

Riskline / Destination Report

This document was generated on 22 December 2023



KAZAKHSTAN

Overall risk level

<p>Low Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Moderate Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Medium Exercise caution</p>	<p>High Reconsider travel</p>	<p>Extreme Defer non-essential travel</p>
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The Overall Risk Level will be determined by the higher of the Security Risk Level and Covid-19 Risk Level.

Security risk level

<p>Low Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Moderate Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Medium Exercise caution</p>	<p>High Reconsider travel</p>	<p>Extreme Defer non-essential travel</p>
Safe, with few security risks	Generally safe, with some predictable security risks	Not completely safe, but typically presents predictable security risks	Can be dangerous and may present unexpected security risks	Extremely dangerous and presents unpredictable security risks
Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible with an expectation of routine disruptions and delays	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions	Chaotic; travel impossible

Covid-19 risk level

<p>Low Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Moderate Take normal safety precautions</p>	<p>Medium Exercise caution</p>	<p>High Reconsider travel</p>	<p>Extreme Defer non-essential travel</p>
<p>Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to Low Risk locations, which have limited or no restrictions on international travel and domestic activities.</p>	<p>Travellers should take normal precautions when travelling to Moderate Risk locations, which have few restrictions on international travel and limited or no restrictions on domestic activities.</p>	<p>Unvaccinated travellers should exercise caution when travelling to Medium Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should take normal precautions. These locations may have some restrictions on international travel, but few restrictions on domestic activities.</p>	<p>Unvaccinated travellers should reconsider their need to travel to High Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should exercise caution. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and partially restricted domestic activities.</p>	<p>Unvaccinated travellers should defer non-essential travel to Extreme Risk locations, and vaccinated travellers should reconsider their travel. These locations may have severely restricted international travel and domestic activities.</p>

Overview

Upcoming Events

There are no upcoming events scheduled

Travel Advisories

Summary

Overall ● Medium Risk

Kazakhstan is a **Medium Risk** destination: exercise caution.

Security ● Medium Risk

Medium Risk locations are not completely safe, but typically present predictable security risks. Travel is possible, but there is a potential for disruptions.

Covid ● Low Risk

Authorities were quick to implement travel restrictions in the country following the confirmation of the first COVID-19 case in early 2020. The country's healthcare facilities are incapable of handling a widespread outbreak. Authorities have lifted all domestic and entry restrictions.

Political Instability ● Medium Risk

Public support for President Tokayev and the Amanat party (former Nur-Otan party) has markedly declined in recent years and resulted in widespread violent protests and riots, largely spearheaded by the general public, over political and economic issues in early January 2022. While Tokayev managed to successfully suppress this unrest with the aid of foreign forces, the same economic and political issues that sparked the unrest will continue to affect the country's long-term political stability.

Conflict ● Moderate Risk

The country maintains good diplomatic relations with its former Soviet neighbours, as well as China and other western nations. Tokayev has banked on the help of foreign forces in the region to intervene during a period of widespread unrest.

Terrorism ● Medium Risk

Radicalisation and Islamist militancy in the country have been fuelled by various socio-economic factors and porous borders; Islamist extremists have become a growing threat in recent years, mainly in **Atyrau region**.

Unrest ● Medium Risk

Protests over political, civic and economic issues, largely spearheaded by social activists and other members of the general public, do take place in major cities like **Astana, Almaty** and **Shymkent**. Prolonged protests have the potential to escalate to widespread violent unrest, as seen in early January 2022. Authorities have used heavy-handed deadly force to quell demonstrations and relied on external forces to bring the situation back into control.

Crime ● Moderate Risk

Petty crimes, including pickpocketing, and vehicle break-ins are common in the country, including in **Almaty, Astana** and **Shymkent**. However, violent crime targeting foreigners is rare in the country.

Natural and Environmental ● Medium Risk

The country's **southern region** is prone to sporadic earthquakes, while floods, landslides and avalanches are more common in the **eastern and south-central regions**. Emergency disaster management personnel are not well trained and are limited except in **Astana and Almaty**. Outside these two main cities, infrastructure is also relatively poor, which delays the response time of emergency personnel, especially in the cases of evacuations. The country, however, has a good advanced weather-warning system.

Local Travel ● Medium Risk

For travel between cities, the most reliable and safest mode of transport is air travel. Trains are cheaper but slower, less comfortable and not generally recommended. Bus services are often the only option to get to small settlements, though they are unreliable and uncomfortable. Instances of pickpocketing and theft are also common onboard public transport. Self-drive is not safe due to the poor condition of roads and the difficult terrain outside urban areas.

Health and Medical ● Medium Risk

The overall standard of medical care in Kazakhstan is below international standards. Medical facilities, particularly private ones, are significantly more reliable in the capital **Astana**. The number of qualified English-speaking staff is limited in hospitals outside major cities. There have been reports of lead pollution in **Shymkent**, located in the south of the country, and in its surrounding areas. There have also been frequent outbreaks of tick-borne haemorrhagic fever in the southern region during the spring and summer months.

Political Overview : ● Medium Risk

Since its independence from the Soviet Union, power has remained tightly concentrated in the Nur Otan party (current Amanat party) led by Nursultan Nazarbayev; he ruled the country for nearly three decades under an iron grip before resigning in March 2019 and transferring power to a former Senate speaker Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Much of the public's dissent which led to the violent nationwide protests on 4-9 January 2022 was over Nazarbayev's continued influence over the country's governance coupled with the government's failure to address a sudden sharp increase in energy prices, prolonged unemployment and other economic issues.

Nursultan Nazarbayev as president contested five nominal elections without any real opposition candidates until 2019. Stringent regulations remained for the registration of opposition parties, with many often failing to make the cut for contesting in the elections. On 20 March 2019, 78-year-old Nazarbayev voluntarily stepped down from the presidency, nearly a year before the completion of his term without divulging any reason and named former Senate (parliament) speaker and close ally Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, from Amanat, as interim president.

Small-scale anti-government protests mounted over time, with the public accusing Tokayev of being Nazarbayev's puppet as the change in leadership did not alter Nazarbayev's influence over governance. Nazarbayev remained as chairman of the Security Council, which gave him the power to implement military policy and law enforcement until 5 January 2022.

After the protests escalated to widespread violent unrest amid a sudden increase in liquified petroleum gas prices in early January 2022 (known as Bloody January), Tokayev re-introduced the price ceiling on vehicle fuel prices for six months and removed from the Security Council Nazarbayev and several other high officials who were seen as the former president's loyalists. He arrested the head of the National Security Committee Karim Masimov, a close Nazarbayev ally, on charges of a coup attempt. Moreover, Tokayev called in foreign troops who are part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The CSTO and local forces suppressed the unrest by 10 January 2022 with mass arrests and heavy-handed force.

Following the January 2022 unrest, Tokayev introduced political reforms, including the strengthening of the parliament, modernisation of the electoral process and a ban on

the president's relatives from holding senior government positions. Moreover, the January 2022 unrest allegedly resulted in the end of Nazarbayev's era who had been holding the behind-the-scene power; Tokayev renamed the leading political party from Nur Otan to Amanat, renamed the capital from Nur-Sultan to **Astana**, as well as Nazarbayev and his family lost immunity from prosecution. On 20 November 2022, Tokayev won a snap presidential election with 81.31 percent of the votes and is expected to remain in power until 2029.

