Cycling in Kazakhstan

Trip Code: KNMB

Version:

CYCLE	GUIDED GROUP	MODERATE
		6



HIGHLIGHTS

- Views of Khan Tengri (7010m) and the central Tien Shan peaks from Lake Tuzkol
- Meet and take tea with nomadic Kazakh shepherds at their yurt encampments
- Visit the Golden Man Museum, dedicated to a Scythian warrior from the 4th century BC
- Hike to the top of the 'Singing Sand-Dune' for far-reaching views

AT A GLANCE

- 8 days cycling
- 500 kilometres
- 65% off-road and dirt road
- 100% vehicle supported
- Max altitude - 3000 metres
- Join in Almaty

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

This varied and exciting Central Asian mountain biking holiday is focused on the south-eastern corner of Kazakhstan, close to the borders with both China and Kirghizstan and overlooked by the 7000 metre-high snow peaks of the Tien Shan. Access to this fascinating region is through the city of Almaty, founded on the site of an old Silk Road oasis in 1854 and now a prosperous and sophisticated place with leafy parks, cosmopolitan cafes, excellent museums, shops and restaurants.

KE has a long history of running mountain biking holidays in Kazakhstan (first trip in 2004), but this latest version is a little bit different. We have reduced the difficulty a little whilst expanding the range of the territory that we cover. We start out with a week in the northern foothills of the Tien Shan, cycling on a mix of surfaced and grassy dirt roads that cut through the open grassland or 'steppe' of several picturesque valleys. There are isolated farming villages in this area and also scattered camps of nomadic Kazakh shepherds who come to these upland valleys in summer with their flocks of sheep and herds of horses. Riding cross-country between riverside camps, with luck, we'll have the chance to take tea at the yurt encampments of these charming people. We visit the Charyn Canyon with its spectacular 'Valley of Castles' rock formations, before cycling on an ancient Silk Road route up onto the Kegen Plateau. Here, we spend a night beside Lake Tuzkol where the views extend to Khan Tengri (7010m) and the other central Tien Shan summits. Cycling over the Ketman Pass (3000m), we then transfer into the Altyn-Emel National Park and enjoy 2 days of exploration (one by 4WD and one on our bikes) in a beautiful desert world that includes outrageously colourful sandstone formations and a striking 120 metre high 'Singing Sand Dune' that we can hike to the top of. This is an outstanding Central Asian cycling holiday and a real adventure travel experience in a remote, seldom visited and culturally intriguing area.

Is this holiday for you?

MOUNTAIN BIKING. This tremendous holiday covers around 500 kilometres in 8 days of cycling. Approximately one third of this is on surfaced roads and two thirds on unsurfaced tracks. The conditions that you need to be prepared for include hardpack gravel tracks that are very straightforward to ride on, loose and sometimes rocky tracks with short sections that can be quite challenging and tracks which are little-used and grass-covered. These unsurfaced tracks were originally used for forest access and to connect some of the more remote settlement in the area. None of the cycling is technical, but there are some long and quite tough climbs and some descents on loose terrain where care is needed. You can expect to encounter sections where you will have to step off the bike. Our rugged off-road support

vehicle will follow the group throughout the whole trip and we must stress that aside from the usual kit and food that you would carry on any day ride at home, you will not be required to carry any additional equipment - this is adventure mountain biking at its purest. This holiday will provide a fun challenge for regular weekend bikers with reasonable off-road skills. BIKE HIRE AVAILABLE LOCALLY.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- An experienced English-speaking local cycling guide
- Single timed Almaty Airport transfers on Day 1 and Day 11 of the Land Only itinerary
- Vehicle support and driver(s) and any other land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as detailed in the trip dossier
- All meals throughout the trip
- Full camping service including all equipment (excluding personal equipment)

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Almaty Airport transfers (other than timed group transfers)
- Tips for drivers and other staff
- Kazakh Visa fees (if needed)
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc
- Bike Carriage on the flights - please check with your carrier for charges
- Bike hire

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Almaty.

A single group transfer from Almaty Airport is provided in the early morning of Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary. A single group transfer back to Almaty Airport is also provided in the early morning of the final day of the itinerary.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If this is not practical, we can provide private transfers at an additional cost. Taxis are also available.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation. Clients booking a Land Only Package MUST provide the KE office with full details of their flights.

Meal Plan

All meals are included, from breakfast on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary to breakfast on Day 11.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Food & Water

Drinking Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a Water-To-Go bottle) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

The food served during the camping section is a mixture of local and Western, purchased locally and cooked for us by well-trained camp cooks. Please note that vegetarianism is a concept not widely understood in Central Asia. Whilst we can cater for vegetarians on this trip, choices will be limited and a degree of flexibility is required. You may wish to bring along some energy bars from home to use during the course of the cycling day, as these are not readily available in Kazakhstan.

