition aimed to reflect the wide variety of art found within Kazakhstan that has developed from the "unique encounter" of ancient historical heritages with evolving modern day techniques.

The exhibition was organised with the participation of the Rysbek Akhmetov Gallery in Almaty, which provided paintings by Salikhitdin Aitbayev and Bakhtiyar Tabiyev.

The Abylkhan Kasteyev Museum of Arts

Based in Almaty, the Abylkhan Kasteyev Museum of Arts is the largest art museum in Kazakhstan. The museum is named after Abylkhan Kasteyev, regarded as one of Kazakhstan's finest painters. He was highly decorated for his work, by both the Kazakh government and the Soviet Union. Over the course of his life, he painted more than a thousand paintings in oil and watercolour.

The museum has a collection of over 23,000 works, including historic and contemporary Kazakhstan art, works from the Soviet era, Russian artworks, Western European art, and East Asian art. The museum also features the best examples of traditional applied arts, including tapestry, jewellery, felt and leather items. Given the role of nomadic and domestic animal husbandry in Kazakhstan, it is unsurprising that felt has a significant place in Kazakh art.

Transitioning Kazakh Art

In fact, traditional Kazakh art is mainly in the form of carpets, wall hangings, clothing, and decorated yurt parts and everyday objects. However, contemporary art in Kazakhstan has often taken on a more experimental style.

Kanat Ibragimov, one of the country's first conceptual artists, made his name in Moscow for nailing the carcass of a chicken to the door of the gallery that had invited him to exhibit.

Between these two extremes, it seems that Kazakh fine arts truly blossomed in the late 1950s. It was during this time that a large number of young and talented artists graduated from the best art institutes of the USSR, and entered into Kazakhstan's cultural life. Among them were such outstanding masters as the People's Artists of Kazakhstan Kanafia Telzhanov, Sabur Mambeyev, Aisha Galimbayeva, Moldakhmet Kenbayev, Gulfairus Ismailova, Khakimzhan Nauryzbayev and many other painters, graphic artists and sculptors.

Museums and galleries

Beyond the Kasteyev Museum of Arts, Kazakhstan boasts a multitude of fantastic galleries. Located in Almaty's city

centre, the Oyu Art Gallery specialises in the best of Kazakh fine art, focusing exclusively on established modern and contemporary artists of Kazakhstan. Over the years, the gallery has showcased a variety of renowned artists, including Alpysbai Kazgulov, Aktoty Smagulova, Akhmet Akhat and others.

The National Museum of Kazakhstan in Nur-Sultan also houses an impressive contemporary art section, showing off the best of Kazakh art from the 20th and 21st centuries. A wider wander around the museum is strongly encouraged, as it covers the history and culture of Kazakhstan from ancient to modern times. Themed halls comprise interactive displays and artefact exhibitions, ranging from a yurt in the Hall of Ethnography to a chronicle of the capital's modern history in the Hall of Nur-Sultan.

The impact of Kazakh art can even be seen in Nur-Sultan's skyline. The Shabyt Art Palace is a striking lens-shaped building, housing the largest art centre in Kazakhstan.

Kazakh fashion

Kazakh fashion is easily identifiable by its dazzling bright colours, conservative style and adorned ornaments. Traditional garments were originally made from fur, thin felt and woollen cloth that people often produced themselves, changing to cotton in the late 19th century. In the 20th century, materials such as silk, brocade and velvet became more popular, as an indication of wealth and well-being.

According to Vogue, today Kazakhstan has a "bustling fashion industry". Its annual Fashion Week attracts hundreds of artists, designers, models and photographers from across the world, while the country also has a head-turning street style scene.

Kazakhstan has several higher education institutions dedicated to the study of fashion, including the Kazakhstan Fashion Institute and the Symbat Academy of Fashion & Technology. Opened in 1996 by the Republican House of Clothing, Knitwear & Footwear, the country's only fashion company at the time, the Symbat Academy offers a number of different programmes – including Design, Graphic Design, Visual Arts & Draughtsmanship, Decorative Arts, Scenography, Technology & Design for Light Industry Products, Technological Equipment, and Textiles Technology.

One of the rising brands in Kazakhstan is 'Pentatonica', designed by two friends Kira Maysheva and Saule Dzhamil. The team use only natural fabrics, and specialise in transformer pieces that can be worn in several ways, a reflection of the country's resourceful nomadic roots.

