

Help Sheet to Design a Tour for a Group Interested in Religions

The basics:

For centuries, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were mostly Muslim areas (Islam had spread along the Silk Road in medieval times). However, there were also communities of Jews and smaller numbers of other religious adherents. The Russian take-over of the region in the late 18th century brought many Orthodox Christian Russians into the area. With the fall of the Soviet Empire and rise of the Soviet Union, all religious practice was outlawed. Only in modern times, after the break-up of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the independent countries of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has religion returned to public life. New mosques have been built, churches reopened.

How to research the topic:

It shouldn't be too hard to find information by looking up "religion in Kazakhstan" and "religion in Uzbekistan." Consider to what extent there has been a rise in religious identification/practice after 1991 and/or to what extent people now identify as Muslim or Orthodox for nationalistic, rather than religious reasons.

Planning your itinerary:

Look up Muslim, Jewish, and Orthodox places of worship and monuments. See which ones are open for visitors and if there are any museums or visitors' centers as part of them.

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.