



GROUP TOUR • 8 DAYS

# Mangistau – Karynzharyk Tour

Round trip from Aktau • Kazakhstan

Duration  
8 days, 7 nights

Start and end  
Round trip from Aktau

Best time to visit  
Apr–Oct

Group tour from  
\$1,350 per person

Group size  
Max 9 travellers

Tour type  
Hiking, Jeep (4x4), Nature

Difficulty  
Moderate

Issued 6 October 2026.

## Tour highlights

An 8-day 4x4 camping expedition from Aktau through the deserts and canyons of **Mangystau**. The first days lead past the Hanga-Baba and Kenty-Baba necropolises and the Fallen Land of Zhygylgan to **Kapamsay Canyon** and the rock-cut **Shakpak-Ata** mosque, then on through Akespe Gorge, the round boulders of **Torysh**, the purple Jurassic clays of Kokala, the yurt-shaped **Sherkala** and the castle-like cliffs of **Airakty**, with dinner in a Kazakh yurt at Kogez Ethno Village.

After the white salt flats, canyons and White Arch of **Tuzbair** and a rest day in a yurt camp at Zharmysh, an off-road crossing of the **Ustyurt Plateau** reaches the remote **Karynzharyk Depression**, the Three Brothers peaks and the Kendirli salt flat. The last days bring Bokty Mount, **Kyzylkup (Tiramisu) Canyon**, a night beneath the **Bozjyra Fangs**, and the underground mosque of Karaman-Ata and Ybyk Gorge on the way back to Aktau. Six nights are spent in tents at these scenic spots and one in a shared yurt.

**Difficulty: Moderate.** No altitude or technical sections, but long 4x4 days (about 3.5–6.5 hours of driving daily, much of it off-road), short walks and hikes at the sights (optional 3-hour evening walk on the Kendirli salt flat) and six nights of basic camping in the desert. Not suitable for children under 6, pregnant women or people with disabilities.

- 1 **Karynzharyk Depression** – a deep desert hollow with the Kendirli salt flat and the Three Brothers peaks
- 2 **Bozjyra** – Mars Panorama, Dragon Crest and the iconic twin limestone Fangs, with a night camping beneath them
- 3 **Tuzbair Salt Flat** – sparkling white salt plains, the White Arch and colourful canyons
- 4 **Torysh – Valley of Balls** – a desert valley scattered with thousands of round boulders
- 5 **Sherkala and Airakty** – the yurt-shaped mountain and the Valley of Castles
- 6 **Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon** – layered red and orange slopes resembling the famous cake
- 7 **Shakpak-Ata and Karaman-Ata** – ancient mosques carved into the rock



Karynzharyk depression in Mangystau



Boszhira Tract in Mangystau

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## Where you'll stay

|         |                                    |                                                |
|---------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Night 1 | <b>Kapamsay Canyon</b>             | Camping in tents at Kapamsai Canyon            |
| Night 2 | <b>Airakty – Valley of Castles</b> | Camping in tents at Airakty                    |
| Night 3 | <b>Tuzbair Salt Flat</b>           | Camping in tents at Tuzbair                    |
| Night 4 | <b>Zharmysh Village</b>            | Shared yurt at the camp                        |
| Night 5 | <b>Karynzharyk Depression</b>      | Camping in tents in the Karynzharyk Depression |
| Night 6 | <b>Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon</b>  | Camping in tents at Kyzylkup                   |
| Night 7 | <b>Bozjyra (Boszhira)</b>          | Camping in tents beneath the Bozjyra Fangs     |

Listed accommodation or similar, same category.

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# Day-by-day itinerary

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DAY

1

**Hanga-Baba Necropolis, Zhygylgan, Kenty-Baba, Kapamsai Canyon, Shakpak-Ata**

185 km on road &amp; 95 km off-road, about 5h drive

The day begins with a visit to the Hanga-Baba Necropolis, a historic site steeped in centuries of cultural and spiritual significance. Wandering among the ancient tombs, you can feel the depth of history that this sacred place holds.

