



GROUP TOUR • 5 DAYS

Through the dried Tethys Ocean – 5 days Mangystau tour

Round trip from Aktau • Kazakhstan

Duration
5 days, 4 nights

Start and end
Round trip from Aktau

Best time to visit
Mar–Oct

Group tour from
\$810 per person

Group size
Max 9 travellers

Tour type
Culture, Jeep (4x4), Nature

Difficulty
Moderate

Prices and dates valid for 2026 departures. Issued 12 October 2026.

Tour highlights

Discover the desert landscapes of Mangystau in western Kazakhstan, once the floor of the ancient Tethys Ocean, on this 5-day small-group camping tour from Aktau. On the first day you drive through the limestone cliffs of Akespe to the giant stone balls of Torysh, the colorful Jurassic clays of Kokala and the lone Sherkala mountain, and camp among the castle-like rocks of Airakty.

Next you walk on the white Tuzbair salt flat and visit its White Arch before a night in a yurt at an ethno camp. Heading south, you see the underground mosque of Karaman-Ata and the sculpted walls of Ybyk Gorge, stop at the local market in Zhanaozen and spend two nights camping in Bozjyra, at the Dragon Crest viewpoint and beneath the famous limestone Fangs. On the last day you see the pyramid-shaped Bokty mountain and the layered cliffs of Kyzylkup, the "Tiramisu Canyon", before returning to Aktau. The group is small, with a maximum of 9 travelers, and departures are guaranteed from one person.

Difficulty: Moderate. Daily drives of about 3–6.5 hours in off-road vehicles, with 50–105 km off-road per day, short walks on uneven desert terrain, three nights in tents and one night in a yurt. Not suitable for children under 6, pregnant women or people with disabilities.



Mangustay Valley of balls or the devil's balls



Sor Tuzbair, Mangistau

Where you'll stay

Night 1	Airakty – Valley of Castles	Tent Camping
Night 2	Kogez Ethno Village	Yurt Ethno Camp
Nights 3–4	Bozjyra (Boszhira)	Tent Camping

Listed accommodation or similar, same category.

Day-by-day itinerary

DAY

1

Akespe – Torysh – Kokala – Sherkala – Airakty

The journey begins with pick-up from Aktau Airport at 8:30 AM for arriving guests, while hotel guests are collected at 9:00 AM and transferred to the starting point for payment formalities, a briefing and a short rest before departure. At 9:30 AM, the tour officially starts as the group heads into the Mangystau desert.

The first destination is Akespe Gorge, where tall limestone cliffs rise above winding canyon paths, creating a dramatic landscape shaped by time and erosion.

The route then continues to Torysh (Valley of Balls), a unique natural site filled with mysterious spherical rock formations scattered across the desert floor.

Next, the journey leads to Kokala (Jurassic Clays), known for its colorful layered rock formations that reveal ancient geological history.

Afterward, visit Sherkala Mountain, a striking natural formation often called the “Sphinx of Mangystau” due to its distinctive shape.

In the late afternoon, arrive at Airakty, the valley of castle-shaped mountains, where dramatic rock formations resemble ancient fortresses. Here, the day ends with camping under the stars in the desert landscape.

Overnight	Airakty – Valley of Castles · Tent Camping
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Meals	Lunch, Dinner
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Travel	Aktau – Airakty – Valley of Castles
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DAY

2

Tuzbair (Upper, Lower and White Arch) – Yurt Ethno Camp

The day begins with a scenic drive covering 160 km on-road and 105 km off-road (approximately 5 hours and 30 minutes), heading toward one of Mangystau’s most breathtaking natural landscapes.

The first stop is Tuzbair, where you will explore both the upper and lower sections of this vast salt flat. From the upper viewpoint, enjoy sweeping panoramic views of white cliffs and endless horizons, before descending to the lower plateau to walk across the striking salt formations.

You will also visit the famous White Arch, a naturally formed rock structure that stands out against the surrounding landscape and offers excellent photo opportunities.

After a full day of exploration, continue to a traditional Yurt Ethno Camp, where you will experience elements of the Kazakh nomadic lifestyle. In the evening, enjoy a local-style dinner and relax in the comfort of a yurt, surrounded by the peaceful desert environment.