Despite the political reforms and alleged decrease of Nazarbayev's influence over the governance, anti-government activists had been denouncing Tokayev's authoritarian aspirations and violent suppression of the January 2022 unrest. While Tokayev does not face any strong contender to his position from present opposition parties, who still remain weakly organised, further violent protests in the future have the potential to trigger cabinet shuffles that will affect political governance and cause massive losses for the economy. As an example, during the January 2022 unrest, key government institutions and the financial market were closed for several days, which along with the damage incurred to public infrastructure, is estimated to have cost the government around USD3,000,000,000.

Maintaining ethnic harmony will remain a long-term priority for Tokayev's government as Kazakhstan is home to 17 million people from more than 130 different ethnic groups. Other long-term goals of the Amanat party-led government include economic growth and multi-vector foreign policy.

Recent incidents

29 March 2023 - 30 March 2023

- **Moderate risk: Government resigns following snap parliamentary elections - Update**

Local sources indicated that the government under Prime Minister Älihan Ashanuly Smaiyllov resigned following snap parliamentary elections held on 19 March. Current ministers and the prime minister will fulfil their duties until the formation of a new government.

19 March 2023 - 20 March 2023

- **Moderate risk: Snap parliamentary elections to be held on 19 March**

Parliamentary elections will be held on 19 March, after President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev dissolved the Mazhilis on 19 January. New election rules passed in 2022 will take effect for the voting, including the use of a mixed proportional-majoritarian system and setting political parties' entry threshold to five percent of the vote.

14 January 2023 - 15 January 2023

- **Moderate risk: Senate elections to be held on 14 January 2023**

Authorities announced that elections for the Senate, the upper house of the Parliament, will be held on 14 January 2023. Nominations for Senate candidates can be submitted between 29 November-14 December. Candidates must be registered by 24 December, when the election campaign begins.

Conflict : ● Moderate Risk

Relations with Uzbekistan: Diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and neighbour Uzbekistan improved, following the proper demarcation of their shared border which settled all outstanding territorial disputes. Heightened security measures remain at the **Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border** as part of Kazakhstan's strategy to curtail cross-border drugs and armament smuggling activities. Visitors should keep their identification and travel documents readily available for inspection.

Strength of Military Forces: Kazakhstan had joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program run by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and as part of the PfP agreement, NATO forces assisted Kazakhstan in training its military forces. As a result, Kazakhstan reformed its armed forces into a smaller, more flexible and professional military, with a particular focus on counter-terrorism operations with around 70,000 active personnel. However, the military on its own proved to be insufficient in tackling the January 2022 widespread unrest which prompted authorities to call in foreign troops for additional help.

Foreign Forces in the Territory: After alleging that much of the January 2022 unrest was fuelled by "foreign terrorists" operating in the country, Tokayev invited Russian-led CSTO troops, comprised by 2,000 soldiers. This was the first time in its history that the CSTO intervened in a domestic uprising among its members. After government forces aided by CSTO regained control of the country, CSTO forces withdrew from the country by 19 January 2022. A redeployment of CSTO to the country cannot be ruled out in the event of another similar emergency situation in Kazakhstan and this may fuel more anti-Russian sentiments among Kazakhs.

Terrorism

Islamist militancy: Islamist extremism and militancy in Kazakhstan are partly fuelled by income inequalities and rising rates of unemployment; a large number of youths joined militant groups in the country for financial gains promised during recruitment in the past. Militants from neighbouring countries periodically cross the porous **Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border** to settle in **Mangystau region**, resulting in sporadic counter-terrorism operations in the border areas. Militant groups operating in Kazakhstan include the al-Qaeda-linked Jund al-Khilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and its offshoot, the Islamic Jihad Union.

The threat from Islamic State (IS)-linked extremists and militants also exists in the country. Authorities in early 2019 admitted that Kazakh youths who joined rebel groups linked to the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq have returned home following the defeat and loss of territory suffered by IS in Syria and Iraq. Though defeated militarily, the group has reconstituted itself through scattered underground networks of sleeper cells and spawned various offshoots and adherents in other parts of the world. At the same time, the group's ideology continues to retain influence and attract radicalised individuals in Kazakhstan due to its extensive social media propaganda. Since its defeat in the Middle East, the IS and its inspired offshoots have engaged in a more aggressive terror campaign, even in countries where it does not possess a significant presence. Places like Kazakhstan which have significant numbers of Western tourists are particularly at risk of reprisal attacks by IS-inspired individuals. Therefore, although not necessarily likely, an IS-inspired terror attack cannot be ruled out due to the global mobility of international jihadist networks.

Thousands of the people who were suspected of being involved in the January 2022 unrest were arrested on terrorism charges. However, there were no independent reports confirming the involvement of militant or extremist elements in the recent unrest.

Tactics and targets: Attacks perpetrated by Islamist militants and extremists can be lone-wolf-style gun attacks, knife attacks and suicide bombings. Targets include hard targets like government and state buildings, diplomatic and security infrastructure – particularly police as they are less guarded than military installations – and transportation hubs; and soft targets such as entertainment venues, mosques, hotels and other urban areas. Travellers should remain vigilant of their surroundings.

There are no recent incidents

Unrest : ● Medium Risk

Protests and Demonstrations: Political opposition in Kazakhstan is severely limited and demonstrations by opposition parties are curtailed by laws prohibiting public assembly. Protests which have recurred over a period of time have the potential to suddenly escalate to violence. On 5-9 January 2022, at least 164 people died in violent clashes between security forces and demonstrators amid nationwide protests over several issues, including an increase in gas prices and the allegations of former president Nazarbayev's continued hold on political powers. These protests were loosely organised by the general masses, including in **Almaty, Shymkent, Kyzylorda, Taldykorgan and Aktau** and the level of unrest was unprecedented in Kazakhstan. Anti-government protesters stormed and torched many local government buildings and temporarily blocked access to **Almaty Airport (ALA/UAAA)** on 6 January 2022 while looting was also reported in several urban areas. Security forces used tear gas, rubber bullets as well as live gunfire (on orders by Tokayev to fire without warning), water cannons and stun grenades to disperse crowds. Authorities also implemented strict night curfews and prolonged communications blackouts to suppress the unrest by 10 January 2022; in many instances, security forces allegedly opened fire on civilians who were suspected of violating night curfew directives.

Further protests and unrest over economic and political issues cannot be ruled out, as anti-government activists have been denouncing Tokayev's authoritarian aspirations and the violent suppression of the January 2022 unrest. All mass gatherings should be avoided due to the risk of incidental violence and the proven history of security crackdowns.

Protests on social and civic issues are also common during the annual Kazakh Independence Day celebrations on 16 December, particularly in **Almaty, Mangystau** and **West Kazakhstan** regions. Travellers should avoid all demonstrating crowds due to the potential for arbitrary arrests and detentions.

Social and ethnic tensions: Income inequalities between locals and expatriates and the forced relocation of Kazakhs due to economic development projects remain a source of social tensions in **Atyrau region**; these tensions have the potential to escalate to clashes.

Tensions between Kazakhs and ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks also remain elevated in the **Turkistan region** (formerly known as the South Kazakhstan region). Prevailing anti-

China sentiments which have increased tensions between Kazakhs and Chinese, especially in the wake of reports of alleged torture of ethnic Kazakhs in detention facilities in China, have led to scuffles between locals and Chinese nationals in **Astana**, **Almaty** and **Atyrau** in early 2019.

