



## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ❑ Driving is on the right.
- ❑ Drivers are required to carry a valid national license, 1968 version of an International Driving Permit (IDP), passport, vehicle documents and proof of insurance.
- ❑ Visitors must be able to produce a passport, or an Embassy or Consulate-certified copy of a passport, when requested to do so by police or authorities.
- ❑ The official currency is the Kazakhstani Tenge (KZT).
- ❑ Travelers should consider hiring a car with a professional driver from a reputable agency.
- ❑ If you choose to drive, keep windows up and doors locked. If approached by a person dressed as a police officer, ask to see identification.
- ❑ Female drivers and women traveling alone may be subject to verbal abuse and harassment.
- ❑ Walking alone at night is unsafe. Violent attacks have taken place in many areas.
- ❑ Pedestrians account for an estimated 31% of all traffic fatalities.
- ❑ Legal blood alcohol limit is zero. Despite legal limits, many serious and fatal crashes involve the use of alcohol.
- ❑ There are 12.8 road deaths per 100,000 people in Kazakhstan, compared to 2.2 in Sweden and 2.3 in the UK.



Source: CIA Factbook

## ROAD CULTURE

- **Speeding** and aggressive driving are common. There is widespread disregard of traffic laws.
- **Many drivers** engage in reckless road behavior including dangerous overtaking and tailgating.
- **Drivers** generally ignore lane markings and traffic signals.
- **Motorists** may drive against traffic, even on main roads.
- **Drivers may** activate turn signals and pull into another lane before existing traffic moves over.
- **Motorists stop** suddenly on roads or highways without signaling, and step out of vehicles or block lanes while engaging in conversations with other drivers.
- **There are** frequent instances of road rage.
- **Taxi drivers** generally ignore road safety practices and may race through traffic lights, or swerve suddenly into other lanes to avoid potholes.
- **Many motorists** drive vehicles lacking standard safety features including seat belts. Some vehicles may not have working headlights or taillights. Vehicles may also be missing doors and windows.
- **Drivers rarely** yield to pedestrians, even at marked crossings.
- **Pedestrians** often step into busy roads without warning, or may run between traffic.

## ROAD CONDITIONS

- **There are** 96,167 km (59,755 miles) of roads; 83,813 km (52,078 miles) are paved and 12,354 km (7,676 miles) are unpaved.
- **Roads** are generally in poor condition, especially in rural and mountainous areas.
- **Signs** are lacking. This includes signs near road works and maintenance projects.
- **There are** many deep potholes. Some are large enough for a car to fall into.
- **Do not** drive after dark. Road lighting is inadequate or non-existent. In some areas, existing street lights may be turned off at night.
- **Many** roads outside of cities are closed throughout winter and early spring because of strong winds and deep snowdrifts.
- **Pedestrian** infrastructure is underdeveloped.
- **Although pedestrians** have right-of-way at crossings, drivers generally ignore the presence of pedestrians.
- **Loose animals** on roads, particularly in rural areas, are difficult to see in the dark.
- **Do not** drive into the following areas, which are closed to visitors:
  - » The Gvardeyskiy village in the Almaty region located in the southeast.
  - » The town of Baykonur.
  - » The districts of Karmakchi and Kazalinsk in the southern Kyzylorda region.
- **Demonstrations** occur regularly and should be avoided. Recent violent clashes between police and protestors have resulted in injuries and death. Demonstrations may disrupt transportation.



