

## **Help Sheet to Design a Tour for a Group Interested in Relations among Different Ethnic, Linguistic, and Religious Groups**

### **The basics:**

Both Kazakhs and Uzbeks are Turkic peoples who speak related Turkic languages. However, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have had very different historical experiences and traditions, and both have large ethnic minorities.

Kazakhstan, especially the steppes in the area around Nur-Sultan, has traditions deeply rooted in nomadic Turkic culture with influences from the Muslim religion. After centuries of Russian rule, Kazakhstan also has a large (though decreasing) Russian population, who are Orthodox Christian by background and who speak the Russian language. (Kazakhstani people, except for new arrivals, tend to be fully bilingual in Kazakh and Russian – and use both in daily life.) There are other small local minorities too. In addition, during Stalinist times, the Soviet government used the sparsely inhabited (and very cold) Kazakh steppes as a place to exile minorities that gave them trouble. So you might find groups of Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars, Koreans, and others.

Uzbekistan, on the other hand, has traditions that center more around life in towns and along trade routes. Although Uzbekistan promotes its Turkic identity – and have even changed their alphabet from the Cyrillic (Russian-based) alphabet used in Soviet times to a Latin alphabet like that adopted by Turkey. However, Uzbekistan has been greatly influenced by Persian culture. Not only are many of the great buildings in Samarkand and Bukhara in the Persianate style, but a large percentage of the population speak Tajik (an Indo-European, NOT Turkic language) at home. Tajik is very closely related to Persian (spoken in Iran) and Dari (spoken in Afghanistan). There are other minorities too; Uzbekistan once had a vibrant Jewish community.

### **How to research the topic:**

Look up the minorities in each country. See what language(s) they speak and what areas they live in. Look up the language policies and recent changes since independence and think about how that would affect minority groups. (For example, what has it been like for Russians now that Russian is a second language and Uzbek or Kazakh is a primary one?) Who are the national heroes are in each country, and what would some minorities feel about that. (Especially look at the history of “Amir Timur”/Tammerlane in Uzbekistan, and consider what Tajiks would think about his elevation to “hero” status.

### **Planning your itinerary:**

Be sure to look up ethnographic museums and other sites of traditional culture. Look up important religious sites. Maybe plan to visit the countries during some great cultural holiday – and find out how that is celebrated.

### **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.