

# Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan Adventures

**Tour Style:** Worldwide walking holidays

**Destination:** Kazakhstan

**Trip code:** KZWHW

**Trip Walking Grade:** 4



## HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

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The Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan offer spectacular walking opportunities for those seeking adventure. Their landscapes surprise with an extraordinary mix of alpine lakes, desert sand dunes, frosted peaks, steppe grassland plains, and dizzying gorges. This holiday not only takes you to a host of see-it-to-believe-it places, but also immerses you in local culture with an eagle hunting demonstration, yurt making, dinners with local families, and a couple of nights at a traditional yurt camp on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

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- Full programme of guided walks and sightseeing led by experienced local leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- Full board
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- Eagle hunting demonstration
- Yurt building in Kyzyl Tuu
- Air-conditioned transport
- Return flights from the UK including hold baggage and airport transfers

**Please note:** On days 10 & 11 we stay in a traditional yurt camp. Yurts will be on a shared basis, with 3 to 4 people of the same gender per yurt. Single & twin rooms are not possible here

## HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

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- Uncovering the history behind Panfilov Park in Almaty
- Walking to the Singing Dunes in Altyn-Emel National Park
- Soaking up the beauty of Charyn Canyon
- Trekking to the Kolsai Lakes through alpine scenery
- Taking in the views as you walk the Kara-Beltek Pass in Ak-Suu Nature Park
- Discovering Skazka Canyon, known as the fairytale canyon

## ITINERARY

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### Day 1: Overnight Flight

Depart from the UK on an overnight flight to Almaty, Kazakhstan.

### Day 2: ALMATY (KAZAKHSTAN)

You'll arrive at Almaty International Airport in the early morning, where your HF Holidays Tour Manager will meet you and take you to the hotel. Enjoy breakfast and time to rest.

Later, we'll set off on a city tour to get acquainted with Almaty and its history, visiting the Republic Square and Monument of Independence. We'll walk through the old city centre to the Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen, which honours the fighters who defended Moscow against German invasion during WWII. We'll also visit the Russian Orthodox Zenkov Cathedral (also known as Ascension Cathedral), Museum of Musical Instruments, Abai Theatre, and Green Market.

### Day 3: ALTYN-EMEL NATIONAL PARK

After breakfast, we'll leave Almaty and travel to Basshi in Altyn-Emel National Park via Kapchagay for a picnic on the reservoir shore and a dip if you fancy. This national park has plenty to please from its grassland plains and desert dunes to rare wildlife and surrounding mountains. We'll walk to the famous Singing Dunes, named after the deep humming noise you'll hear as you slide down from the top.

**Distance:** 2.5 miles (4 km)

**Ascent/Descent:** 330 feet (100m)

### Day 4: CHARYN CANYON

Today we'll travel to Charyn Canyon, one of Kazakhstan's most standout sights. The canyon's about 150km long and up to 300m deep in places, and we'll head to one of the most jaw-dropping parts, the Valley of Castles where you'll gaze up at imposing pillars and rock formations that almost look manmade. We'll walk to Charyn Lake for a picnic lunch before travelling to the village of Shatty where we'll stay for the next two nights.

**Distance:** 2.5 miles (4 km)

**Ascent/Descent:** 850 feet (260m)

### Day 5: KOLSAI LAKES NATIONAL PARK

The three alpine lakes in Kolsai Lakes National Park will be the setting for today's walk. They sit at an altitude

between 1,700m and 2,650m with exceptionally clear water and an idyllic location surrounded by snow-capped peaks and wooded hillsides.

We'll walk from the first to the second lake, where we'll stop for a picnic before making our way back amongst this dream-like landscape.

**Distance:** 7.5 miles (12 km)

**Ascent/Descent:** 2130 feet (650m)

## Day 6: CROSSING TO KYRGYZSTAN

It'll take us about an hour to get through the border to Kyrgyzstan and once we're through we'll visit San-Tash barrow (meaning counting stones) - a burial mound dating back from the time of Timur. We'll then arrive at the village of Jyrgalan for dinner and an overnight stay. On day 6, our stay at Alakol-Jyrgalan Guesthouse will involve twin rooms shared by same-gender pairings with shared bathrooms.

## Day 7: TURNALY-KOL PANORAMA WALK

From our guesthouse, we'll set off on a hike to the remote mountain lake of Turnaly-Kol, taking in the wow-worthy panorama of Jyrgalan valley where wildflower-filled fields and wooded slopes will capture your attention. Once we arrive back, we'll transfer to Karakol for dinner with a local family. This will be our base for the next three nights.

**Distance:** 8 miles (13 km)

**Ascent/Descent:** 1840 feet (560m)

## Day 8: JETI OGUZ WALK

We'll travel to our starting point for today's walk, which will begin at Svetlaya Polyana Gorge. Crossing the impressive Kok-Jaiyk Pass, we'll head to Jeti Oguz - the dramatic red sandstone rocks known as the Seven Bulls. Once we're back in Karakol, we'll have dinner with a local Uigur family.

**Distance:** 6 miles (10 km)

**Ascent:** 1970 feet (600m)

**Descent:** 1810 feet (550m)

## Day 9: AK-SUU NATURE PARK WALK

A 1.5-hour transfer will take us to the starting point for our hike in Ak-Suu Nature Park, where we'll spend five to six hours crossing the Kara-Beltek Pass (2,606m) before descending to Karakol. We'll then have a half-hour transfer back to the hotel in time to have dinner with a Tatar family tonight.