Kazakh Cinematography

An important cultural project for Kazakhstan is the promotion of national film production.

From 1991 to 2015, **Kazakhfilm**, the leading film company in Central Asia, completed the production of 479 feature, documentary and animation films. Kazakhfilm has also signed Memorandums of Cooperation with the world's leading cinematographic organisations to increase Kazakhstan's global cinematic impact, including the Cinema Foundation of Russia, the National Centre for Cinematography of France, the New York Film Academy, and the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China.

There are on average 12 domestic film releases per year in Kazakhstan, increasing every year, more than half of which are produced by Kazakhfilm. Beyond Kazakhfilm, there are **over 30 private film studios in Kazakhstan**, including Satay-film, Eurasiafilm, Tanasis, Zhas Ulan, and MG Production.

Kazakhstan has also recently adopted a **new law on cinematography**. According to the new law, **all non-Kazakh filmmakers are eligible for a reimbursement of up to 30% of goods, works and services** related to the production of a film in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's box office has grown along with its domestic releases, with around 300 releases annually, grossing \$70 million. Furthermore, between 2008 and 2015, **206 Kazakh films were included in 208 festivals and international screenings in 52 countries**.

Noteworthy Kazakh films include:

- **Turksib** (1929): One of the first films ever shot in Kazakhstan, which has recently been restored by the British Film Institute.
- **Amangeldy** (1939): The first Kazakh feature film, about the leader of the 1916 revolution, Amangeldy Imanov.
- **Kyz Zhibek** (1970): One of the most popular romance films in Kazakhstan. The plot's origin is from a traditional folk poem, and the story was first performed in the theatre in 1934.
- **The Needle** (1988): Known for being one of the first Kazakh new wave films, the main character is played by the famous Soviet rock musician Viktor Tsoi.
- **Nomad** (2005): A historical epic film, which was Kazakhstan's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 79th Academy Awards.

- **Mongol** (2007): A semi-historical epic film co-produced between companies in Russia, Germany and Kazakhstan. The film was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.
- **Wanted** (2008): Russian-Kazakh director Timur Bekmambetov has created a name for himself in Hollywood, with titles including 'Wanted' and 'Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter'.
- **The Old Man** (2012): Inspired by Ernest Hemingway's 'The Old Man and the Sea', a Kazakhstani drama film written and directed by Ermek Tursunov.
- **Harmony Lessons** (2013): A Kazakh-German film which premiered at the 63rd Berlin International Film Festival, where it won the award for outstanding cinematography.
- **Kunanbai** (2015): Starring the famous Kazakh actor Doskhan Zholzhaksynov, the film is about the fate of Kunanbai, the father of the great Kazakh poet Abai.
- **Tar Zaman** (2018): A historical drama directed by Murat Bidosov.
- **Amre** (2018): Filmed across Latvia, the US and Kazakhstan, the film tells the story of the famous singer and musician Amre Kashaubayev, who was called 'Kazakh nugget' since he once presented the national folklore of the Kazakh people in Europe.
- **Ayka** (2018): Director Sergey Dvortsevoy's documentary-drama tells the story of a young homeless single mother in Moscow. The Kazakh actress in the leading role, Samal Yeslyamova, won the best actress award at Cannes Film Festival.
- **The River** (2018) is a drama film, directed by Emir Baigazin and released in 2018. The completed film premiered at the 75th Venice International Film Festival in September 2018, where Baigazin won the award for Best Director in

the Horizons programme. Its second screening was in the Platform programme at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival, where it received an honourable mention from the Platform Prize jury.

- **Tomiris** (2019) is the story of the life of the great queen of the steppe – legendary Tomiris. She is destined to become a skilful warrior, survive the loss of close people and unite the Scythian/Saka tribes under her authority.

There are multiple film festivals held in Kazakhstan, including the **Eurasia International Film Festival**, and **Shaken's Stars**.

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

Nauryz

Nauryz is a non-religious Kazakh folk celebration of the vernal (spring) equinox and of the symbolic renewal of nature. It is believed that it originates from ancient Mesopotamia. In Babylon the New Year was celebrated on the 21st day of the month of Nissanu (corresponding to March-April) with festivities held further 12 days, each commemorated with individual rites, amusements and performances.