Next, the journey continues to Zhygylgan, also known as the Fallen Land, a remarkable geological formation shaped over millennia. Here, natural patterns and ancient markings create a landscape that hints at the presence of prehistoric creatures.

From there, explore the Kenty-Baba Necropolis, another fascinating burial site in the region. Its unique architecture and atmosphere offer a deeper insight into the area's rich historical and cultural heritage.

The adventure then leads to Kapamsai Canyon, where you can take in sweeping views of steep cliffs and dramatic rock formations. The panoramic vistas highlight the region's rugged natural beauty, making it a perfect spot for photos and quiet reflection.

The final stop of the day is the Shakpak-Ata Underground Mosque, an ancient mosque carved directly into the rock. Its architecture and historical significance make it a truly unique site to explore.

The day concludes with camping at Kapamsai Canyon, where you can enjoy a hot dinner and spend the night under a canopy of stars, surrounded by the serene desert landscape.

Meals include a picnic lunch during the day and a warm dinner in the evening, with accommodation in comfortable tents at the campsite.

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|           |                                                              |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overnight | <b>Kapamsay Canyon</b> · Camping in tents at Kapamsai Canyon |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|

|       |               |
|-------|---------------|
| Meals | Lunch, Dinner |
|-------|---------------|

|        |                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| Travel | Aktau – Kapamsay Canyon (280 km) |
|--------|----------------------------------|

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## DAY

## 2

**Akespe, Torysh, Kokala, Sherkala, Airakty**

180 km on road &amp; 41 km off-road, 5h 30 min drive

The day begins with a journey to Akespe Gorge, where sheer limestone cliffs rise dramatically above a winding path. Each turn reveals new rock formations, offering a sense of wonder at the canyon's rugged beauty.

Next, explore Torysh, also known as the Valley of Balls. This area is famous for its mysterious spherical rock formations, a unique geological phenomenon that captures the imagination of all who visit.

The route continues to Kokala, home to the Jurassic Clays. Here, vibrant purple hues and ancient rock layers create a striking landscape, showcasing millions of years of geological history.

A short drive brings you to Sherkala Mount, often called the "Sphinx of Mangystau." Its distinctive shape, reminiscent of a yurt, makes it one of the most iconic natural landmarks in the region.

The final stop is Airakty, the Valley of Castle-Shaped Mountains. Walk among towering rock formations that resemble fortresses, and soak in the dramatic desert scenery. Dinner is served in a traditional Kazakh yurt at Kogez Ethno Village, allowing you to experience local culture and cuisine before returning to your tented camp for the night.

Overnight at Airakty in tents, surrounded by the otherworldly landscape. Outdoor breakfast, picnic lunch, hot dinner. Camping in tents.

|           |                                                                  |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overnight | <b>Airakty – Valley of Castles</b> · Camping in tents at Airakty |
| Meals     | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner                                         |
| Travel    | Kapamsay Canyon – Airakty – Valley of Castles (221 km)           |

## DAY

## 3

**Zharmysh Village, Tuzbair Salt Flats, White Arch**

Today's journey covers 163 km on paved roads and 116 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 5 hours 30 minutes.

The day begins in Zharmysh Village, where you pause for a hearty homemade lunch at a local guesthouse. This is a chance to experience the simple flavors of rural Mangystau life.

After lunch, drive to Tuzbair Syndy Upper Viewpoint to take in the breathtaking panorama of the dazzling white salt flats and cliffs. Continue to the Lower Tuzbair Salt Flat to take in its expansive, tranquil landscape.

In the afternoon, explore the White Arch, a striking natural rock formation offering dramatic desert views, and then walk through the Lower Tuzbair Canyons, where narrow passages and colorful rock walls reveal the power and history of the landscape.