**Distance:** 7.5 miles (12 km)

**Ascent:** 2330 feet (710m)

**Descent:** 2660 feet (810m)

## Day 10: KARAKOL SIGHTSEEING

We'll have a change of scenery today as we embark on a city tour of Karakol which begins in Przhevalskiy Museum, dedicated to the Russian explorer. We'll also visit a Russian Orthodox Church and Dungan Mosque. Then we'll journey to Issyk-Kul Lake, the world's second-largest mountain lake, which sits

pretty in the Tian Shan Mountains. We'll spend the night in a yurt camp. On days 10 & 11 we'll stay in a traditional yurt camp. Yurts will be on a shared basis, with 3 to 4 people of the same gender per yurt. Single & twin rooms are not possible here.

### **Day 11: ISSYK-KUL LAKE & SKAZKA CANYON**

After breakfast at the camp, we'll spend the morning discovering Issyk-Kul, with time to relax and swim at the beach before joining our host family for lunch. They'll teach us how to make a typical Kyrgyz dish – feel free to join in with cooking if you like.

In the afternoon, we'll drive to Skazka Canyon, known as the fairy tale canyon thanks to its bewitching wind-shaped rock formations and 'sculptures'. On our way back to camp, we'll stop to meet an eagle breeder who will introduce us to his eagles and demonstrate how he hunts with them.

### **Day 12: TO BISHKEK**

We'll start the day with an early breakfast before making our way to Bishkek. On the way, we'll stop to visit a local family in the village of Kyzyl-Tuu where they make traditional yurts by hand. We'll build our own yurt with them and have tea, then set off to our picnic spot in Boom gorge on the shores of the Chu Lake.

We'll visit the 11th century Burana Tower with links to the Silk Road, as well as the ruins of the ancient walled city of Balasagun. Once we reach Bishkek, we'll check in to our hotel and have dinner at a local café.

### **Day 13: EXPLORE BISHKEK**

A look around Osh Market will start our day, where you'll see a whole array of spices, fresh fruit, vegetables and more. Enjoy lunch at a restaurant, then the afternoon is yours to spend however you wish. We'll round off our trip with a final dinner together, during which we'll be treated to local performances.

### **Day 14: DEPARTURE DAY**

Transfer to the airport for your flight back home.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

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### **Kazzhol Park Hotel, Almaty - Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan**

This 4-star modern hotel will be our base while in Almaty. Its central location puts you within easy reach of the top sights, while rooms provide a comfortable place to sleep. They come equipped with air conditioning, kettle, TV, and Wi-Fi. There's also an on-site restaurant, gym, and garden.

### **Aigai Kum Guesthouse, Altyn Emel National Park - Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan**

The Aigai Kum guesthouse's location is its main draw, perched on the edge of this spellbinding national park. Rooms are basic, but clean and comfortable. It features 11 private rooms with shared bathrooms, a garden, and dining room. There's no Wi-Fi here due to its remote location.

### **Grand Kolsay Hotel, Shatty - Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan**

Situated within the Kolsai Lakes National Park, Gran Kolsay Hotel is a modern hotel with mountain views. There's a wood-burning sauna (extra charge) and rooms come with en-suite bathrooms and minibar.

## Alakol-Jyrgalan Guesthouse, Jyrgalan - Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan

This traditional guesthouse in the heart of Jyrgalan Valley provides simple yet comfortable accommodation. Rooms have shared bathrooms, and there's a lounge to rest up in with your fellow guests as well as a Finnish sauna for an additional charge.

## Amir Hotel, Karakol - Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan

Rooms at the Amir Hotel are clean and modern while the hotel itself is just a few minutes' walk from the town centre. There's free Wi-Fi, a terrace to sit out on, and rooms come with a TV and tea and coffee maker.

## Nomad Lodge Yurt Camp, Issyk-Kul - Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan

Located on the southern shore of Issyk-Kul lake, you'll be immersed in nature at the Nomad Lodge Yurt Camp. Sharing with three to four members of your group, you'll stay in traditional, handcrafted yurts, with beds and bedding provided. Villagers have made everything in the yurts, from the carpets to the decorations. Not only will you get a glimpse of local traditions and customs but wake up to birdsong – a far cry from towns and cities.

## Ambassador Hotel, Bishkek - Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan

This 4-star hotel is in the centre of Bishkek. Rooms are spacious, light, and modern, each with a TV, en-suite bathroom, and free Wi-Fi. There's a rooftop terrace and an on-site spa to help you fully relax before your journey home.

## USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

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### Joining Instructions (With Flights)

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from a range of UK airports\* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email [reservations@hfholidays.co.uk](mailto:reservations@hfholidays.co.uk)

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

### Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

If you prefer to book the holiday without flights and make your own travel arrangements you will still be able to make use of the return group transfers between the airport and hotel, which are included in the cost of your holiday. You must contact us on [+44 \(0\)20 3974 8865](tel:+4402039748865) or email [reservations@hfholidays.co.uk](mailto:reservations@hfholidays.co.uk) at least 8 weeks before your holiday start date to provide your flight details if you wish to join the transfers. If you do not contact us, we will assume you are making independent travel arrangements.

If you are arriving ahead of the group, and are meeting them at the first hotel, please leave a message at the hotel reception for the HF Holidays' leader or local leader, detailing your room number, and a mobile telephone number if possible. The leader will contact you once the group arrives. If you are arriving after the group, a message will be left for you at the hotel reception, welcoming you and giving details of the time and place to meet the group.

## Essential Information

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

### Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

### Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags
- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

### Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device

## Useful Information

### Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We work with Campbell Irvine to provide you with competitive single and annual multi-trip insurance. Please see our website for more information and details of how to contact them for a quote:

<https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/about-us/booking-information/insurance>.

For more information about healthcare abroad and its costs, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>.

### Modest Dress

On your trip we advise you to dress modestly and respectfully. Both men and women should aim to cover their shoulders and knees, especially if visiting religious sites or rural areas. Opt for loose-fitting and conservative clothing to show respect for local customs and traditions.



## TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

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These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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