## Road Conditions, continued

- **Distances** are often great between towns. Fuel stations and service areas are limited and generally do not accept credit cards. Carry sufficient water, food, warm clothing, a first aid kit, spare tires, fuel and tools.
- **Cell phone** service is unavailable or unreliable in many areas of the country. Carrying a satellite phone is recommended, particularly if traveling outside of major cities.
- **Travel** to some areas close to the Chinese border, or located near military installations, requires advance permission from the Kazakhstani government's Foreign Ministry and Interior Ministry, with an agreement from the Kazakh National Security Committee.
- **Roads and border** crossings may be closed without notice.
- **Identification** checks are sometimes conducted in public areas; police and government authorities are not required to demonstrate probable cause in order to detain an individual.
- **Harassment** or extortion by police, officials or persons pretending to be these authorities occurs. Should harassment occur, report the incident to your embassy.
- **Avoid mountain roads** at night and during inclement weather due to potholes, uncleared snow, broken surfaces and road obstacles.
- **The following roads** may present particular challenges to motorists:
  - » **The Almaty-Bishkek Regional Road** connects Almaty to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan through the Tian Shan Mountains. This steep road has broken, poorly maintained surfaces. There is no lighting. Road dangers increase during inclement weather including rain, wind and snow. Efforts are being made to improve this route, but ongoing delays have created additional hazards in the form of many unmarked construction zones and incomplete repairs.
  - » **Austrian Road** is a remote road through the Altai Mountains of East Kazakhstan. The road is unpaved and unmaintained. Planks of wood have been placed over potholes in many areas. A four-wheel drive vehicle is necessary. The road is hazardous at all times; dangers increase following rain and snow. Do not attempt this road.
  - » **The M32/Aral Highway** is part of European Route 38, and links Oral/Uralsk in the northwest with Shymkent in the South Kazakhstan Province. Paved sections are asphalt, but there are multiple dirt/gravel sections with large potholes. Drivers traveling at speed may not be aware of the transition to dirt. Lighting is poor. Night driving is especially dangerous. Many large transport trucks use this route. There are few services or fuel stations.

## REGIONAL AND SEASONAL CONDITIONS

- **Kazakhstan** is subject to strong winds, wildfires, severe winter weather, avalanches, landslides and earthquakes.
- **Wildfires** occur often throughout the country, particularly during July and August. Smoke may limit driver visibility.
- **Winter winds** create severe wind chill conditions.
- **Heavy snow** is common during winter.
- **Avalanches** occur frequently, especially in mountainous areas during spring when snow is melting.
- **Strong earthquakes** occur regularly, particularly in the Almaty region. Buildings are not constructed to meet western seismic requirements.

Maximum Speed Limits

Type of road	Maximum speed
Urban areas	60 kph (37 mph)
Residential areas	20 kph (12 mph)
Rural roads	90 kph (56 mph)
Highways	110 kph (68 mph)

Always adjust speed according to signage, hazards and weather conditions.

Signs are generally pictorial and may not follow European Union conventions.

Do not enter	Pedestrian tunnel	Blind pedestrians in area	Yield to oncoming traffic	Direction of main road	Added lane	No right turn	Pedestrian zone	No overtaking

## Regional and Seasonal Conditions, continued

- **Landslides** and strong aftershocks may occur after earthquakes.
- **Be familiar with emergency procedures.** The Red Cross provides a website and free, downloadable emergency app: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies>

## TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation options** include cars, taxis, buses, minibuses, trams, trolleys, one subway system, bicycles, electric kick scooters (e-scooters) and trains.
- **Public transport** is regarded as unsafe and unreliable.
- **Tickets** for buses are purchased from drivers.
- **Bus travel** should be avoided. Public buses and minibuses have poor safety records.
- **Buses** and minibuses are generally overcrowded and in poor repair.
- **Use only** official taxis. Drivers generally speak Kazak or Russian and may not understand English. Carry a copy of destination written in Kazakh or Russian.
- **Do not** use unmarked taxis. Visitors have been attacked and violently assaulted.
- **Avoid entering** a taxi where another passenger is present. Insist that driver not pick up additional passengers.
- **Agree** on fare prior to travel.
- **There is** one subway system in Almaty.
- **Two cities** have tram networks: Termitau and Pavlodar.
- **Bicycles** are not commonly used for transportation, but bike rental systems are available in many cities.
- **Cycling** is more common during summer. Bike lanes exist in some cities and towns.
- **E-scooter** use is increasing, especially in urban areas.
- **Passenger** flight lists are not kept confidential; be alert to airport scams that include persons in the arrivals area carrying signs with your name, claiming to be a private driver. This may include persons impersonating police officers or other authorities.

- **Rideshares** are available in major cities. Use only services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver's name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- **Trains** are regarded as relatively safe.
- **Overnight trains** may require sharing compartments with strangers.

## TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

- **Drivers must** be at least 18 years of age to drive, and 23 years old to rent a car. Some rental car agencies may have other restrictions.
- **Seat belt** use is mandatory for drivers and passengers.
- **Children** under the age of 12 must be in a child restraint; those over age 12 must use a seat belt.
- **Children may** be seated in front seats provided they are in a safety restraint appropriate to size and weight.
- **Helmet use** is compulsory for motorcycle drivers and passengers. Helmets must be fastened.
- **Children under** 12 years of age are prohibited from being passengers on motorcycles.
- **Cyclists may not be** wearing safety helmets. If using a bicycle, wear a fastened helmet.
- **Laws** are in development concerning the use of electric kick-scooters (e-scooters).
- **Current guidelines** limit e-scooters to 25 kph (15.5 mph) when on bike paths; or along the right-hand edge of roadways and in bus lanes.
- **E-scooters** must travel under 6 kph (3.7 mph) when driven on sidewalks and footpaths.
- **E-scooter** drivers on roads and in bus lanes must wear a fastened helmet, have a valid driving license, and wear reflective clothing in the dark.
- **E-scooter** drivers are prohibited from transporting goods or passengers.
- **Random** breath tests are illegal, but all drivers are tested in the event of a crash.
- **Parking** is prohibited within 50 meters (164 feet) of railway crossings.

### Astana (Capital)

- » Transportation options include cars, taxis, buses, minibuses, trolleybuses, bicycles and trains.
- » Driving is not recommended. Many drivers ignore traffic rules.
- » Street signs are often lacking.
- » Many roads are in poor condition and have large potholes.
- » Use only official taxis. Book registered taxis through reputable hotels.
- » Do not hail taxis on the street, or ride in informal/unregistered taxis.
- » Avoid entering a taxi where other passengers are present.



### Astana, continued

- » Taxis are unmetered. Agree on fare ahead of travel.
- » Taxi drivers may not give change. Carry small bills.
- » Taxi drivers do not generally speak or understand English. Carry a copy of destination written in Kazakh or Russian.
- » Rideshares are operated by taxi companies.
- » Pedestrians should use caution. Drivers frequently disregard zebra crossings, even when pedestrians are present.
- » There is a citywide bike rental system. Bike paths and cycling infrastructure are underdeveloped.
- » Drivers often disregard the safety of cyclists.
- » The main train stations are Astana-1 and Astana Nurly Zhol.
- » Astana-1 Railway station is located on the north side of the city. There are daily connections between the city and Almaty. Travel time is approximately 20 hours.
- » Astana Nurly Zhol Railway Station is 10 km (6.2 miles) east of the city.
- » Bus 48 connects the two railway stations.
- » Saparzhay Bus Station is the main station. There is long-distance service to other main cities, and to some major cities in Russia and Central Asia.
- » Public buses are operated by Astra Bus.
- » Buses are often overcrowded.
- » Fares are paid directly to the bus driver, or to onboard conductors if one is present.
- » The Astrabus smartphone app provides location updates and arrival/departure times.
- » Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport is 15 km (9.3 miles) from city center.
- » Transport to and from the airport and the city includes cars, taxis and buses.
- » Taxi ranks are located outside of the arrivals area. Use only registered taxis, and avoid drivers soliciting for fares in the luggage/arrivals area.
- » Buses 10 and 12 connect the airport and city center. In general, there are two buses each hour. The bus stop is located outside the main doors of Terminal 2.
- » Some rental car agencies are represented at the airport. Vehicles may be in poor condition.

