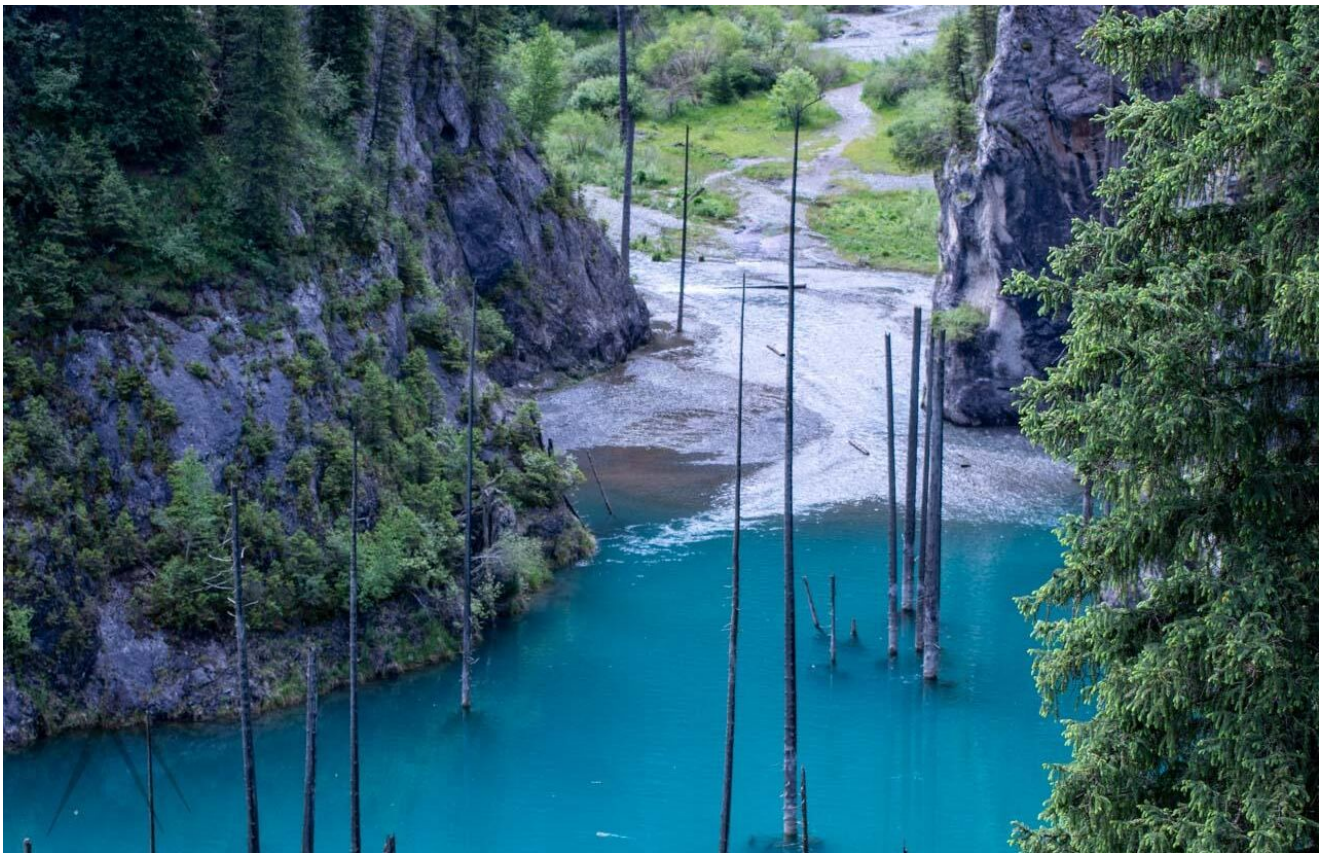
CENTRAL ASIA GUIDE



PRIVATE TOUR · 7 DAYS

Pure Kazakhstan Tour

Round trip from Almaty · Kazakhstan

Duration 7 days, 6 nights	Start and end Round trip from Almaty	Best time to visit All year
Private tour from $1,250 per person	Group size Max 11 travellers	Tour type Culture, Jeep (4x4), Nature
Difficulty Easy		

Prices and dates valid for 2026 departures. Issued 23 November 2026.

Tour highlights

This 7-day private tour combines Almaty with the canyons, dunes and mountain lakes of south-eastern Kazakhstan. After a tour of Almaty with the Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen, the wooden Ascension Cathedral, the Green Bazaar and a cable-car ride up Kok-Tobe, a four-day jeep journey takes you east into the wild.

In Altyn Emel National Park you explore the striped chalk hills of the Aktau Mountains, visit a 700-year-old willow revered by locals and climb the Singing Dune, which hums like an organ when the sand slides. On the way to the mountain village of Saty you stop in the border town of Zharkent with its Chinese-style mosque and local bazaar. From Saty you visit the Kolsay Lakes, the "Necklace of the Tien Shan" at 1,800 m, and Kaindy Lake, where the trunks of a spruce forest flooded after the 1911 earthquake still rise from the turquoise water.

