CENTRAL ASIA GUIDE



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 $969 per person	Group size Max 12 travellers	Tour type Culture, Jeep (4x4), Nature
Difficulty Moderate	Departures 16 guaranteed dates	

Prices and dates valid for 2027 departures. Issued 23 November 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 to the giant stone balls of Torysh and the limestone cliffs of Akespe, on to 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 before a night in a yurt at a camp nearby. 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 camp by the layered cliffs of Kyzylkup, the "Tiramisu Canyon". On day 4 you see the pyramid-shaped Bokty mountain and the Mars Panorama and Dragon Crest of Bozjyra, with a night beneath its famous limestone Fangs. The last morning starts at the Middle Fangs viewpoint before the return to Aktau past the Senek dunes. The group is small, with a maximum of 12 travelers, and departures are guaranteed from one person.

Difficulty: Moderate. Daily drives of about 125–335 km in off-road vehicles, with 30–95 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	**Tuzbair Salt Flat**	Yurt camp near Tuzbair
Night 3	**Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon**	Tent Camping
Night 4	**Bozjyra (Boszhira)**	Tent Camping

Listed accommodation or similar, same category.

Day-by-day itinerary

DAY 1

Aktau – Torysh – Akespe – 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 day covers 198 km on-road and 31 km off-road.

The first destination is Torysh (Valley of Balls), a unique natural site filled with mysterious spherical rock formations scattered across the desert floor.

The route then continues to Akespe Gorge, where tall limestone cliffs rise above winding canyon paths, creating a dramatic landscape shaped by time and erosion.

After lunch at a local café, 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
Meals	Lunch, Dinner
Travel	Aktau – Airakty – Valley of Castles (229 km)

DAY 2

Airakty – Tuzbair – Yurt camp near Tuzbair

The day covers 157 km on-road and 94 km off-road, heading toward one of Mangystau’s most breathtaking natural landscapes.

The main stop is the lower part of Tuzbair, where white chalk cliffs rise above a vast salt flat (sor) and striking rock formations. Walk across the salt flat and take in the wide desert views.

After a full day of exploration, continue to a traditional yurt camp near Tuzbair, 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, shared with your group, surrounded by the peaceful desert environment.

Overnight	**Tuzbair Salt Flat** · Yurt camp near Tuzbair
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Travel	Airakty – Valley of Castles – Tuzbair Salt Flat (251 km)

DAY 3

Karaman-Ata – Ybyk – Zhanaozen – Kyzylkup (Tiramisu) Panorama

The day covers 240.5 km on-road and 67.5 km off-road, 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, grottos 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 to the Shakpakty panorama above Kyzylkup, the "Tiramisu Canyon", with its colorful layered hills. The day ends with camping near Kyzylkup, where you can enjoy sunset, silence and a night under the stars.

Overnight	**Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon** · Tent Camping
Meals	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Travel	Tuzbair Salt Flat – Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon (308 km)

DAY 4

Kyzylkup – Bokty Mount – Bozjyra Mars Panorama – Dragon Crest – Under the Fangs

The day covers 46 km on-road and 77.6 km off-road, focusing on some of the most spectacular landscapes of Mangystau. In the morning, explore Kyzylkup (Tiramisu Canyon), known for its beautifully layered, colorful cliffs that resemble the famous dessert, and continue to Bokty Mount, a striking pyramid-shaped formation with bands of colored geological layers rising from the desert. On the way, you also pass Naiza mountain.

After lunch at a local café, the journey continues into Bozjyra. At the Mars Panorama, dramatic white cliffs create an otherworldly scenery that resembles the surface of another planet, and the Dragon Crest offers a jagged limestone ridge with wide, uninterrupted views over the surrounding desert formations.

In the evening, descend to the foot of the iconic Bozjyra Fangs, where the campsite will be set up beneath the towering limestone pinnacles. 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	Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon – Bozjyra (Boszhira) (124 km)

DAY 5

Bozjyra Middle Fangs – Senek – Zhanaozen – Aktau

The final day covers 297 km on-road and 38 km off-road, bringing your journey through Mangystau to a close. The morning starts at the Middle Fangs, a panoramic viewpoint overlooking the iconic Bozjyra Fangs and the surrounding desert.

After lunch at a local café, the route passes the sand dunes near Senek and continues via Zhanaozen.

In the afternoon, continue 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 (335 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 and dates

Valid for 2027 departures

Group tour, per person

Tour	Double / twin room	Single supplement
5 days	**$969**	–

Same price on all departures. 6% deposit, balance 30 days before tour starting date.

Guaranteed group departures

2027

Start	End	Weekdays	Status
27 Mar 2027	31 Mar 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
10 Apr 2027	14 Apr 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
24 Apr 2027	28 Apr 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
8 May 2027	12 May 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
22 May 2027	26 May 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
5 Jun 2027	9 Jun 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
19 Jun 2027	23 Jun 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
3 Jul 2027	7 Jul 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
17 Jul 2027	21 Jul 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
31 Jul 2027	4 Aug 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
14 Aug 2027	18 Aug 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
28 Aug 2027	1 Sep 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
11 Sep 2027	15 Sep 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
25 Sep 2027	29 Sep 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
9 Oct 2027	13 Oct 2027	Sat – Wed	Available
23 Oct 2027	27 Oct 2027	Sat – Wed	Available

Availability as of 23 November 2026. Check current availability on the tour page.

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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