The most recent violent ethnic clashes erupted between Kazakhs and Dungans in the **Zhambyl region's Korday area** in February 2020 following a road-rage brawl that left 11 people dead and dozens injured while thousands of Dungans fled their villages. Kazakh-Uyghur ethnic clashes are also common, especially in **Almaty region** where the largest Uyghur community in the country resides.

While prevailing ethnic tensions among various groups have the potential to result in clashes, they are not likely to escalate to widespread unrest as these regions are heavily patrolled by police and anyone suspected of generating violence is arrested and jailed for prolonged periods. Visitors nevertheless are advised to remain alert for indicators of ethnic tensions and avoid all gathering crowds.

Recent incidents

16 December 2023 - 17 December 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Opposition activists to rally nationwide on 16 December

Local sources indicated that activists affiliated with the opposition Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan party planned to rally nationwide, including near the Monument to the Victims of Famine in Astana, near Zheltoksan Monument in Almaty and near Kasiret Memorial Complex in Shymkent, from 12:00 local time (06:00 GMT) on 16 December to commemorate the victims of political repression.

26 November 2023 - 27 November 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Activists to rally in Almaty on 26 November

Local sources indicated that activists will rally near Sary-Arka cinema building in Almaty from 12:00-13:30 local time (06:00-07:30 GMT) on 26 November to denounce domestic violence against women, among other issues.

25 November 2023 - 26 November 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Opposition activists to stage protests nationwide on 25 November

Local sources indicated that opposition activists will stage protests nationwide, including near Youth Palace Zhastar in Astana, Astana Square in Almaty and Shymkent Plaza in Shymkent, from 15:00 local time (09:00 GMT) on 25 November to demand the release of political prisoners and better healthcare services, among other issues.

25 October 2023 - 26 October 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Opposition activists to rally nationwide on 25 October

Local sources indicated that Mukhtar Ablyazov, the leader of the opposition Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan party, called on supporters to rally nationwide from 12:00 local time (06:00 GMT) on 25 October to demand better education and healthcare services, among other issues. The locations of the protests were not immediately available.

Crime : ● Moderate Risk

Petty Crime: Petty crime, including pickpocketing and vehicle break-ins, are common in crowded areas, local markets and public transport in both major cities and rural areas, especially in **Almaty**, including **Green Bazar** and **Barakholka** markets, **Shymkent** and **Astana**, and it is likely to impact foreigners. There have also been sporadic incidents of unlicensed taxis overcharging foreigners, especially outside airports.

Beware of your surroundings, do not leave your belongings unattended and exercise general personal safety for travel. Only carry what is needed, do not flash expensive valuables or large sums of money, and keep cash, identification and mobile phones in front pockets, or in a zipped or concealed pocket or pouch rather than in a bag. Secure belongings when using public transport or when frequenting markets and other crowded public areas; secure bags diagonally across the body against the chest, keep bags within sight and away from the street. Refrain from using mobile phones or laptops in congested public places; avoid putting bags containing valuables on the ground. Avoid walking in poorly lit and isolated areas. Stay in groups. Reject rides or drinks from strangers and never leave drinks unattended. Exercise extreme caution when purchasing and consuming alcohol in public venues. Do not accept pamphlets in the street or shopping centres; these could be impregnated with potent and disorienting drugs, which permeate the skin. If you start to feel unwell, tell staff or close friends and do not leave the venue alone or with strangers. Shout to attract attention, if needed.

Violent Crime: Violent crime targeting foreigners is not common in Kazakhstan. In the past, there have been isolated instances of clashes between locals and foreign nationals due to workplace disputes, but these instances are rare and violent incidents generally do not affect foreign travellers.

Commonsense measures are best kept to ensure against becoming the victim of a violent crime. Travellers are advised to remain vigilant at all times and exercise general personal safety for travel: avoid walking alone at night, do not venture down roads with poor lighting and few access points. Be careful when using taxis and public transport and plot route bypasses around rowdy crowds. Seek local advice for areas to avoid. If you are held-up by an armed robber do not become confrontational as any resistive behaviour may cause more violence by the attackers.

Kidnapping: While kidnapping incidents are not so frequent in the country, there have been sporadic reports in the past where foreigners were targeted by criminals who demanded money from abductees for their safe release. The response of police to kidnappings is likely to be good in urban areas, but poor in rural areas due to their poor investigative capabilities and limited capacity.

Travellers should remain aware of their surroundings and follow the latest advisories for their destination. Maintain communications and your itinerary with local contacts, authorities or embassy staff, especially in locations with a higher risk of kidnapping. Consider a local guide or security escort for the highest risk locations.

Recent incidents

18 June 2023 - 19 June 2023

● **Low risk:** Police respond to hostage situation in Astana - Closed

Updated reports indicated that police officers arrested a suspect and released all hostages after storming the Kaspi bank building on Dostyk Street in Astana during afternoon hours local time. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Natural Risks : ● Medium Risk

The country's **southern region** is prone to sporadic earthquakes, while floods, landslides and avalanches are more common in the **eastern and south-central regions**. Emergency disaster management personnel are not well trained and are limited except in **Astana and Almaty**. Outside these two main cities, infrastructure is also relatively poor, which delays the response time of emergency personnel, especially in the cases of evacuations. The country, however, has a good advanced weather-warning system.

Earthquakes

An earthquake is the sudden, rapid shaking of the earth, caused by the breaking and shifting of subterranean rock as it releases strain that has accumulated over a long period. Initial mild shaking may worsen and become extremely violent within a matter of seconds. Additional earthquakes, called aftershocks, may follow the initial earthquake.

The southern part of the country, notably the **Almaty** region, is located in an active seismic zone and sporadically witnesses shallow earthquakes. There have been no major earthquakes in recent years. However, some old Soviet-era buildings and roads in **Almaty** are not built to withstand strong earthquakes which are capable of causing widespread disruptions and damage.

When shaking begins, drop to the ground and take cover under, and hold on to, a sturdy piece of furniture, such as a heavy desk or table that can provide you with air space if the building collapses. If you're not near a strong piece of furniture, crouch down and protect your head and face in an inner corner of a building; only stand in a doorway if you know it is strongly supported. Stay away from windows or glass panels. Most deaths and injuries in an earthquake are caused by collapsing building materials and heavy falling objects. Stay indoors until the tremors stop and you are sure it is safe to exit. Avoid all areas in the vicinity of outer walls and doorways, as these are most prone to falling debris. In a high-rise building, the electricity may go out and the sprinkler systems may come on. Do not use the elevators. If the lights go out, avoid using candles, matches or lighters during or after the earthquake; if there is a gas leak, an explosion could result. If outdoors, move to an open space away from buildings,

electric poles and street lights which are prone to collapse. Do not travel on roads and bridges which may have been damaged by the earthquake. Be prepared for secondary earth movements that follow the initial earthquake; some of these may be large enough to cause additional damage or bring down weakened structures.

Flooding

A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry. It is normally triggered by an extended period of heavy rainfall and can be exacerbated by poor drainage systems in the affected area.