The present-day name of Nauryz derives from the Persian Novruz translated as a new day. In Kazakhstan Nauryz is certain to have been celebrated in pre-Islamic times and later. During the Soviet period, it was declared ideologically inconsistent and was “hushed-up”. Nauryz has a remarkable endurance and survival capacity through a

long and dramatic history of Kazakhstan and was formally reinstated as a public holiday in Kazakhstan in 1988.



A young girl in a Kazakh traditional folk costume smiles onstage during a Nauryz spring festival performance.

During the course of history Nauryz became a symbolic Kazakh New Year in Kazakhstan, official calendar being kept as everywhere in the world. Nowadays it is one of the most favourite holidays in Kazakhstan. Kazakhs also often refer to Nauryz as “Ulystin uly kuni” which means “the great day of the nation”. Nauryz remains also a strong tradition in the countries of Central Asia as well as in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey.

At its core, the Nauryz festival celebrates the awakening of Nature. This awakening symbolizes the triumph of good, the Spring, winning against the evil forces of darkness that are represented by the Winter. Nauryz is the point when the oppressive presence of the cold Winter finally begins

to retrieve with the commencement of the lively and hopeful Spring. This symbolic and poetic change corresponds to the mathematical instance of the sun leaving the zodiac of Pisces and entering the zodiacal sign of Aries, also known as the Spring Equinox.



One of the ancient holidays, Nauryz symbolizes the renewal of nature and the beginning of a new life.

The central theme of Nauryz is renewal, cleansing, the coming of spring, and the birth of new life. Love and beauty run through the many literary works and scientific works of the geniuses of the Eastern Middle Ages: Mahmut Kashgari, Abu Raihan Biruni, Firdausi, Alisher Navoi, and Omar Hayam. Many verses have been devoted to this magnificent holiday in the works of the outstanding Kazakh intellectuals, such as Abai Kunanbayev, Alihan Bukeihanov, Ahmet Baitursinov, Mirzhakip Dulatov, Saken Seifulin and others.

Nauryz has many unique features. In the past Nauryz used to last from three to nine days. Various kinds of competi-

tions were included in the festival program, such as horse races and hand-to-hand combats between stalwart fellows. The “Aytis” (a contest of two or more improvising folk poet-musicians) is a joyful competition of wit and poetic skill.



A special dish – Nauryz közhe (yogurt soup) – is prepared for the festival table.

And of course, there were many songs, dances and games. One of the bright traditions that we meet in Abai’s manuscript is the “Nauryz -bata” or Nauryz blessing. To receive a blessing on this day from the lips of aqsqaqs (elderly) and aje (women of old age) is considered a big honour and sign of kindness.

During the Nauryz holiday it is customary to share generously one’s dastarkhan (table). A special dish – *Nauryz közhe* (yogurt soup) – is prepared for the festival table. In each yurt (nomadic tent house) everyone would have their own recipe. The only rule for making it was the number of ingre-

dients: seven. The guests are served the best meat dishes *qazy*, *qarta*, *shujiq* (lamb and horse meat delicacies), etc.

Since Nauryz's central theme is renewal and joy hence is the tradition on the eve of Nauryz to thoroughly clean you house, return all your debts, forgive all offences and resentments and to make peace with all with whom you were at odds. It is believed that Nauryz night brings luck and realisation of wishes. Therefore, one has to greet it with clear soul and mind and to fill all the vessels at home with milk, grain or spring water so that prosperity never leaves one's household.

But Nauryz is not only about festivities and *dastarkhan*. During the month you have to help the land to clear its life-giving arteries – to clean natural and artificial water channels and chutes, water wells and springs sprinkling them with hallowed milk thus wishing fertility to Mother-land; cultivation, planting and other agricultural work are to be started.

In the last years Nauryz was reborn. Nauryz celebrations start on 21 March and last for one month. Many sports and cultural events are held during this month throughout the country. It became a loved holiday of each citizen of Kazakhstan, symbol of unity and peace.

A Kazakh Wedding

A wedding ceremony is one of the most significant and festive events in the culture of any nation. Wedding customs go back to ancient times and reflect the uniqueness of the people's mentality and traditions. There is no other such magnificent, bright and most anticipated event like the celebration of the traditional Kazakh wedding.

