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## Kazakhstan, tourism

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Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world (2.7 million km<sup>2</sup>). Located in Central Asia (Figure 1), with a population of 16.57 million (2011 census), it is bordered by ► [Russia](#), ► [Uzbekistan](#), ► [Kyrgyzstan](#), ► [Turkmenistan](#), and ► [China](#). Its economy is heavily dependent on the oil sector (over 11 % GDP and nearly 57 % of total exports in 2010) and on uranium, textiles, wheat, and livestock (Gleason 2003).

During Soviet times (1922–1991), the economy was centrally planned (Jeffries 2003), and ► [social tourism](#) was promoted. Since its independence in 1991 and during the transition to a market economy in 2000, tourism ► [development](#) was unplanned. A first 5-year strategic plan was published in 2000, with a new Ministry of Tourism and Sport established in 2006. Research on ► [national tourism](#) and on the position of Kazakhstan in the world tourism market was conducted during 2005–2007. The 2007–2011 tourism development program supported an increase in public funding, participation in international exhibitions and fairs,

► [attraction](#) of foreign investment, international advertising, and the hosting of the VII Asian Winter Games in 2011.

In the same year, Kazakhstan had four million international arrivals, an increase of 20 % from 2010 (UNWTO 2012). Reflecting sustained per capita growth and an emphasis on social welfare and security, the number of domestic tourists rose by 10.3 % to 4.5 million in the same period. Tourism's contribution to GDP was 5.2 % in 2012 (WTTC 2013). Income from tourism increased by 56 % to \$1.2 billion and investments also grew by 58.3 %. From 2006 to 2012, the number of tourism jobs (393,000 or 4.7 % of total ► [employment](#)) expanded considerably. The country's vast natural landscapes containing steppes and mountains, together with its nomadic people, are its main appeals. The two main urban attractions are the former capital Almaty and the present futuristic capital Astana. Despite oil revenues tourism ► [infrastructure](#) is poor.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sport was reorganized in 2012, with its tourism functions now housed in the Ministry of ► [Industry](#) and New Technologies. A ► [tourist](#) cluster is being established along the “Western Europe–Western China” corridor. Five tourism megaprojects are also underway. A collaborative government initiative will enhance ► [sustainable tourism](#) development along the historic Silk Road route. The government has implemented professional ► [certification](#) for tourism offered in more than 30 institutions. Ten universities have postgraduate



**Kazakhstan, tourism, Figure 1** Map of Kazakhstan

tourism degrees. One bachelor degree program has the ► [UNWTO.TedQual](#) accreditation.

► [Future](#) tourism ► [facilitation](#) measures include easier ► [visa](#) procedures, a Central Asia visa-free zone, and reduction of ► [transportation](#) prices. Potential attractions include ► [space tourism](#) at the Baikonur Cosmodrome, ► [dark tourism](#) based on the Stalin-era camps around Karaganda, and event tourism.

**See also** ► [Dark tourism](#), ► [ethnicity](#), ► [mass tourism](#), ► [space tourism](#), ► [sustainable tourism](#).

## References

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