Flash floods are common in **Almaty, Jambyl, East Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan** and **Turkistan** regions, and normally occur between March and June due to the rapid melting of snow as well as heavy rainfall. The country has a flood warning system, however, it may take several days for rescue services to reach residents in remote areas due to difficult mountain terrain. Floods also tend to cause widespread overland travel disruptions for several days due to poor infrastructure and a lack of effective drainage systems. In April 2022, at least 1,165 people were evacuated from their homes in parts of **West Kazakhstan, Aktobe, Pavlodar** and **Karaganda** regions.

If instructed of the possibility that flash-flooding may affect the area you are in, monitor local updates and move immediately to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks and storm drains. Though flash-flooding is commonly attributable to excess upstream precipitation, be aware that flooding can occur without typical warning signs of rain clouds or heavy rain. This is especially true near streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. If you happen across a flooded road in your car, turn around and drive in the opposite direction. When trapped on a flooded road, vacate your vehicle immediately and climb to higher ground.

Landslides/Mudslides

Sometimes referred to as debris flows, mudflows, lahars or debris avalanches, landslides/mudslides are a form of mass soil movement that tends to flow in channels in a surge of water-saturated rock, earth and debris, typically following heavy rainfall.

Landslides are common in mountainous areas, especially in the southern **Almaty** and **Jambyl** regions, and usually follow periods of heavy rainfall. The country does not have an effective landslide warning system, and travellers can be stranded for several days when landslides block key routes.

Follow local news updates in landslide prone areas for warnings about intense storms and rainfall. If landslide or debris flow danger is imminent, quickly move away from the path of the slide. Seek shelter on the nearest high ground in a direction away from the path. If rocks and debris are approaching, run for the nearest shelter and take cover (if possible, under a desk, table or other piece of sturdy furniture that can provide you with air space if the building collapses). Anticipate disruptions to overland travel in areas affected by landslides. Confirm the viability of intended overland travel routes before departure and remain alert for landslide warning signs including cracks in the soil or the faint rumbling sound of an approaching landslide or debris flow.

Avalanches

Avalanches can range from a small shifting of loose snow to the displacement of enormous slabs of snow. Avalanches typically occur on slopes greater than 27 degrees and are commonly associated with heavy snowfall and strong winds. The risk of avalanches increases during new snowfall, wind-deposited snow and after earth tremors. Avalanches can also occur as a result of excessive use of a slope by skiers, snowmobilers and snowboarders.

Avalanches are common in **Almaty** and **Jambyl** regions during periods of heavy snowfall between November and January. Avalanches can be fatal and disruptive for traffic, with rescue operations taking several days to arrive in dangerous mountainous terrains. Disaster management agencies also often lack proper equipment for quick clearance of avalanches.

If you are planning to travel over snowy mountainous terrain, there are several preparatory steps that should be taken. Be sure to carry an avalanche transceiver, snow probe, shovel, first aid kit and mobile phone for use in the event of an emergency. Ensure every member of the party is carrying a map with the same route marked on it. Have this route checked locally for avalanche risk information before

setting off for the day. Should you find yourself caught in an avalanche, use your arms to create an air pocket in front of your face.

Blizzards

Blizzards occur when severe winter storm conditions are accompanied by strong winds, producing wind-driven snow, dangerous wind chill and excessive accumulation of snow (drifting). Heavy accumulations of ice and snow can immobilise a region and paralyse a city, disrupting supply chains and compromising emergency and medical services. Electrical wires, telephone poles and lines and communication towers are vulnerable to disruption. Even small accumulations of ice may produce extreme hazards for motorists and pedestrians. Prolonged exposure to the cold may result in life-threatening medical conditions, including frostbite and hypothermia.

Blizzards are common across the country during the winter period between November and January. Blizzard conditions often render road travel unsafe due to poor visibility and tend to disrupt public transportation services for several days in major cities like **Astana** and **Almaty**. However, the country does have an efficient blizzard warning system, with alerts usually sent out 48-72 hours ahead of inclement weather.

In early January, Air Astana and FlyArystan flights were cancelled and multiple flights were delayed in most parts of the country due to strong winds and heavy snowfall.

Refrain from going outdoors during severe blizzards as prolonged exposure to the cold may result in life-threatening medical conditions, including frostbite and hypothermia. If you must go outside, cover your mouth to protect your lungs and walk carefully on snowy, icy pavement. Bear in mind that several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Motorists should drive with deference to road conditions and avoid driving during severe snowstorms, while pedestrians should walk slowly on icy ground, particularly near stairs.

Recent incidents

18 December 2023 - 22 December 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Officials warn of avalanches in parts of Almaty region

Local sources indicated that officials warned of avalanches in mountainous areas of Enbekshikazakh, Talgar and Karasay districts of Almaty region, from 18-21 December amid heavy rainfall and snowfall as well as warm temperatures.

15 December 2023 - 17 December 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Adverse weather triggers disruptions in Kyzylorda region, other areas

Local sources indicated that power supplies were suspended in parts of Kyzylorda, Kyzylorda region, and power supplies, water supplies and heating services were suspended in parts of Kentau, Turkistan region, as of 15 December due to strong winds. A state of emergency was also in effect across Jambyl region due to blizzards; train services were disrupted in parts of Jambyl region.

26 November 2023 - 28 November 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Officials warn of poor air quality in Almaty, other areas until 27 November

Local sources indicated that officials warned of poor air quality in Almaty, Astana, as well as Karaganda region's Karaganda and Temirtau, through early morning hours local time on 27 November due to adverse weather conditions. Officials advised people to stay indoors.

18 November 2023 - 20 November 2023

● **Moderate risk:** Strong winds disrupt water and power supplies in parts of Karaganda, Karaganda region

Local sources indicated that power supplies were suspended in most areas of Karaganda, Karaganda region, since 18 November due to strong winds; water supplies were also disrupted in several areas of the city. No further details were immediately available.

Health and Medical: ● Medium Risk

Overview

The overall standard of medical care in Kazakhstan is below international standards. Medical facilities, particularly private ones, are significantly more reliable in the capital **Astana**. The number of qualified English-speaking staff is limited in hospitals outside major cities. There have been reports of lead pollution in **Shymkent**, located in the south of the country, and in its surrounding areas. There have also been frequent outbreaks of tick-borne haemorrhagic fever in the southern region during the spring and summer months.

Before you travel

Consult your doctor or a healthcare provider who specialises in travel medicine at least six weeks before your departure. If you have a medical condition, you should also share your travel plans with your doctor.

Outbreaks and Other Diseases

Malaria

There is no risk of malaria transmission.

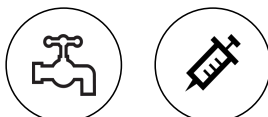
Yellow Fever

There is no risk of Yellow Fever infection.

Vaccinations, Medicines and Documentation

Note: Requirements and recommendations for vaccines and other medicines as well as Yellow Fever vaccine are based on guidelines from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Yellow Book 2024. All other entry requirements are based on Riskline research.

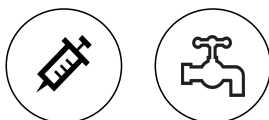
Routine vaccines



Make sure you are up-to-date on all routine vaccines before every trip. Some of these vaccines include

- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis
- Flu (influenza)
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)
- Polio
- Shingles

COVID-19



All eligible travellers should be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

Hepatitis A



Recommended for unvaccinated travellers one year old or older going to Kazakhstan.