On the way back to Almaty you walk down through the Valley of Castles of Charyn Canyon to the Charyn River for a picnic lunch. The last full day leads into the mountains right above the city: the Medeu high-mountain skating rink and the cable car up to the Shymbulak resort and the Talgar Pass (3,163 m), followed by the Almaty Museum of Arts and Republic Square.

Difficulty: Easy. Mostly sightseeing and short walks, including about 2 km each way down to the Charyn River in Charyn Canyon and a short walk (or optional horse ride) to Kaindy Lake. Two long days by 4x4, partly off-road (450 km to Altyn Emel and 370 km to Saty), simple guesthouses with mostly shared facilities in Altyn Emel and Saty, and the Shymbulak cable car up to 3,200 m.



Car driving in Charyn Canyon



Second Kolsay lake in Kazakhstan

Where you'll stay

Night 1	**Almaty**	Grand Sapphire Hotel or KazZhol Park Hotel or similar
Night 2	**Altyn Emel National Park**	Guesthouse in Altyn Emel or similar
Nights 3–4	**Saty**	Guesthouse in Saty or Kolsay Prestige Mountain Resort or similar
Nights 5–6	**Almaty**	Grand Sapphire Hotel or KazZhol Park Hotel or similar

Listed accommodation or similar, same category.

Day-by-day itinerary

DAY 1

Arrival in Almaty and city tour

Welcome to Almaty, Kazakhstan's cultural and economic heart! Your guide meets you at the airport and takes you to the hotel (check-in after 14:00), where you can leave your luggage and get ready to explore the city.

The sightseeing starts in the Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen, one of Almaty's most beloved landmarks. Here you see the Eternal Flame, the beautiful wooden Ascension Cathedral that survived a major earthquake, and the Museum of Folk Musical Instruments with rare exhibits dating back to the 17th century. Next comes the lively Green Bazaar, where you can taste dried fruits, nuts and local delicacies – a perfect way to dive into the city's vibrant atmosphere.

In the afternoon a walking tour through the modern center takes you past the Abay Opera House, along cozy Panfilov Street with its cafés and street performers, and to Arbat Street with its handmade crafts. The day ends with a cable-car ride up Kok-Tobe Hill (1,100 m) for panoramic views over the city and the snowy peaks of the Tian Shan. Return to the hotel for the night.

Overnight	**Almaty** · Grand Sapphire Hotel or KazZhol Park Hotel or similar
Travel	Almaty International Airport – Almaty (18 km) Almaty – Kok Tobe Mountain (3 km) Kok Tobe Mountain – Almaty (6 km)

DAY 2

Almaty – Altyn Emel National Park

After an early breakfast set off by 4x4 across the Almaty region to Altyn Emel National Park, one of Kazakhstan's most remarkable nature reserves (450 km today, including the drives in the park). Its name, "Golden Saddle", comes from the shape of a nearby mountain ridge, and the park is a land of contrasts: endless steppes, colorful hills and rocky mountains home to rare wildlife.

After lunch at the guesthouse explore the Aktau Mountains, a range of ancient chalk hills known as the "Lunar Mountains". They shimmer in layers of white, pink, red and green – a truly otherworldly sight. Then visit the legendary 700-year-old willow tree, revered by locals as a guardian of wisdom and life.

In the evening return to the guesthouse for dinner and a well-deserved rest under the peaceful desert sky.

Overnight	**Altyn Emel National Park** · Guesthouse in Altyn Emel or similar
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Travel	Almaty – Altyn Emel National Park (450 km)

DAY 3

Altyn Emel – Singing Dune – Zharkent – Saty

After breakfast continue the off-road journey through Altyn Emel National Park. The first stop is the legendary Singing Dune, which "sings" like a pipe organ when dry sand slides down its slopes. From the top enjoy sweeping views over the desert, the Ili River valley and the distant mountain ridges.

Then drive towards the mountain village of Saty, the gateway to the Kolsay and Kaindy lakes (370 km today). On the way stop in Zharkent, a small border town known for its mix of cultures and traditions: visit its Chinese-style mosque, now a museum, and stroll through the local bazaar to get a feel for daily life in eastern Kazakhstan. Lunch at a local café.

Arrive in Saty in the evening, check in at the guesthouse or mountain resort and rest surrounded by alpine scenery.

Overnight	**Saty** · Guesthouse in Saty or Kolsay Prestige Mountain Resort or similar
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch
Travel	Altyn Emel National Park – Saty (370 km)

DAY 4

Kolsay Lakes and Kaindy Lake

After breakfast set out to explore two of Kazakhstan's most beautiful alpine lakes (75 km of driving in total today). The first stop is Kolsay Lake, often called "the Necklace of the Tien Shan". Nestled among forests and snow-capped peaks at 1,800 m above sea level, it is an ideal place for a peaceful walk and great photos.