In many cultures, a wedding is a ceremony to record an official marriage and has associated festivals and rituals that are usually celebrated within one or several days. However, it is different in Kazakh culture. According to old customs, a **traditional Kazakh wedding ceremony is a series of many ritual stages extended over a few months, sometimes even years** (for example, preparation and bride price after the marriage proposal, might last for several years).



A young bride in a Kazakh traditional wedding headdress known as saukele is portrayed by Kazakh artist Viktoriya Tagirova for a special calendar series sponsored by Tengizchevroil.

Each similar wedding cycles are celebrated (*toi*) where many guests are invited. There are **seven cycles in the Kazakh wedding ceremony**: the first *toi* is linked to the arrival of the parents from the groom's side, to the bride for the match-making process.

The second one is the reception of the parents from the bride's side at the groom's place, the third one is sending of the groom for his date with his future bride, the fourth *toi* is the reception of the groom at the bride's village, the

fifth is sending the groom to bring his bride, the sixth is the bride's farewell, and the last one is meeting of the bride at the groom's place (wedding). Each wedding cycle consists of a variety of strictly regulated rituals, magical customs and formalities as Kazakh ancestors believed should be observed and which will have a positive impact on the future family life.

Tradition has it that: "It is impossible to predict three things in a lifetime: first, who is your future wife (or husband), second, gender of the baby and the third, time of death". A wedding ceremony is the most important event in a lifetime and one of the brightest and significant celebrations in Kazakh culture.

Did You Know That?

Did you know that....

- ☞ Kazakhstan is the **9th largest country in the world**, with a total area of 2,724,900 square km. It lags behind Argentina and India that occupy the 7th and 8th positions, respectively. The land of Kazakhstan is covered with mountains, forests, wildlife parks, and natural parks. It is a large and wide country that has many sites to attract tourists from all over the world.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is the **largest landlocked country**. It does not share any of its borders with an open sea or ocean. The country has the Caspian Sea on its western side, which is in fact a large lake having no access to seaborne trade. Still, Kazakhstan has a navy, which is based on the Caspian Sea.
- ☞ Kazakhstan's **Caspian Sea is the largest inland body of water** in the world at 371,000 square km and it borders Kazakhstan on the west. It is rich in sturgeon, a fish prized for its world's famous caviar.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is one of the countries that have **the lowest population density in the world**. The country's population density equals to 7 people per square km.
- ☞ Kazakhstan has the **second-longest continuous land border** in the world. It shares its northern border with Russia which is the longest border of the country, measuring about 7,644 km in length.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is **so large** that the distance from one end to the other is about the same as from London to Istanbul.

- ☞ Kazakhstan is **located in both Europe and Asia**. The Ural River, which forms the traditional boundary between these continents, cuts through Kazakhstan in the west.
- ☞ Kazakhstan's **highest point is Khan Tengri** of the Tian Shan mountain range. At 7,010 metres, it is also the world's most northern 7000-m peak. The lowest point in Kazakhstan is the bottom of the Karagiye Depression at 132 metres below sea level; located east of the Caspian Sea, it is one of the lowest elevations on Earth.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is home to **a lake that contains both freshwater and saltwater**. The Balkhash has two parts: an eastern part which contains freshwater, and a western part with salty or saline water. Lake Balkhash is the 15th largest lake in the world and covers an area of around 16,400 square km. It is also an important tourist site in the country.
- ☞ There exists **an underwater spruce forest in Lake Kaindy**. The lake was created after the 1911 Kebin earthquake triggered a large landslide blocking the gorge and forming a natural dam. The Kaindy is a 400-meter-long and nearly 30-metre-deep lake located 129 kilometres east-southeast of the city of Almaty and is 2,000 metres above sea level.
- ☞ Kazakhstan has a nature reserve with about 1,300 species of flowering plants. **The Aksu-Zhabagly National Park** in South Kazakhstan also has excellent guides, well-marked trails and biodiversity that includes ibex, argali sheep and golden eagles.

