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**THE FACTS:**

Location:	The northern part of Central Asia
Area:	Over 2.7 million square kilometres
Capital:	Astana
Population:	17 693 500
Status:	Presidential Republic
President:	Nursultan Nazarbayev
Language:	Kazakh and Russian
Religion:	Islam and Russian Orthodox

**COUNTRY OVERVIEW:**

Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world, covering more than 2.7 million sq km and accounting for 1.8% of the world's land. Whilst its population stands at approximately 17 million people, its population density is fewer than six people per square kilometre. The country is also known as the most ethnically diverse state of the former Soviet Union. A census in 2008 identified that Ethnic Kazakhs represent 59% of the overall population, whilst Russians represent 25%. The rest of the population consists of Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Germans, Tatars and Uighurs. The official language of the country is Kazakh. The official alphabet is Cyrillic. Russian is designated as the language of interethnic communication and is used in everyday business.

**CLIMATE:**

Within Kazakhstan's vast territory there are a number of extreme climates. In January temperatures average between -19/-4°C and in July +19/26°C. In winter the temperature may go down to -45°C and in summer up to +45°C.

As temperatures can plummet to well below freezing in winter months, it is advisable to take plenty of warm clothing including hats, scarves and gloves. It is wise to dress in layers as

hotels and restaurants are generally well-heated. For footwear, if travelling in winter months it is advisable to bring rubber soled boots. Bring cool and comfortable clothing and footwear for the summer months.

## **MONEY:**

**Credit and debit cards** are widely used in Astana, even for small purchases. MasterCard, Visa, Visa Electron, Diners, American Express and Maestro, Cirrus are widely accepted. Travellers' cheques can be cashed in most banks, but are subject to a commission. Banks are usually open from Monday to Friday from 0900 to 1800 and on Saturday from 0900 to 1300.

**ATM machines** also accept the above mentioned cards and will give you money in KZT and occasionally USD. ATMs can be found inside and outside banks, in high streets and shopping centres across the Kazakhstan.

Foreign currency can be exchanged at banks, some hotels Bureau de Change kiosks, which are found in most city centres. You are highly recommended NOT to change money at the airports.

## **CITY OVERVIEW: ASTANA**

Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, is situated 1000 km to the northwest of Almaty. The capital was moved from Almaty to Astana in 1997. Since the capital's move, the population has more than doubled, now standing at 600,000 and is constantly growing.

It is a new capital and is very modern and bright. The ingenious architectural projects which use advanced technologies and design, super modern hotels, business-centres, multi-storey new buildings reflect city's bold ambitions and gushing energy. Astana, like any other modern capital, has a wide choice of restaurants and cafés, as well as parks, museums, theatres and cinemas.

Astana's restaurant scene is like the city itself: at the cutting edge and growing fast. You'll find Indian, American, Japanese and European cuisines alongside more traditional Russian and Kazakh fare. Chefs have been imported from around the globe to work in Astana's finest restaurants and have brought their own unique influences.

Astana has a variety of shopping malls which offer different entertainment.

The State Opera and Ballet Theatre "Astana Opera" was founded in 2013. According to its technical capabilities, the Astana Opera is on a par with the world's famous opera houses.

On November 22, 2012, Astana was chosen by the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) as the venue to host Expo 2017.



## **FOOD AND DRINK:**

### **Kazakh specialties:**

**Beshbarmak** – the main national dish, consisting of boiled horsemeat or mutton with boiled pasta sheets and a meat broth

**Kuyrdak** – a dish made from fried horse, mutton, or beef offal, such as heart, liver, kidneys, and other organs, diced and served with onions and peppers

**Manty** - another popular dough-based dish in Kazakh cuisine. It is a mixture of ground beef or mutton spiced with black pepper, enclosed in a dough wrapper. Manty are cooked in a multi-level steamer and served topped with butter, sour cream, or onion sauce

**Kazy** – horsemeat sausages

**Boursaky** – fried dough balls

**Kumys** – fermented mare's milk

#### **LOCAL CULTURE:**

Women, particularly those travelling alone, face no particular risks when travelling in Kazakhstan.

Visitors should feel free to wear whatever clothing they want. When visiting religious places, however, visitors should dress more conservatively.

Smoking is banned indoors and in public places. It is only permitted outside in specially designated areas.

#### **EQUALITY POLICY:**

We are committed to ensuring that there is no unjustified discrimination in the recruitment, retention, training and development of staff on the basis of age, disability, gender including transgender, HIV/AIDS status, marital status including civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, political opinion, race/ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, work pattern, on the basis of having or not having dependants, or on any other grounds which are irrelevant to decision-making.

Our Equality Policy takes account of relevant legal standards. We aim to abide by and promote equality legislation by following both the letter and the spirit of it in this area. We try to avoid unjustified discrimination which we recognise is a barrier to equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights.

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