Overnight	Kogez Ethno Village · Yurt Ethno Camp
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Meals	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
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Travel	Airakty – Valley of Castles – Kogez Ethno Village (265 km)
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DAY

3

Karaman-Ata – Ybyk – Zhanaozen – Bozjyra (Dragon Crest)

The day covers 260 km on-road and 68 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 5 hours, taking you through both cultural and natural highlights of the region. The first stop is the Karaman-Ata Necropolis, home to one of the largest underground mosques in Mangystau and an important spiritual site dating back centuries. You will have time to explore the area and experience its peaceful and historical atmosphere.

The journey continues to Ybyk Gorge, a unique porous canyon known for its unusual rock formations and smooth, sculpted walls shaped by wind and time. Walking through the gorge offers a chance to appreciate the raw beauty of Mangystau's desert landscapes.

Next, there is a stop in Zhanaozen, where the group will refuel and visit the local market. This is a great opportunity to observe everyday life, try local products and enjoy a cup of tea before continuing the journey.

In the afternoon, travel toward Bozjyra National Park, reaching the spectacular Dragon Crest Panorama. This dramatic viewpoint features jagged white cliffs and vast open desert views. The day ends with camping at this breathtaking location, where you can enjoy sunset, silence and a night under the stars.

Overnight	Bozjyra (Boszhira) · Tent Camping
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Travel	Kogez Ethno Village – Bozjyra (Boszhira) (328 km)

DAY

4

Bozjyra National Park (Mars Panorama) – Bozjyra Fangs – Bozjyra Lower Part

The day covers 62 km on-road and 50 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 2 hours and 47 minutes, focusing on a deeper exploration of the breathtaking Bozjyra landscapes. The first stop is the Mars Panorama, where dramatic red and white cliffs create an otherworldly scenery that resembles the surface of another planet. From this viewpoint, you can take in wide, uninterrupted views of the surrounding desert formations.

The journey continues to the iconic Bozjyra Fangs, a pair of striking limestone spires rising sharply from the desert floor. Here, you can explore the area on foot and take in the scale and beauty of one of Mangystau's most famous natural landmarks.

In the evening, descend to the lower part of Bozjyra, where the campsite will be set up beneath the Fangs. Surrounded by towering cliffs and vast open space, this location offers a truly unforgettable desert experience, with sunset views and a peaceful night under the stars.

Overnight	Bozjyra (Boszhira) · Tent Camping
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Travel	Bozjyra (Boszhira) – Bozjyra (Boszhira) (112 km)

DAY
5**Bokty Mount – Kyzylkup (Tiramisu Canyon) – Shakpaktysai Canyon – Aktau**

The final day covers 305 km on-road and 90 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 6 hours and 35 minutes, bringing your journey through Mangystau to a close. The first stop is Bokty Mount, a striking pyramid-shaped formation rising from the desert, offering a unique and photogenic landscape shaped by nature.

The journey continues to Kyzylkup (Tiramisu Canyon), known for its beautifully layered, colorful cliffs that resemble the famous dessert. Here, you will have time to explore and enjoy the vibrant scenery.

Afterward, stop at the panoramic viewpoint of Shakpaktysai Canyon for lunch, where you can relax and take in the surrounding landscapes before the final drive.

In the afternoon, begin the return journey to Aktau. Upon arrival, participants will be dropped off at their respective hotels, marking the end of the tour.

Overnight	Departure day, no overnight
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch
Travel	Bozjyra (Boszhira) – Aktau (395 km)

What's included

Included

- English-speaking local guide
- All transport during the tour, with pick-up at Aktau Airport or your hotel in Aktau on day 1 and drop-off at your hotel in Aktau on day 5
- Three meals per day (local food cooking), except breakfast on day 1 and dinner on day 5
- 3 nights tent camping (tent, sleeping bag, pillow, bedsheet)
- One night in a yurt at the ethno camp
- Storage for your luggage and large bags during the tour
- Accident insurance coverage
- All entrance fees
- Complimentary camel milk products
- Wet towels for refreshment

Not included

- Visa fees
- International and domestic airfare
- Expenses due to unexpected weather (e.g., extra guesthouse or hotel stays)
- Accommodation on arrival and departure days in Aktau
- Breakfast on day 1 and dinner on day 5

Prices

Valid for 2026 departures

Group tour, per person

Tour	Double / twin room	Single supplement
5 days	\$810	–

Same price on all departures. \$49 deposit, balance one month before tour starting date.

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