Infants 6 to 11 months old should also be vaccinated against Hepatitis A. The dose does not count toward the routine 2-dose series.

Travellers allergic to a vaccine component or who are younger than 6 months should receive a single dose of immune globulin, which provides effective protection for up to 2 months depending on dosage given.

Unvaccinated travellers who are over 40 years old, immunocompromised, or have chronic medical conditions planning to depart to a risk area in less than 2 weeks should get the initial dose of vaccine and at the same appointment receive immune globulin.

Hepatitis B



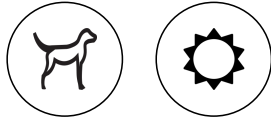
Recommended for unvaccinated travellers younger than 60 years old traveling to Kazakhstan. Unvaccinated travellers 60 years and older may get vaccinated before traveling to Kazakhstan.

Measles



Infants 6 to 11 months old traveling internationally should get 1 dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine before travel. This dose does not count as part of the routine childhood vaccination series.

Rabies



Rabid dogs are commonly found in Kazakhstan. If you are bitten or scratched by a dog or other mammal while in Kazakhstan, there may be limited or no rabies treatment available.

Consider rabies vaccination before your trip if your activities mean you will be around dogs or wildlife.

Travellers more likely to encounter rabid animals include

- Campers, adventure travellers, or cave explorers (spelunkers)
- Veterinarians, animal handlers, field biologists, or laboratory workers handling animal specimens
- Visitors to rural areas

Since children are more likely to be bitten or scratched by a dog or other animals, consider rabies vaccination for children traveling to Kazakhstan.

Tick-borne Encephalitis



For travellers moving or traveling to TBE-endemic areas

TBE vaccine is recommended for persons who will have extensive exposure to ticks based on their planned outdoor activities and itinerary.

TBE vaccine may be considered for persons who might engage in outdoor activities in areas ticks are likely to be found.

Typhoid



Recommended for most travellers, especially those staying with friends or relatives or visiting smaller cities or rural areas.

Required documentation

Yellow Fever entry requirement (Source: USA CDC):

Required for travellers arriving from countries with risk for YF virus transmission; this includes airport transits or layovers in countries with risk for YF virus transmission.

Other entry requirements:

None

Note: Documentation requirements are subject to change. Consult your destination embassy or consulate prior to departure for confirmation.

While you are there

Emergency Numbers

Medical	103; 112	
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Emergency services

The country's emergency services are poorly equipped and may be extremely slow to arrive on the scene. The respondents will speak Russian and Kazakh only.

Evacuation

In the event of severe or life-threatening injury or illness, medical evacuation will be required.

Routine care

Medical infrastructure is sporadic and poor throughout the country, with low levels of expertise and professionalism among medical staff, including in the capital **Astana**.

Medicine

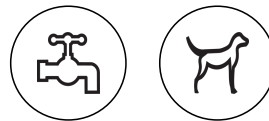
Travellers requiring prescription medications or specific brand-name medicines should bring sufficient supplies of medications and not rely on local availability.

Payment

Up-front or cash payments may be required prior to treatment, even for individuals with medical insurance. Whenever possible, check with medical providers for payment requirements prior to treatment.

Ailments

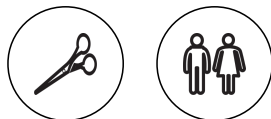
Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)



There have been a number of outbreaks of avian influenza, more recently in September 2021, in the **North Kazakhstan** region.

Avian influenza is a class of viral infections, including H5N1 and H7N9, which can be transmitted through contact with wild or domesticated birds. Symptoms are flu-like, and include fever, muscle aches, coughing, as well pneumonia and – in severe cases – respiratory failure. Treatment includes a course of antivirals.

HIV/AIDS



The HIV virus and AIDS in Kazakhstan are largely spread through the intravenous drug-using community. Foreign nationals (except citizens of CIS countries) residing in the country for more than three months may be required to take an HIV test.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a retrovirus that induces Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and is transmitted through contact with the blood, sexual and rectal fluids of an infected person, usually via sexual intercourse. AIDS weakens the body's immune system, making the body susceptible to numerous other diseases and ailments. There is no cure for AIDS or HIV.

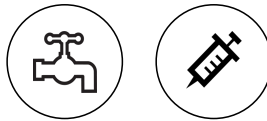
Tick-borne Encephalitis (TBE)



The main risk areas are considered to be **Almaty** and **East Kazakhstan** regions and the **Sandyktau district** of the **Akmola** region. Rare sporadic cases were reported from some other central and northern locations.

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral infection usually transmitted through the bite of an infected tick. Typically the disease occurs in two stages. The first is a mild-flu like illness. The second is a potentially serious infection of the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). TBE can at times be fatal in up to 20 percent of cases. Long-term neurological complications are common. Individuals are at increased risk if they visit areas where TBE is known to occur particularly in woodland or grassland. Travellers may reduce the risk of infection by avoiding risk areas and taking bite prevention measures.

Tuberculosis (TB)



Kazakhstan is in the World Health Organisation's highest risk category for TB and visitors staying more than one month should consult their doctor before departure.

Tuberculosis is a bacterial infection transmitted via the coughing and sneezing of infected persons. Symptoms – which may take years to develop if a person has latent TB – include fever, night sweats, chest pain, coughing up blood, weight loss and fatigue. TB can be treated with a course of antibiotics; the length of treatment is significantly longer once the disease becomes active and is no longer latent.

Recent incidents

26 October 2023 - 28 October 2023

● **Medium risk: Anthrax cases prompt quarantine of Topar village in Karaganda region**

Authorities imposed quarantine measures for Topar village in Karaganda region on 26 October as at least three villagers were confirmed with, and two others were suspected of, anthrax infection; at least one person died of anthrax in the village. A sanitation post was set at the main entrance of the village while the entrance from Zhartas village was closed, but movement was not restricted.

27 July 2023 - 30 July 2023

● **Moderate risk: Further measles cases reported nationwide - Update**

Health authorities reported that at least 2,694 measles cases have been recorded nationwide since the beginning of the year and up until 27 July. Most cases were confirmed among unvaccinated children, particularly in Almaty. There have been no measles-related fatalities reported.

28 March 2023 - 29 March 2023

● **Moderate risk: Turkmenistan Airlines to resume flights between Turkmenistan's Ashgabat and Kazakhstan's Almaty from 28 March**

Local sources indicated that Turkmenistan Airlines will resume flights between Turkmenistan's Ashgabat International Airport (ASB/UTAA) in Ashgabat and Kazakhstan's Almaty International Airport (ALA/UAAA), from 28 March as part of a gradual resumption of international travel amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

27 March 2023 - 28 March 2023

● **Moderate risk: Measles cases continue to rise across the country - Update**

Local sources reported an uptick in measles cases nationwide as suspected cases increased to 145 and laboratory-confirmed measles cases to 75, as of 27 March. Most cases were confirmed among unvaccinated children, while 11 cases were detected in children arriving from overseas.

Covid-19: ● Low Risk

Summary

Authorities were quick to implement travel restrictions in the country following the confirmation of the first COVID-19 case in early 2020. The country's healthcare facilities are incapable of handling a widespread outbreak. Authorities have lifted all domestic and entry restrictions.