Accommodation

During this holiday, the group will spend 2 nights (Day 1 and Day 10) at a comfortable, centrally located hotel in Almaty. There will also be 1 night at a hot springs resort at Chundzha and 1 night in very basic guesthouse accommodation in Basshiy. There are 6 nights wild camping. Whilst wild camping we use roomy 2-person tents and there is also a dining tent, a toilet tent and a camp shower. All accommodation is allocated on a twin-sharing basis. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex. It is possible to pre-book single room occupancy for the 2 nights in Almaty and for the nights at Chundzha and Basshiy at additional cost. Single tent occupancy can also be pre-arranged at additional cost.

Group Leader & Support Staff

An experienced, English-speaking local cycling guide will accompany the group throughout the holiday. One or more support vehicles and driver(s), an interpreter and a camp support and cook team will also travel with the group.

Altitude

This holiday does not involve any significant ascent to altitude and we would not expect any altitude issues with this trip.

Spending Money

Approximately $150 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses and you should take this money in the form of US dollars currency. You should allow $80 for trek staff tips. Outside of Almaty, there is little opportunity to spend anything. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect).

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is expected in this part of the world, although you should only tip for services which are well done. The total amount that you can expect to pay in tips for your local guide, trek crew and drivers is approximately $80. The local guide will help to coordinate these payments and decide on an appropriate level of tipping for each crew member.

Your Bike

If you are taking your own mountain bike, it should be either a 'hardtail' with front suspension or a lightweight full suspension bike. It should have a good range of gears and should be fitted with moderately knobbly cross-country tyres which work well on the range of surfaces typically found on our **Mountain Biking** holidays.

Since you are depending on your bike to transport you throughout your holiday, across at times demanding terrain, it's important to ensure it is in good working order. If you are not mechanically minded, get your local bicycle dealer to service it for you.

Please contact us if you are unsure about the suitability of your bike.

Bike Hire

Bike hire is available locally for this holiday. Our local agent can provide alloy-framed hardtail mountain bikes such as the Haro Double Peak Comp which have either 27.5 or 29 inch wheels. These bikes typically have Shimano components, single crank ring (32T) and 10-speed cassette (11-46T), 100 or 120 millimetre forks, and hydraulic disc brakes. There is limited availability and the bikes will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. It is important to note that we cannot guarantee that each member of the group will be allocated the same make and/or model of bike. The cost of hiring a bike for the duration of the trip is $270. This must be paid directly to the ground agent on arrival in Almaty in US$ cash. We must stress that your hire contract is with our local agent and KE cannot be held responsible for any issues arising from your bike hire. Please note that the hire bikes have flat pedals. If you usually ride clipped-in, you will need to take your own SPD (or similar) shoes and pedals. You might also want to take your own saddle, which will go a long way towards making the hire bike feel like your own bike. You will also need to take your own helmet, which must be worn at all times when riding. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE HIRE BIKES ARE SET UP IN THE CONTINENTAL WAY WITH THE LEFT-HAND BRAKE LEVER OPERATING THE FRONT BRAKE.

Travelling With Your Bike

Airlines require that you pack your bike properly for travel and for this holiday we recommend that you use either soft bike bag or a purpose-made bike box or case. Whether you are using a bag or a case, you will need to partially dismantle your bike to pack it. Please note that bike bags or boxes will be placed in secure storage and will not travel with us during the course of the trip.

Please contact us if you have any questions about travelling with your bike.

Vehicle Support

We have one or more support vehicles which accompanies the group throughout the tour. The principal support is usually provided by a rugged 6-wheel off-road vehicle which has no difficulty on the rolling gravel roads, nor crossing the several streams which have to be forded. Group members will naturally have differing levels of fitness and it's normal for the group to become strung out, with a fair distance between the front and rear cyclists. The support vehicle will bring up the rear and the tour leader will arrange regular stops to allow the group to reform. The support vehicle can pick up cyclists wishing to take a break at any time.

Baggage Allowance

Apart from your bike in its bag or box (if you are taking your own bike), you should travel with one main item of luggage, such as a KE Trek Bag or similar holdall, as well as a small day pack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack. The day pack can be used to carry valuable items such as cameras and GPS devices whilst travelling and will also carry your day-ride essentials during the rides. Your baggage allowance on the flights will depend on your airline.

When choosing your flights, whether booking them directly or through KE, you will need to consider the cost of carrying your bike. These costs are your responsibility.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

UK, USA and EU countries do not require a visa to visit Kazakhstan as a tourist for a period of up to 30 days. Other nationalities should check the requirements directly with their own government travel advice, or with the Kazakhstan embassy in their own country.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The unit of currency in Kazakhstan is the Kazakhstani Tenge.

Preparing for your Holiday

The better conditioned you are the more you will enjoy your trip. We suggest that you adopt a sensible weekly exercise regime and fit in a number of long cycle rides in hilly country to ensure you are physically capable of taking part in this trip - this will also provide you with an opportunity to make sure all your riding kit is tried and tested before you travel. Cycling is obviously the best activity to prepare for this trip, however, running and swimming are also good for developing aerobic fitness and stamina.