- ☞ Kazakhstan is home to **snow leopards** who inhabit the mountains in Eastern Kazakhstan. They are notoriously shy and may grow to 68 kgs. Kazakhs have long revered the animal for its bravery, independence, and intelligence. Today, the animals are very rare in the wild, with estimates ranging from 4,000 to 8,000. The snow leopard is considered a national symbol of Kazakhstan.
- ☞ Kazakhstan's Kyzylkum Desert is home to many different species of lizards, including **the Central Asia's largest lizard, the gray monitor lizard**. The monitor lizards average about one meter in length but can reach total body lengths of almost two meters.
- ☞ Early Kazakh nomads used to live in a traditional tent called a **yurt**. The word entered the English language through Russian ("yurta") but originated in the Turkic language meaning "nomadic dwelling", "to roam".
- ☞ The sun in **Kazakhstan's national flag** has 32 beams, which symbolise progress and prosperity.
- ☞ **The golden eagle** is one of Kazakhstan's national symbols, also pictured soaring on the country's national flag. Kazakhs revere it as a symbol of power, strength, and independence as it is a master of the skies. The female bird is actually larger than the male, measuring 1 metre from beak to tail. The average bird has a wingspan of 2 metre.
- ☞ Kazakhstan's **Coat of Arms** is composed of a shanyrak, the image of the upper dome-like portion of a yurt, and two mythical horses against a blue background. The shanyrak is a symbol of well-being of family, peace,

and calmness, while the circular shape represents life and eternity.

- ☞ Kazakhstan is a **bilingual nation** where both Kazakh and Russian are spoken widely in the country. Since recently, Kazakhstan has been pursuing a trilingual policy with English as a third language in response to sociolinguistic and economic factors.
- ☞ **Kazakh** is a Turkic language that contains many words from Russian and Arabic, as well as Mongol, Persian, and other Turkic languages. It was not written down until the 1860s, using the Arabic script. In 1940, the Cyrillic alphabet was adopted along with some extra symbols to write Kazakh. In 2017, a decision was taken to transition Kazakh from Cyrillic to a Latin script by 2025.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is **the birthplace of apple trees**, which originated in the mountains around Almaty, the former capital of Kazakhstan, as far back as 20 million years ago. The name Almaty means “a place of apples.” Many wild apple trees still grow in parts of Kazakhstan.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is where **horse was first domesticated**. The ancient Kazakhs were the first to tame the horses and use them for travel purposes. Later, they started using horses in war. Kazakhs have a special association with horses.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is home to over **27,000 ancient monuments** throughout the country, including the Golden Warrior, a Saka prince which was interred clad in gold armour.
- ☞ Kazakhstan has **five UNESCO World Heritage sites**: three cultural sites – the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed

Yasawi; Tamgaly, home to 5,000 ancient rock carvings (petroglyphs), and the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Silk Road Corridor; and two natural sites – the Saryarka plains, a world-famous birdwatching site; and the Western Tien-Shan.

- 👉 **Nur-Sultan** is one of the world's newest, and most futuristic, capital cities.
- 👉 Kazakhstan is home to **the Baikonur Cosmodrome**, the world's oldest and largest operating space launch facility. The first manned spaceflight with Yuri Gagarin took off into space from there in 1961. It is currently the world's only launch site for human space flight, except for China's Jiuquan Space Launch Centre.
- 👉 Kazakhstan was home to **the Soviet Union's Semipalatinsk Nuclear Testing Site**, where more than 500 nuclear devices were tested between 1949 and 1989, equalling approximately 20,000 Hiroshima bombs. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan inherited the fourth largest nuclear weapons arsenal in the world after Russia, the United States and Ukraine. As an independent nation, Kazakhstan renounced nuclear weapons and dismantled the nuclear testing infrastructure at Semipalatinsk by July 2000.
- 👉 Kazakhstan is home to the **highest mountain skating rink, Medeu**. Located at a height of 1,691 metres above sea level, this skating rink was erected in a mountain valley in the south-eastern area of Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan. Opened for the public in 1951, Medeu is one of the great tourist attraction sites in Kazakhstan with a surface area as large as two football fields.

- ☞ Kazakhstan is hotly tipped as **the ski destination of the future**. The Shymbulak Ski Resort located at an elevation of 2,200 metres above sea level in the upper part of the Medeu Valley in the Zailiysky Alatau mountain range is the largest ski resort in Central Asia. It is popular for its mild climate, large quantity of sunny days and great amount of natural powder snow through the winter.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is home to **99 elements from Mendeleev's periodic table of chemical elements**.
- ☞ Kazakhstan is the **world's largest uranium producer**. The country is home to 12% of the world's uranium resources, and in 2018 it produced 41% of the world's uranium.
- ☞ Kazakhstan's **Tengiz oil field is one of the largest in the world** at 19 km wide and 21 km long, covering 2,500 square km. It is also one of the largest discoveries in recent history and helps make oil the country's number one export.
- ☞ Kazakhstan's traditional drink **kumis** is made from fermented mare's milk and is believed to be a cure-all for everything from the common cold to tuberculosis. The Kazakhs living on the steppes also drink **shubat**, or fermented camel's milk, which is believed to have virucidal properties.
- ☞ **Horseriding** is a large part of Kazakh culture, including traditional sport *kyz kuu*, literally translated as "girl chasing". It is essentially a race between a man and woman, both on horseback, that either ends up with the man kissing the woman (a victory for the man) or