Then visit a local family in Saty village for a homemade lunch and a taste of genuine mountain hospitality.

In the afternoon continue to the mysterious Kaindy Lake, formed after an earthquake in 1911 flooded a spruce forest. The tree trunks still rise from the turquoise water, creating a hauntingly beautiful landscape. After a short off-road drive you can walk or ride a horse to the lake (horse riding at extra cost). Return to the guesthouse or mountain resort for the night.

Overnight	**Saty** · Guesthouse in Saty or Kolsay Prestige Mountain Resort or similar
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch
Travel	Saty – Kolsai Lakes (15 km) Kolsai Lakes – Saty (15 km) Saty – Lake Kaindy (23 km) Lake Kaindy – Saty (22 km)

DAY 5

Saty – Charyn Canyon – Almaty

After breakfast begin the return journey to Almaty (about 300 km), with a stop at one of Kazakhstan's true natural treasures – Charyn Canyon. Often called the "Little Brother of the Grand Canyon", it stretches for more than 150 km and reveals red and orange cliffs shaped by wind and water into fantastic "castles".

Explore the famous Valley of Castles, walking down through the gorge to the Charyn River (around 2 km one way). On the riverbank enjoy a picnic lunch (lunch box included) with views of the canyon walls glowing in the sunlight.

In the afternoon drive back to Almaty, arriving in the late evening. Check in at the hotel and rest.

Overnight	**Almaty** · Grand Sapphire Hotel or KazZhol Park Hotel or similar
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch
Travel	Saty – Charyn Canyon (100 km) Charyn Canyon – Almaty (200 km)

DAY 6

Medeu, Shymbulak and Almaty

After breakfast head into the Ili Alatau mountains, where Almaty meets the clouds. The first stop is Medeu, the legendary high-mountain skating rink at 1,691 m above sea level. The rink is closed for renovation until 2027, but the area remains a favorite spot for fresh air, stunning views and a leisurely walk surrounded by alpine scenery.

Next ride the cable car up to the Shymbulak mountain resort. The ride goes over three stages up to the Talgar Pass (3,163 m), with breathtaking panoramas of the snow-capped Zailiyskiy Alatau range; at the top enjoy the crisp mountain air and the cozy cafés. If the cable car is under maintenance, an eco-transfer takes you to the resort base instead.

Back in the city visit the Almaty Museum of Arts, a vibrant space for Kazakh contemporary art, international exhibitions and multimedia installations. The last stop is Republic Square, the symbolic heart of modern Almaty with the Golden Warrior monument, elegant fountains and wide boulevards – perfect for photos and people-watching. Return to the hotel.

Overnight	**Almaty** · Grand Sapphire Hotel or KazZhol Park Hotel or similar
Meals	Breakfast
Travel	Almaty – Medeu (15 km) Medeu – Shymbulak (5 km) Shymbulak – Almaty (20 km)

DAY 7

Departure from Almaty

Breakfast at the hotel. Check out before noon and transfer to the international airport for your flight home.

Overnight	Departure day, no overnight
Meals	Breakfast
Travel	Almaty – Almaty International Airport (18 km)

What's included

Included

- Private air-conditioned transport with driver according to the program, including the airport transfers on arrival and departure; on days 2–5 (jeep tour in the Almaty region) by 4x4 SUV (Toyota Land Cruiser or similar), 3 travelers per car
- 3 nights in a hotel in Almaty (double/twin rooms, bed & breakfast; check-in after 14:00)
- 1 night in a guesthouse in Altyn Emel National Park (twin shared rooms)
- 2 nights in Saty village (guesthouse, 3* option) or at Kolsay Lake (mountain resort, 4* option)
- Meals: breakfast daily, 3 lunches, a picnic lunch box at Charyn Canyon and 1 dinner
- Sightseeing tours and entrance fees according to the program
- English-speaking guide throughout the tour (guide-driver for small groups)
- Bottled mineral water (1 liter per person per day)

Not included

- International flights
- Meals not mentioned above
- Optional horse riding to Kaindy Lake (from 40 USD per person)
- Single room supplement in Almaty (115 USD with 3* hotels, 175 USD with 4* hotels)
- Medical expenses and insurance
- Porters at hotels, train stations and airports
- Tips and personal gratuities
- Visa fees (if applicable)

Prices

Valid for 2026 departures

Private tour, per person by group size

Travellers	3-star	4-star
1 traveller	$2,990	$3,290
2–3 travellers	$1,760	$1,820
4–5 travellers	$1,360	$1,430
6–7 travellers	$1,300	$1,370
8–9 travellers	$1,265	$1,340
10–11 travellers	$1,250	$1,320

Private tours start on any date you choose. Prices per person in a double or twin room. Single room supplement per person: 3-star: $115; 4-star: $175.

Optional extras

- Horse riding to Kaindy Lake (per person): $40 per person

Book or ask a question

Choose a date or ask us anything about this tour. We usually reply within one working day.

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