Set up camp at Tuzbair, enjoy a hot dinner, and spend the night under the stars. Outdoor breakfast, homemade lunch, hot dinner. Camping in tents.

|           |                                                          |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Overnight | <b>Tuzbair Salt Flat</b> · Camping in tents at Tuzbair   |
| Meals     | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner                                 |
| Travel    | Airakty – Valley of Castles – Tuzbair Salt Flat (279 km) |

## DAY

## 4

### Rest Day and Preparation for the Karynzharyk Expedition

Today is a rest day designed to help you relax and recharge in preparation for the challenging off-road ride to the Karynzharyk Depression tomorrow. Travel from Tuzbair to the yurt camp, stopping for lunch at a local café along the way, and arrive at the camp around 3:00 PM.

Spend the afternoon unwinding and enjoying the tranquil desert surroundings. This is a perfect opportunity to rest after several days of driving and exploration, and to prepare mentally and physically for the remote and dramatic landscapes ahead.

Meals: Outdoor breakfast, lunch at a local café, dinner at a local café.

Accommodation: Shared yurt at the camp.

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|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Overnight | <b>Zharmysh Village</b> · Shared yurt at the camp |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|

|       |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|
| Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner |
|-------|--------------------------|

|        |                                      |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Travel | Tuzbair Salt Flat – Zharmysh Village |
|--------|--------------------------------------|

## DAY

## 5

### Onere Spring, Karynzharyk Depression, Kendirli Salt Flat

Today's journey covers 160 km on paved roads and 95 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 5 hours 30 minutes.

Travel across the Ustyurt Plateau, an exciting off-road route through endless plains that showcase the region's unique flora and tranquil desert landscapes.

The first stop is Onere Spring, where you can refresh and enjoy a light lunch surrounded by the natural beauty of the area. From there, continue to the Karynzharyk Depression, a dramatic landscape with breathtaking elevation changes and striking geological formations. Take in panoramic views of the Three Brothers Mountain Range, whose three majestic peaks rise above vast salt flats, creating an almost mystical atmosphere.

Nearby lies the Kendirli Salt Flat, a dazzling white expanse that feels otherworldly. Guests may choose to take an evening walk across the salt flat, a round trip of about three hours, to experience its beauty up close.

The day concludes with camping in the Karynzharyk Depression, where you can relax after an adventurous day and enjoy the mesmerizing desert night sky.

Meals: Field breakfast, picnic lunch, hot dinner

Accommodation: Camping in tents

|           |                                                                                |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overnight | <b>Karynzharyk Depression</b> · Camping in tents in the Karynzharyk Depression |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|       |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|
| Meals | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner |
|-------|--------------------------|

|        |                                                    |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Travel | Zharmysh Village – Karynzharyk Depression (255 km) |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------|

## DAY

6

### Zhanaozen, Bokty Mount, Kyzylkup (Tiramisu) Canyon

Today's journey covers 265 km on paved roads and 110 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 6 hours 40 minutes.

Begin with a stop in Zhanaozen City for lunch, a chance to rest and experience a local town along the route.

The journey continues to Bokty Mount, a striking pyramid-shaped peak that rises dramatically from the desert, resembling a natural monument carved by time and wind.

The day concludes at Kyzylkup, also known as Tiramisu Canyon due to its layered rock formations that resemble the famous dessert. Here, you can explore the canyon and enjoy a peaceful evening camping amidst this iconic landscape, surrounded by stunning desert scenery.

Meals: Field breakfast, picnic lunch, hot dinner

Accommodation: Camping in tents

|           |                                                                  |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overnight | <b>Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon</b> · Camping in tents at Kyzylkup |
| Meals     | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner                                         |
| Travel    | Karynzharyk Depression – Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon (375 km)     |

## DAY

7

### Bozjyra National Park: Mars Panorama, Dragon Crest, Bozjyra Fangs

Today's journey covers 5 km on paved roads and 90 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 3 hours 40 minutes.

Begin your day at Bozjyra National Park with a visit to the Mars Panorama viewpoint. From here, the cliffs and ridges stretch out in surreal formations, creating a landscape that feels almost extraterrestrial.

Next, hike to Dragon Crest, a jagged ridge whose spine-like formations resemble the mythical dragon it is named after. Continue to the Bozjyra Fangs, the iconic twin limestone peaks that are among the most photographed landmarks in Mangystau.