Climate

Daytime maximum temperatures will generally be between 20ºC and 25ºC, falling to between 10ºC and 15ºC at night and possibly as low as 5ºC at Lake Tuzkol. We may have a couple of early starts to take advantage of relatively cool morning conditions. On the highest parts of our route, we can expect to encounter cool and windy conditions and some additional clothing layers are needed. In the foothills of the Tien Shan and in the Altyn Emel National Park in the early autumn season we can expect warm days with clear skies and little rain or snow. However, weather in mountainous areas is notoriously difficult to predict and short-lived storms can occur at any time of the year. In short, you need to be prepared for everything!

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's **'Travel Aware'** campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Kazakhstan. Bradt Travel Guide.
- Central Asia. Lonely Planet.
- Foreign Devils on the Silk Road. Peter Hopkirk.
- Mountains of the Middle Kingdom. Galen Rowell.

Maps

- EWP. Central Asian Series at 1:500,000 scale. Almaty and Karakol sheets.
- Kazakhstan. Reise Know-How. 1:2,000,000 scale.

Private Groups Information

Make this KE cycling holiday your own!

- Do our normal group departure dates not fit?
- Are you wanting to travel with just your friends or family?
- Are you looking to organise a trip for your local cycling club?

We are experts in creating holidays for groups of friends, families, charities, and cycling clubs. Our personal service means you'll be fully involved as we make the arrangements for your perfect adventure holiday.

Independence with Security

Travelling as a KE Private Group allows you more flexibility and choice, but still with the peace of mind that everything is pre-planned and arranged for your group by a reputable adventure travel company.

To take your first step to an amazing adventure with your friends and family complete the private group enquiry form, or call our **Sales Experts on: 017687 73966**

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our Travel Insurance page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

For this holiday you will need your usual cycling clothing, including shoes, cycling gloves and helmet (which must be worn at all times when cycling). Whether you are hiring a bike or taking your own, we recommend that you take the usual day-ride essentials of: mobile phone, multi-tool, mini-pump, tyre levers, spare tubes and puncture repair kit.

Bike Wear

- Cycling helmet
- Cycling shoes
- Daypack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack (e.g. Camelbak)
- Water bladder - min. 2 litres water capacity (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Padded (baggy) cycling shorts
- Long leg cycling trousers or leg warmers
- Base-layer - short sleeve cycling tops
- Mid-layer - long sleeved cycling tops
- Fleece jacket or jumper
- Lightweight windproof top
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Regular biking gloves
- Long-fingered biking gloved
- Warm hat that fits under your helmet
- Buff
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream (inc. total bloc for lips/nose)

- Camera

Other Stuff

- Travel and off-the-bike clothing and footwear
- Sandals or old trainers for stream crossings
- Sleeping bag (comfort rated 0ºC)
- ** Optional - Thermarest or similar camping mattress
- Wash bag, towel, toiletries, including anti-bacterial handwash
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Basic First Aid kit and personal medication
- Chamois cream (e.g. Assos/Ozone)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Note

** A 4 cms-thick inflatable camping mattress is provided locally.

Spares

If you are hiring a bike you do not need to bring any spares. The hire bikes are provided in good condition and a supply of spares is carried. You may be asked to pay directly for any spares used, especially in the case of crash damage or damage by mis-use. If you are taking your own bike, you should consider taking a minimum of spares, including a couple of spare spokes (for each wheel if they are different), spare brake blocks (or brake disc pads), chain links/chain connector, rear derailleur hanger and any non-standard parts specific to your bike.

Repairs

Whilst not essential, it is a good idea that you familiarise yourself with how to carry out at least some basic repairs to your bike e.g. changing an inner tube and fixing a puncture. Your bike guide will be happy to help with repairs and general maintenance, but being able to carry out a simple repair yourself could save the inconvenience of having to wait for assistance.

Hydration and Energy Snacks

You should take suitable water bottle(s) or a hydration pack and you should also consider taking a small supply of the gels, power bars or sports drink mix that you would normally use on a ride at home.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your equipment.

Land Only Information

Please refer to the 'Joining Arrangements & Transfers' within Holiday Information for further details.

Flights and other transport to your destination should not be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the departure is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting at the hotel in Almaty. A single group transfer is included from/to Almaty Airport.

Flight Inclusive Information

Limited seats are available at the advertised flight price, please book as early as you can. If we are unable to secure seats at the price shown, or you have requested regional departures and/or upgrades, we will provide you with an alternative quote. It is likely that flight payment will be in advance of your final holiday balance. Booking a flight inclusive package means you will benefit from full financial protection, eases your holiday planning, and leaves us to deal with airlines and schedule changes. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

Regional departures and/or alternative carriers are available on request.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Almaty. Outbound flights usually depart the UK in the afternoon, arriving in the early morning of the following day (Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary). Return flights depart from Almaty in the early morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK in the afternoon of the same day.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Experience Counts!The south-eastern corner of Kazakhstan is a wild and wonderful part of the world and this exciting holiday (set up using our more than 15 years experience of running bike trips in the Tien Shan) shows it off perfectly.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 31/10/2026 and the trip is subject to change