

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

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. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have also been affected by centuries of Russian rule (from the late 18th century until 1991). All of these traditions have influenced Central Asian food.

How to research your topic:

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have very different food traditions. In Kazakhstan, especially in the northern steppes with a harsh, cold climate and a nomadic tradition, the diet contains a lot of meat and animal products (from herding and hunting) and not a great variety of vegetables (which are scarcer in the steppe regions). Look up “Kazakh cuisine” and “what to eat in Kazakhstan.” Uzbekistan, in contrast, has a more moderate climate and a more varied diet. It is especially influenced by Persian cuisine. Look up “Uzbek cuisine” and especially “Uzbek plov.” Also, look at “Uzbekistan bread.”

Planning the itinerary:

Plan to visit markets (ones that sell foods and ones that sell cooking implements), specialized restaurants, bakeries, and cooking classes/demonstrations. Also find ethnographic museums that show traditional lifestyles, cooking implements, etc. You can even look up “eagle hunting in Kazakhstan” and take people out on the steppe near Nur-Sultan for a demonstration. Plan a time of year for your trip that there is a big holiday with lots of food-related traditions.

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.