### Almaty

- » Transportation options include cars, taxis, buses, minibuses, trolleybuses, one metro line, bicycles and trains.
- » Driving is not recommended. Many streets are poorly maintained.
- » Traffic is undisciplined. Drivers are reckless and generally disregard traffic rules.
- » Streets are laid out in a grid.
- » Buses include city buses, minibuses, long-distance buses and trolleybuses.
- » Sayran Bus Station and Sayakhat Bus Station are the main bus terminals.
- » Sayran Bus Station is 8 km (5 miles) west of city center.
- » Sayakhat Bus Station is 1 km (0.6 miles) east of Almaty-2 rail station.
- » Overnight long-distance bus service connects the city to Urumqi, China. The border crossing at Khorgos is closed on all Chinese national holidays, including the first week of October.
- » Direct long-distance bus connections are available to Kyrgyzstan.
- » There is a metro system with one line. Trains run from approximately 6 am to 11 pm.
- » There is police security at metro stations.
- » Metro tickets are plastic tokens that can be purchased at kiosks (“KASSA”) in stations. Fares can also be paid at contactless readers with rechargeable multi-trip smart cards, and by some major credit cards.
- » Use only official taxis and avoid private vehicles being used as taxis. Book a registered taxi in advance through a reputable hotel, and do not hail taxis on the street.



## Almaty, continued

- » Agree on fare prior to travel. Taxi drivers do not give change.
- » Never enter a taxi already occupied by another passenger, and do not allow driver to pick up additional fares. Violent attacks have occurred.
- » Most taxi drivers do not speak or understand English. Carry a copy of destination written in Kazakh or Russian.
- » Rideshares are operated by taxi companies.
- » The main train stations are Almaty-1 and Almaty-2. Routes are available to other major cities, and to some international destinations.
- » Pedestrians are at high risk. There is little infrastructure for persons on foot. Drivers often ignore zebra crossings, even when people are present.
- » There is a citywide bike rental system. Infrastructure is underdeveloped, but there are some bike paths and lanes.
- » Motorists may not respect cyclists or provide adequate safety margins on shared roads.
- » Almaty International Airport is 15 km (9.3 miles) from city center.
- » Use only official taxis, ordered at the taxi booth in the arrivals area. Be aware that drivers may refuse to honor the price quoted to travelers by the booking agent.
- » Travelers using taxis from the city to return to the airport should be alert to a common scam: Taxi drivers will claim that passengers have directed them to a retail shopping center west of the city called “Aport,” and charge high rates to go from there to the airport.
- » Airport buses run from about 5:20 am to 11 pm daily; travel time is approximately 30 minutes.
- » Bus 92 has a stop just outside of the arrivals hall.
- » All other city buses run from Mailin Street outside of the airport. Travelers must cross cross Zakarpatskaya Street and walk past a hotel and grocery store to access the bus stop.
- » Rental car agencies are represented at the airport. Vehicles may be in poor condition.

## ACCOMMODATIONS AND INCLUSIONS FOR MOBILITY CHALLENGED

- **Laws prohibiting** discrimination against persons with physical, sensory or other challenges are generally enforced.
- **Accessibility** is limited in public transportation, lodging and general infrastructure.
- **There are no** parking provisions for persons with mobility challenges. Parking attendants may agree to provide assistance if asked.

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- **Pre-program** emergency numbers into your phone before departure.
- **Responders to emergency calls** speak Kazakh or Russian. Interpreters may not be available.
  - » Rescue service: 112
  - » Police: 102
  - » Ambulance/emergency medical assistance: 103
  - » Fire: 101
- **Medical care** is inadequate, and is below western standards.
- **Good medical** care is generally available only in or near major cities. In the event of serious illness or injury, evacuation to another country may be necessary.
- **Ambulance services** are not available countrywide, and are unreliable beyond major cities.
- **Ambulances** are not staffed with trained paramedics, and have little or no medical equipment. Existing medical equipment is not state-of-the-art.
- **Ambulances and first responders** may not be able to access the injured or provide urgent or life-saving care in areas beyond main urban centers.
- **Injured** or ill persons may wish to take a taxi to the nearest major hospital instead of waiting for an ambulance.
- **Medical** personnel including doctors usually do not speak English.



## Emergency Information, continued

- **Some medications** prescribed in other countries are illegal in Kazakhstan. Check on legal status of all medicines before travel.
- **Cash payment** is required prior to the administration of medical treatment, including emergency care.
- **If involved in a crash:**
  - » Call police.
  - » Notify rental car agency.
  - » Collect contact information from other driver(s) and any witnesses.
  - » Take photographs of scene if possible.



### ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR SAFE INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRAVEL (ASIRT)

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey.

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