

Help Sheet to Design a Tour for a Group Interested in Turkic Cultures

The basics:

Both Kazakhs and Uzbeks are Turkic peoples. Kazakhstan, especially the steppes in the area around Nur-Sultan, has traditions rooted in nomadic life. Uzbekistan has traditions that center more around life in towns and along trade routes. Uzbekistan, particularly in cities like Bukhara, also has close ties to Persian culture, which is Indo-European and NOT Turkic. More Turkic influences are found in the parts such as Tashkent and Samarkand than in Bukhara. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have also been affected by centuries of Russian rule. (The Kazakh language is still written in the Cyrillic alphabet similar to Russian; the Uzbek language used to be.) In your tour, you might want to emphasize the Turkic traditions while still alluding to Russian or Persian traditions

Languages:

Both Kazakh and Uzbek are Turkic languages. How can people on your tour learn a little more about each one? Where/how could you get an introduction to the languages and the alphabets used?

Nomadic traditions:

Nomadic lifestyles are often a response to difficult environmental conditions, which is why it predominated in the steppes of Kazakhstan, an area that is very flat - with no mountains to block invasions. The steppes are also cold with sudden violent changes of weather (blizzards, droughts) because there is no nearby sea to moderate the climate. Given those conditions, people adopted a mobile lifestyle, where they could move quickly to avoid invading armies or to survive harsh weather conditions.

This has affected people's housing (yurts, which can be packed up and moved), diet (reliance on meat and meat products – since they were a people who herded animals and hunted), music (instruments adapted to be used while riding on horseback), and hunting techniques (look up eagle hunting in Kazakhstan).

Where to go to experience nomadic traditions: Kazakhstan: the capital, Nur-Sultan. You can make a day trip to the steppe to see a demonstration of eagle hunting. What other museums or cultural sites could you visit to learn more about nomadic traditions?

City life:

Many of the big towns in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have deeply-rooted Turkic influences. What would be the best places to visit? Which museums/cultural sites could enlighten your group about Turkic traditions and history? (Look up ethnographic museums and museums devoted to Kazakh or Uzbek culture.)

Tour Group Travel from place to place:

In planning your itinerary, you can take short regional flights to get to or from big cities that are far apart (e.g. from Nur-Sultan to Almaty or Tashkent). Be sure to check on Kayak.com or some other site to see if there are flights between cities that you want to visit. You don't want to waste time on travel from place to place, so find direct flights. You must somehow strike a balance in your itinerary so that your travelers can see as many places as possible but not so many places that they spend all their time traveling without enough time to see things.