What is the current nationwide Policy?: Open

Policy starts: 11 March 2022

Policy ends: indef

Policy explanation:

Officials lifted all domestic and entry restrictions.

Policy source: <https://primeminister.kz/>

Last update: 10 November 2023

Infection

Infection Level: Low

Infection rate: 0.0 cases per 100k in the last 14 days

As of date: 09 November 2023

Hotspots: -

International Travel

International Flights

Is there a ban on international commercial flights? Partial
Through what date? indef

Flight Ban Explanation:

Authorities have resumed flights to and from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Greece, Georgia, Egypt, India, Iran, Qatar, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mongolia, Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Czech Republic, China and Italy. Due to the ongoing conflict, flights to Ukraine are suspended until further notice.

Air Astana airline resumed flights between **Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport** (NQZ/UACC) in **Astana** and **China's Beijing Capital International Airport** (PEK/ZBAA) in **Beijing**, from 18 March.

Turkmenistan Airlines resumed flights between Turkmenistan's Ashgabat International Airport (ASB/UTAA) in Ashgabat and Almaty International Airport (ALA/UAAA).

Russia

Air Astana flights to and from Russia are suspended until further notice.

Qazaq Air suspended flights from **Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport** in **Astana** and from **Oskemen Airport** in **Oskemen (Ust-Kamenogorsk), East Kazakhstan oblast**, to **Russia's Novosibirsk Tolmachevo Airport** which serves **Novosibirsk, Novosibirsk oblast**, until further notice, due to lack of aviation permits.

Last Update: 11 December 2023

Entry and Borders

Is there a ban on entry for any travellers? No

Through what date? indef

Travellers from where are banned?

Land border: Partially Open

Maritime border: Partially Open

Entry Rules Explanation:

Land borders with Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan are open. Visa-free entry services have resumed for foreign nationals from 54 countries, including Australia, Austria, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Canada, among other countries listed [here](#). Travellers eligible under this scheme must not exceed their stay in Kazakhstan for longer than 30 days upon their arrival.

Foreign permanent residence holders and foreign family members of permanent residents and citizens may only cross the border once every 15 days. The family members must provide documentary evidence of the family ties (for example marriage or birth certificates).

Travellers with expired visas should contact their municipality's Migration Police office for an exit visa.

Authorities reopened the Khorgas border crossing between Jetisu region and China's Ili Prefecture in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Authorities are conducting Cholera disease-related surveillance measures at entry ports.

Entry Rules: https://www.kazembassy.ru/rus/konsulstvo/poryadok_peresecheniya_granicy/

Exemptions: -

Last

Update:

Testing

Do travellers need to take a COVID-19 test No

When?

Is it mandatory or optional?

Test Type:

Minimum age requirement:

Pre-travel test validity, in hours:

After arrival test days:

Testing Explanation:

Testing Rules: -

Last Update: 11 December 2023

Health and Travel Documentations

Do arriving travellers need any health and/or travel documentation? No

Documentation Explanation:

Last Update: 10 November 2023

Tracing App

Do travellers need to use a contact tracing app after arriving? No

Tracing App Explanation:

There is no mandatory national contact tracing app at this time.

Last Update: 10 November 2023

Quarantine on Arrival

Who needs to quarantine on arrival None

Travellers from where need to quarantine?

How many days is quarantine?

Is it self-quarantine or operated by the government?

Quarantine Explanation:

Last Update: 2023-12-11

Exit

Is there a ban on exit for any travellers? No

Are there special requirements to exit? No

Exit Requirements Explanation:

Last Update: 11 December 2023

Vaccination

Percent vaccinated with at least one dose: 64.821 as of 30 Apr 2023

Percent fully vaccinated: 54.79 as of 17 Jan 2023

Is vaccination mandatory for entry? No

Fully vaccinated are exempt from: -

Minimum age for vaccine requirements for travel:

Exemptions for vaccine requirements for travel:

"Fully vaccinated" is defined by the destination as:

Accepted vaccines, validity and special age restrictions:

Is mixing of vaccine doses authorised?

Are specific combinations of mixed doses required?

"Boosted" is defined by the destination as:

Accepted boosters:

"Recently recovered" is defined by the destination as:

Recovery status is valid from days until after .

Vaccination certificates accepted:

Vaccination certificates accepted in the following languages:

Recent recovery document required:

Recent recovery document accepted in the following languages:

Explanation:

https://www.inform.kz/ru/pasporta-vakcinacii-protiv-covid-19-kakih-stran-priznany-v-kazahstane_a3898296

<https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/kkkbtu/press/news/details/325537?lang=ru>

Sources:

<https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/kkkbtu/press/news/details/329270?lang=ru>

<https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/kkkbtu/press/article/details/61686?lang=ru>

Last change to

vaccination

08 June 2022

policy:

Last Update:

11 December 2023

Other International Travel Restrictions

Exit Requirements Explanation:

Last Update:



Domestic Situation



Areas on Lockdown

Last Update:



Areas under Curfew

Last Update:



Domestic Travel

Domestic Travel Explanation:

Last Update:



Other Domestic Restrictions

Last Update:

Resources

Government COVID Site: <https://www.coronavirus2020.kz/>

Health Dept COVID Site: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/kkkbtu/press/article/details/61686?lang=ru>

There are no recent incidents

Local Travel : ● Medium Risk

Travel Safety

Air Travel: Most international flights fly through **Almaty International Airport (ALA/UAAA)**, as **Almaty** is the financial/commercial centre. There are also international flights operating through **Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport (TSE/UACC)** located in the capital as well as **Aktau (SCO/UATE)**, **Atyrau (GUW/UATG)**, **Kostanay (KSN/UAUU)**, **Karaganda (KGF/UAKK)**, **Shymkent (CIT/UAll)** and **Ural (URA/UARR)**. The majority of airports have a single check-in area for both international and domestic flights, however **Almaty**, **Nursultan Nazarbayev**, **Aktau**, **Atyrau** and **Karaganda** airports have separate international and domestic zones. Immigration and customs officials are the most friendly and helpful at **Almaty** and **Nursultan Nazarbayev airports**. They are also more experienced in providing foreign nationals with assistance.

In some instances, you may come across attempts for bribes by airport officials. If you are asked for an unexpected fee, ask for a printed and stamped receipt from officials. If they try to detain you on the pretext that you have some prohibited items, ask to see the law or instruction in writing, or to speak to a higher official. There is a traditional respect for and fear of persons of high social status. As a result, dressing well might undermine the willingness of low-level officials to ask for bribes. Always check the identity documents of the person picking you up in the arrivals' hall. Airline passenger lists are not kept strictly confidential, and travellers in the past have been assaulted or robbed after getting into unlicensed taxis.

Buses and mini-buses (*marshrutki* in Russian) are available from outside the arrivals halls in most airports. But the former is slow and you may have to wait for up to 30 minutes. The latter is faster and goes more frequently, but is not convenient if you have bulky luggage. In some cities, no public transport except taxis may be available from/to the airports.

Almaty airport is about half an hour from town. The most reliable Kazakh airline operating international and domestic flights is Air Astana, which is the only one with EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) certification.

Airspace: Authorities have resumed flights to and from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Greece, Georgia, Egypt, India, Iran, Qatar, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mongolia, Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Poland,

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Road Travel: Prosecution of driving offences and police checks are largely arbitrary. Despite the general lawlessness on Kazakh roads, it is still possible to incur a heavy fine for a relatively mild offence.