The adventure culminates with a visit to Bozzhira, venturing beneath the Fangs into an underground world of unusual rock formations. This area evokes a mysterious and magical atmosphere, perfect for exploration and photography.

Camping: End the day camping beneath the majestic Fangs. Enjoy a hot dinner at the camp and spend the evening stargazing, reflecting on the day's adventures, and soaking in the serene desert surroundings.

Meals: Field breakfast, picnic lunch, hot dinner

Accommodation: Camping in tents

|           |                                                                        |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overnight | <b>Bozjyra (Boszhira)</b> · Camping in tents beneath the Bozjyra Fangs |
| Meals     | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner                                               |
| Travel    | Kyzylkup – Tiramisu Canyon – Bozjyra (Boszhira) (95 km)                |

## DAY

## 8

**Karaman Ata Underground Mosque, Ybyk (Porous Gorge), Return to Aktau**

Today's journey covers 310 km on paved roads and 80 km off-road, with an approximate driving time of 6 hours 35 minutes.

Begin the day at Karaman Ata, one of Mangystau's remarkable underground mosques. This revered site, carved directly into rock, offers insight into the region's spiritual history and is a fascinating place to explore.

Next, visit Ybyk (Porous Gorge), where unusual rock formations and deep fissures create an awe-inspiring landscape. The gorge's dramatic geology evokes a sense of antiquity and highlights the raw power of nature, making it a perfect final exploration stop before concluding the journey.

Afterward, return to Aktau, where the tour concludes. Upon arrival, participants are transferred to their hotel or the airport, depending on onward travel plans.

Meals: Field breakfast, picnic lunch

Accommodation: None (end of journey)

|           |                                     |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Overnight | Departure day, no overnight         |
| Meals     | Breakfast, Lunch                    |
| Travel    | Bozjyra (Boszhira) – Aktau (390 km) |

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# What's included

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## Included

- Transportation through the tour. Arrival pickup from the hotel or airport, and transfer to the tour start point.
- Guide: English-speaking local tour leader throughout the journey.
- Meals: Three meals per day featuring local cuisine, from lunch on the first day to lunch on the last day. Complimentary camel milk products are also provided.
- Accommodation: 6 nights of tent camping with all camping equipment provided, plus 1 night in a shared traditional yurt.
- Activities & Access: All entrance fees to sites are included. Additional amenities include wet towels for refreshing the body.
- Insurance & Safety: Accident insurance coverage is included.

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## Not included

- Flights & Visas: International and domestic airfare and visa fees.
- Expenses: Tips for guides and drivers, personal shopping, and optional extras.
- Additional Accommodation: Hotels beyond what is included in the itinerary.
- Other Activities: Optional activities outside the planned program (riding, trekking, or plane rides not included).
- Note: In case of unexpected weather conditions such as storms, heavy rain, or strong winds, the group may be required to leave the campsite and move to the nearest guesthouse for safety. Please note that this alternative accommodation will be at an additional cost.

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# Prices

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## Group tour, per person

| Tour          | Double / twin room | Single supplement |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| <b>8 days</b> | <b>\$1,350</b>     | –                 |

Same price on all departures. \$81 deposit, balance one month before tour starting date.

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## Book or ask a question

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

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tour page          | <a href="https://central-asia.guide/kazakhstan/kazakhstan-tours/exploring-the-heart-of-mangistau-karynzharyk-tour">central-asia.guide/kazakhstan/kazakhstan-tours/exploring-the-heart-of-mangistau-karynzharyk-tour</a> |
| Email              | <a href="mailto:info@central-asia.guide">info@central-asia.guide</a>                                                                                                                                                    |
| Phone and WhatsApp | <a href="https://wa.me/358408124448">+358 40 812 4448</a>                                                                                                                                                               |
| Telegram           | <a href="https://t.me/zhetigenova">t.me/zhetigenova</a>                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Messenger          | <a href="https://m.me/Centralasiaguidefb">m.me/Centralasiaguidefb</a>                                                                                                                                                   |

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