the woman beating the man with a whip (a victory for the woman).

- ☞ One popular Kazakh game is called **kokpar**. It is a precursor to polo, where riders on horseback try to control a “ball,” which is the headless carcass of a goat or sheep.
- ☞ Kazakhstan’s **national dish is beshbarmak**, which literally means “five fingers” because it was traditionally eaten using all five fingers. It is usually served in a large dish placed in the centre of a table and involves large chunks of boiled horse meat, layered over noodles boiled in a broth and topped with onions, parsley and black pepper.
- ☞ Kazakhstan prides itself for its ancient sport of **hunting with eagles** still practiced today. Eagle-hunters, or *berkutchi*, train golden eagles or falcons to sight and capture prey such as rabbits, foxes, and smaller birds.
- ☞ **Alikhan Bukeikhanov** (1866–1937) was a Kazakh statesman, politician, publicist, teacher, writer and environmental scientist who was a founder and led the Alash party. He served as **the Prime Minister of the Alash Autonomy** from 1917 to 1920, **making him the first person in the history of Kazakhstan to hold such a position.**
- ☞ **Abilkhan Kasteyev** (1904–1973) was a Soviet Kazakh painter. Highly decorated, he painted more than a thousand paintings in oil and water-colours. Some of his works are on display in the State Tretyakov Gallery, the State Museum of East Nations Art, in the Central Museum of the Revolution in Moscow.

Kazakhstan's State Museum of Fine Arts is named after Kasteyev.

- ☞ **Rakhimzhan Qoshqarbayev** was the first soldier to raise the Soviet Flag at the Reichstag building in Berlin on 30 April 1945, having placed the flag by a staircase in the opera hall after sneaking into the building. After nightfall Qoshqarbayev and his fellow soldiers raised the flag on the roof, however, because it was too dark to take a photo, none of them were part of the iconic photo of Soviet soldiers raising the flag which was taken on 2 May 1945 to capture a re-enactment of the historic moment.
- ☞ **Olzhas Suleimenov** is a Kazakh poet, Turkologist, politician, and Soviet anti-nuclear activist. Suleimenov became a worldwide name in 1989, when he led the establishment of the international environmental movement **Nevada-Semipalatinsk**, which campaigned to close nuclear sites in Nevada and at Semipalatinsk.
- ☞ **Tokhtar Aubakirov, Talgat Mussabayev and Aidyn Aimbetov** are **Kazakh pilots and cosmonauts** who flew on numerous spaceflights.
- ☞ **Marat Bissengaliyev**, a famous violin player and conductor, was born in Almaty but currently lives most of the time in the UK and India. He is also a professor of Birmingham Conservatory and one of directors of the Alliance of Asia-Pacific Region Orchestras (AAPRO). He is the founding Music Director of the Symphony Orchestra of India.
- ☞ **Timur Bekmambetov** is a Kazakh-born director, producer and screenwriter who has worked on films,

music videos and commercials. He is best known for American films *Wanted* (2008) and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012).

👉 **Alan Buribayev**, a famous bandmaster, is Chief Conductor of the Astana Opera House and Principal Guest Conductor of the Japan Century Symphony Orchestra in Osaka. From 2010 to 2016, he was Principal Conductor of the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in Dublin, Ireland.

👉 **Aruhan Galieva** is a British singer and actress of **mixed Anglo-Kazakh heritage** and is best known for her work as a solo soprano on Karl Jenkins' "Tlep" under Sony BMG and her work on the follow-up album "Shakarim" which was premiered at the Royal Festival Hall.