In the past few years, the number of cars on the roads has increased exponentially as Kazakhs have grown more affluent. This has led to traffic jams, especially in the city of **Almaty**. During rush hour it can take over an hour to drive out of the centre of town. The roads themselves are generally maintained well enough in the city centres, however, in rural areas, they tend to be potholed. The newer highways are smooth and driving on them is easy but driving standards are poor.

Many Kazakh drivers are ignorant of the rules due to the illegal but common practice of buying driving licences without taking driving lessons and examinations. This has led to a growing number of car accidents. The accident rates are particularly high in **Pavlodar, Karaganda**, and **southern and western regions** of Kazakhstan.

The most hazardous seasons for overland travel are late autumn, winter and early spring because of muddy and slippery roads; road hazards are also often not signposted. Be cautious when walking, as pedestrian crossings are rarely respected. Do not give lifts to strangers or hitchhikers since there have been cases of assault, robbery and hijacking. Service and petrol stations and water may not be available outside the main cities like **Astana** and **Almaty**. Make sure you take all you need for your journey. Drivers must have International Driving Permits. This should be accompanied by the driver's national licence/permit. However, self-drive is not a safe option and it is better to rent a car along with a driver who has good knowledge of the local terrain.

Public Transport

Buses: International bus services link **Almaty** and **Astana** with destinations in Russia and Urumqi in China. Domestic bus services are faster than trains on similar routes and generally run on time. They can get crowded during rush hour. Petty theft and bag-snatching incidents are also common onboard buses. It is best to avoid intercity and international bus travel unless no other transport option is available.

Minibuses: These operate in most towns and cities like regular bus services. A legitimate service will have a number clearly displayed and will serve a designated route. Although faster than regular bus services they are often driven in an unsafe manner. The issue of safety has become so prevalent that there is an ongoing debate as to whether minibus services will be ended altogether because of hazardous driving.

Taxis: Taxis are widely available and can be flagged down in the street or ordered by phone. Taxi scams are rare but do happen. Since most taxis are not equipped with meters, foreign nationals are often charged much more than the locals because they

do not know the correct rates. Always negotiate a price before travel. Be prepared to haggle with taxi drivers. There have been incidents where drivers have refused to take the luggage out of the boot until the passenger has paid up to double the agreed price. In other cases, taxis have driven away with the passenger's belongings after payment. If you have to put luggage in the boot, pay the driver after getting it back. If you are tricked, write down the taxi's licence plate and call the police.

Private cars can also be flagged down, and they will often pick up other passengers along the way. Avoid getting in a taxi if there are already other passengers and refuse to share journeys with unknown travellers to minimise the risk of robberies and assaults. It is also best to travel with someone you know. Be particularly careful in the nighttime and in the outskirts. Always take a seat behind the driver.

Vehicle Hire: Cars can be rented with drivers from a number of companies and it is advisable to rent a car with a driver due to poor road safety.

Movement Control Orders

There are some military zones with restricted access in Kazakhstan, particularly in **Dzungarian Alatau**. You need permission from the relevant authorities to enter them. Since these areas may not be clearly marked, foreign nationals should check their routes before travelling.

You are also advised to check the restrictions on taking pictures near military establishments, border areas and some official buildings. Visitors should make hiking tours to remote mountainous regions only if accompanied by mountain guides and armed security forces.

You are advised to avoid going to the areas close to the former **Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground** and the Aral Sea because these areas are polluted by radioactive substances or toxic chemicals.

Recent incidents

30 November 2023 - 01 December 2023

● **Medium risk: Deadly hostel fire reported in Almaty**

Local sources indicated that at least 13 people were killed at a hostel located on Sharipov Street in Almaty, at around 05:33 local time (23:33 GMT, 29 November) following a fire; the fire was contained. A preliminary investigation indicated that people were killed due to carbon monoxide poisoning; an investigation remained ongoing.

12 November 2023 - 13 November 2023

● **Low risk: Kazakhstani and Sammarinese officials announce details on planned mutual visa-free entry scheme - Update**

Kazakhstani and Sammarinese officials will allow 90-day visa-free entry for nationals of Kazakhstan to enter San Marino and nationals of San Marino to enter Kazakhstan; the scheme will be valid for single or multiple entries, as well as for tourism and business purposes. Further details, including the start date of this policy, were not yet available.

10 November 2023 - 11 November 2023

● **Low risk: Chinese and Kazakh authorities allow mutual visa-free entry - Update**

Updated reports indicated that the visa waiver agreement signed on 17 May by Chinese and Kazakh officials was effective today. Nationals of both countries are allowed to enter without a visa for up to 30 days.

08 November 2023 - 11 November 2023

● **Low risk: Kazakhstan and San Marino officials to allow mutual visa-free entry**

Kazakhstan and San Marino officials announced that nationals of both countries will be allowed to enter visa-free for up to 90 days as part of policies to foster economic growth and reinforce tourism between the two countries. Further details, such as the start date of this policy, were not immediately available.

Destination Hotspots

Regions: There are sporadic reports of counter-terror raids on suspected Islamist extremists and militant groups operating in **West Kazakhstan, Aktobe** and **Atyrau** regions.

Foreign nationals are also recommended to avoid large gatherings or travelling alone in dark or poorly lit areas when visiting **Atyrau** and **Aktau** because of continuing tensions between local and foreign workers as well as sporadic reports of racial attacks targeting European and American nationals.

Turkistan region near the Uzbekistan border is a potential hotspot and a hotbed of violent crimes due to high unemployment, ethnic conflicts, the activity of religious extremists and territorial disputes.

Safety

Emergency Numbers

Fire	101; 112	
Police	102; 112	
Medical	103; 112	

Corruption: It is quite likely that short-term visitors to Kazakhstan will not encounter corruption during their visit. Bribes are sometimes solicited by border/customs officials and migration and traffic police. Always ask for a receipt when presented with a 'fine'. Sometimes language and cultural barriers are the most effective short-term strategy against implied bribe requests as public officials often give up when faced with foreign nationals' apparent incomprehension of their demands. Moreover, corporate corruption is also prevalent in Kazakhstan.

If you experience an incident where any law enforcement officer attempts to extort money from you, you should report it to your embassy or consulate immediately.

You may also come across fake policemen who may occasionally stop you; always ask to see their ID and write down their names and ID numbers. If they want to check you or your luggage, insist on going to the police station, providing witnesses and calling your embassy. Until they take you to the station, do not hand your passport in. It would be useful if you had some proof that you are an embassy official or have some relation to the embassy - this usually impresses the real police. Also, try to threaten them by calling or complaining to your embassy.

Abuses: Despite the constitutional prohibition of torture and abuses, the mistreatment of detainees is said to be routine. The government has displayed some sensitivity towards these accusations: thousands of police officers have been subject to disciplinary measures over the violation of constitutional rights, and hundreds have faced criminal charges. Nevertheless, such actions, along with small-scale corruption and petty bribery, persist and human rights organisations suggest that the number of prosecutions should be far higher.

Documents and Identification: Police carry out frequent documentation checks throughout Kazakhstan. Foreign nationals are required by law to carry ID with them at

all times. A valid passport with an appropriate visa and police registration is usually expected, however, a certified copy from your national embassy should be acceptable. If staying for a longer period of time, an ID from an international organisation or non-governmental organisation (NGO) is an adequate substitute for a passport in most situations.