👉 **Gennady Golovkin**, or "GGG", is a two-time middleweight world champion. A top-three pound-for-pound fighter in the world, with a pristine record of 37–0 with 33 wins coming by way of knockout, Golovkin has one of the most durable chins in boxing history, having never been knocked down or knocked out in a total of 392 fights, 42 as a professional and 350 as an amateur. A 2003 World Championships middleweight gold medallist and a 2004 Summer Olympics middleweight silver medallist, Golovkin is a calculating pressure fighter and is known for his exceptionally powerful and precise punching, balance, and methodical movement inside the ring.

👉 **Dimash Kudaibergen**, a Kazakh superstar singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist, is widely known for his exceptionally wide vocal range of six octaves.

Although Dimash's main genre is classical crossover, he sings in multiple musical genres, classical music (bel canto), pop, folk and world music, while using musical elements and vocal styles and techniques of many other genres, including jazz, rock, RnB, musical theatre, and rap. He is also known for his use of the whistle register, the highest register of the human voice, lying above the modal register and falsetto register, and for singing in full head voice.

👉 **Alexandr Vinokourov**, the most famous and successful cyclist in the history of Kazakhstan and one of the greatest sportsmen ever in his country, serves as general manager of renown **Astana Pro Team**. In his long career, Vinokourov won very important races such as the Vuelta a España, the Tour of Switzerland, two Liège-Bastogne-Liège and one edition of the Amstel Gold Race, as well as the **gold medal in the Olympic Road Race in London 2012**, the silver medal at the **2000 Olympic Games in Sydney** and two bronze medals at the UCI Road World Championships. In the jersey of **Astana Pro Team**, Vinokourov won the Giro del Trentino, a stage at the Tour de France and repeated his success at Liège-Bastogne-Liège.

👉 **Zhansaya Abdumalik**, a chess prodigy holding the titles of International Master and Woman Grandmaster, twice won the World Youth Chess Championships in the age of 8 and 11. She holds three Grandmaster norms, and only needs to achieve a rating of 2500 to qualify for the GM title. In 2014, Zhansaya founded the Zhansaya Abdumalik Chess Academy, which provides quality chess coaching services for children as early as 4 years old with a mission "to educate a generation of

thinking and competitive personalities who tomorrow will build the country tomorrow”.

☞ **Nadezhda Ryabets**, a 19-year-old middleweight (75 kg) female boxer, earned the quota place for the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games at the Asian & Oceanian Olympic Boxing Qualifying Event in Amman, Jordan. The youngster won the 3rd place in the same weight category at the **Youth Olympic Games** in 2018. Nadezhda has been a boxer since the age of 10.

☞ **Elizabet Tursynbayeva** is a young and prominent Kazakh figure skater and world's silver medallist. She is the 2019 World silver medallist, the 2019 Four Continents silver medallist, the 2017 CS Ice Star champion, the 2018 CS Finlandia Trophy silver medallist, the 2015 CS Golden Spin of Zagreb silver medallist, the 2019 Winter Universiade silver medallist, and a three-time Kazakhstani national champion (2015–2017). She is currently the 20th highest ranked ladies' singles skater in world by the International Skating Union following the 2019–20 figure skating season. Having successfully landed a quadruple salchow at the 2019 World Figure Skating Championships, Tursynbayeva is the first female skater to land a quadruple jump in senior competition. Because of her small stature, she is known to many of her fans as “Lilbet”.

☞ **Daneliya Tuleshova** is a Kazakh child singer who represented Kazakhstan in the *Junior Eurovision Song Contest 2018* in Minsk, Belarus, finishing sixth. Before Junior Eurovision, she won the fourth season of *The Voice Kids Ukraine* and was a finalist in *Children's New*

Wave 2015. Daneliya took part in 2019 *The World's Best* and in 2020, she auditioned for America's Got Talent singing *Tears of Gold* by Faouzia and passed with a yes from all four judges.

- 🎧 **Imanbek Zeikenov**, known professionally as **Imanbek**, is a Kazakh DJ and record producer. In 2019, he became internationally famous with his remix of Saint Jhn's 'Roses'. The remix has appeared in the charts throughout Europe including Belgium, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, India and Sweden, becoming number 1 on Shazam World. Based on the success and popularity of the remix, the original song recorded in 2016, appeared on the US Billboard chart, the UK Singles Chart and other charts, including, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland in 2019. Imanbek has played guitar since the age of 8. He studied and works in rail transport, but has been engaged in music production since 2017.