Food and Drink: Tap water throughout the country is not potable and visitors should only drink bottled or boiled water. Due to poor food hygiene in many areas, you should also avoid food sold by street hawkers, most dairy products (as they probably won't have been pasteurised) and undercooked meat.

Security Services: Police registration is the responsibility of the Department of Migration Police under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, better known under its former designation as OVIR. All foreign citizens are required to register at their local office or police station within 72 hours of arrival in Kazakhstan; registration is usually carried out automatically as a part of the check-in procedure at major hotels.

Culture

Cultural Sensitivities: Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic state; it was the only one where the titular nationality was actually in a minority when the country became independent. Kazakhs now make up a majority; nonetheless, relations between the different ethnic groups and religions are relatively good; there is no overt discrimination between Russians and Kazakhs.

Russian is commonly used to communicate but in some of the smaller towns you will find that people struggle with Russian and are more accustomed to the Kazakh language. As Russian has been phased out in many village schools, those who did not attend universities and young children from Kazakh language households will often have difficulty communicating in Russian.

Political Sensitivities: Kazakhstan has been criticised for curbing media freedom as former president Nazarbayev's family and cronies have largely monopolised the press, radio and television in the country. Foreign nationals can discuss politics relatively freely in the country. While foreign nationals can discuss politics relatively freely in the country, discussions regarding the ruling elites should be avoided in public, considering the recent social unrest in January 2022.

Religious Sensitivities: The two major religions in Kazakhstan are Islam and Christianity. Most Muslims belong to the Sunni denomination of Islam, while Christians mostly belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. But Kazakhstan is a secular state, and most people are not deeply religious. However, you must always show respect for religious rules, procedures and traditions. Although wearing scarves is not obligatory for women, it is obligatory when visiting mosques, mausoleums and other religious and holy places, including orthodox churches.

Specific Traveller Advice

Female Travellers

Local Customs and Laws: There are some local customs and laws that a female traveller should take into consideration in Kazakhstan, a Muslim-majority nation. Dress according to the country's culture, especially when visiting places of cultural and religious importance. Refrain from wearing clothing that could be considered too tight or revealing, especially in conservative areas, including mosques, churches and historic monuments, as this is socially unacceptable. Wearing any type of headscarf to cover your hair is mandatory when visiting orthodox churches, mosques, mausoleums and other religious and holy places. Travel with a local guide if visiting a mosque as many mosques countries do not allow lone young female visitors; it is easier to negotiate the terms of an entrance with a local guide. Familiarise yourself with your destination prior to travel, and be respectful and mindful of any cultural sensitivities, which may include dress, behaviour and topics of discussion.

Safety: There are minimal safety concerns for female travellers to take into consideration in Kazakhstan. Occasional cases of sexual assault have been reported at night time, especially near pubs and bars and in poorly lit rural areas outside of **Astana** and **Almaty**. Exercise personal safety awareness if walking alone at night. Stick to the main, well-lit streets and avoid walking through desolate areas or unfamiliar neighbourhoods. Opt for official taxis/chauffeur-driven taxis arranged by a reputed hotel. Refrain from wearing headphones while walking in the evening. Restrict evening entertainment to well-known venues. Police are usually efficient in investigating reports of crimes in urban areas, especially if it involves foreigners. However, response times may be slower outside major cities. Consider consulting your home consulate/embassy for legal advice and ensure you receive a copy of the police report.

Health and Wellness: Women have access to some specialised gynaecological and reproductive health services, medicines and products in Kazakhstan, especially within urban areas like **Almaty** and **Astana**. Abortion is legal for up to 12 weeks of pregnancy in Kazakhstan; beyond which a court will determine the legal grounds for abortion. Specialised gynaecological/reproductive healthcare centres as well as rape kits, female-specific OTC drugs, prescription and emergency contraceptives, and feminine hygiene products are not available outside urban areas. Consult a health professional prior to travel. Consider bringing an adequate supply of female-specific OTC drugs, feminine hygiene products and oral contraceptive pills, which may not be available

locally.

LGBT+

Homosexuality is legal in Kazakhstan. There are some legal protections for transgender community members, especially against discrimination in employment and housing, however, there are no legal protections for other LGBT+ persons in the country. Same-sex marriage is illegal. LGBT+ activities and persons are not socially accepted outside major cities like **Astana** and **Almaty**. Due to the prevalence of social conservatism, travellers may prefer to be discreet about sexual orientation/gender and avoid excessive public displays of affection in areas where attitudes towards the LGBT+ community are unknown or generally not accepted. Use caution in conversations about sexuality or LGBT+ issues with strangers or recent acquaintances. Considering booking hotel rooms with two separate beds. Transgender travellers may wish to consider having their passport and identification changed to reflect their new gender before travelling.

Technology & Communication Risk

Travellers are certain to face risks related to information and communication technology (ICT) in Kazakhstan.

Internet access and social media have many restrictions. Most internet and social media content of political or religious nature cannot be accessed freely and any associated social media posting can be unlawful. Popular websites like Tumblr cannot be accessed while Facebook and Whatsapp are periodically restricted ahead of or during demonstrations. Authorities have intimidated and imprisoned journalists for publishing content deemed critical of the government.

There are some concerns related to device searches or sensitive technology. Device searches and inspections at the border are possible. There are some restrictions in relation to bringing or operating sensitive equipment, which may include photo cameras, satellite phones, drones, and other GPS systems, into the country. State or criminal penetration of private data is certain. Authorities implement pervasive state surveillance of ICT networks in the country.

Travellers must ensure that their ICT usage is compliant with local laws and regulations during their stay in the country. Contingency plans may be necessary to ensure access to the internet, including the use of a reliable virtual private network (VPN), which should be installed and ready to use prior to arrival in the country. Travellers should be aware of recent restrictions in accessing internet websites/platforms and/or digital services. Avoid using free wireless access available in

public areas of large cities and use a VPN to access the internet. However, visitors have to install a government-issued application on their mobile devices in order to access internet services in the country. This application allows authorities to monitor traffic on secure websites but may render some VPN services ineffective. Additionally in the capital **Astana**, visitors must install a digital certificate on their mobile devices to access foreign websites, which also allows authorities to intercept and monitor all traffic to secure websites. Travellers should note that ICT laws and practices are subject to change on short notice, and travellers are recommended to confirm the legality/appropriateness of their specific ICT needs prior to departure.

Travellers should expect device searches at the border and must ensure that their ICT devices are compliant with local laws and regulations prior to arrival into the country. It is recommended that only a blank laptop or smartphone device without personal or corporate data stored is brought into the country. The country is known for its surveillance of telephone and electronic communications and travellers should assume that communication is monitored all the time. Hotel rooms may also be subject to surveillance and even accessed without the consent of the guest. Cybercriminal groups may be present in the country. Travellers should avoid bringing sensitive data into the country unless robust hardware and software data security measures are in place; all computers should be equipped with an up-to-date, reliable, anti-virus system. Devices should never be left out of sight unguarded; if leaving your computer in a hotel room, make use of a safe box for storing it. It is also recommended to refrain from accessing or storing sensitive information in computers and other electronic devices during their stay in the country.

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