GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT KAZAKHSTAN

THE FACTS:

Location: The northern part of Central Asia.
Area: Over 2.7 million square kilometres.
Neighbouring Countries: (Clockwise from the North) Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.
Capital: Astana
Population: 16 196 800
Status: Presidential Republic
President: Nursultan Nazarbayev
Language: Kazakh and Russian
Religion: Islam and Russian Orthodox
Currency: The Tenge: 1 GBP = 291.40 KZT (October 2014)

TIME:

Almaty and Astana are UTC/GMT + 6 hours. Kazakhstan does not observe summer time since 2005.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW:

Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world, covering more than 2.7 million sq km and accounting for 1.8% of the world’s land. Whilst its population stands at approximately 16.2 million people, its population density is fewer than six people per square kilometre. The country is also known as the most ethnically diverse state of the former Soviet Union. A census in 2008 identified that Ethnic Kazakhs represent 59% of the overall population, whilst Russians represent 25%. The rest of the population consists of Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Germans, Tatars and Uighurs. The official language of the country is Kazakh, Russian is the language of interethnic communication.
The landscape of Kazakhstan is diverse. The northern forest-steppe turns into steppe, half-deserts and deserts in the south. Kazakhstan is also a mineral rich country. Enterprises involved in the extraction and processing of coal, oil, gas, non-ferrous and ferrous metals play a leading role in the national economy. Rich in commercial minerals, including the world's largest reserves of chromium, vanadium, bismuth and fluorine, there are nearly 160 deposits of oil and gas including one of the largest deposits in the world, the Tenghiz field.

**CLIMATE:**

Within Kazakhstan’s vast territory there are a number of extreme climates. In winter the temperature may go down to -45°C and in summer up to +45°C.

Along the borders of Kyrgyzstan and China, in the south and southeast of the country, there is the Tian Shan mountain range, which extends further north along the Chinese border, by the Altai Mountains and is snow-covered all year round.

Khan Tengri is the highest peak of the Tian Shan standing at 7,000 m above sea level. In contrast however, to the west of the country is the Karagiye Depression which contains the country’s lowest point at -132m.

Whilst the Irtysh, Tobol and Ishim rivers flow north into Russia, many of Kazakhstan's rivers simply evaporate into dry and arid earth which occupies most of the vast expanses of land. These regions are known as steppe regions, and cover around 800,000 sq km of land, eventually giving way to semi-desert. High winds are a well-known characteristic of these lands.

In January temperatures average between -19/-4°C and in July +19/26°C.
CITY OVERVIEW: ASTANA

Kazakhstan’s capital, Astana, is situated 1000km to the northwest of Almaty. The capital was moved from Almaty to Astana in 1997 for a number of reasons, not least is that Almaty sits on several fault-lines and so is prone to earthquakes. Since the capital’s move, the population has more than doubled, now standing at 600,000 and is constantly growing. The city is divided into the Old City and Left Bank. The Left Bank is currently under construction and has been since the capital’s move. It represents President Nazarbayev’s vision for a new republic whilst the Old City is home to a mix of Tsarist buildings, Soviet blocks and modern skyscrapers.

TRANSPORT:

Astana’s airport is located 14km outside of the city centre. (www.astanaairport.kz) Travel to and from the airport can be arranged via taxi. Taxi drivers wait at the entrance of the airport touting for customers. It is advisable to book a taxi at the kiosk in the arrivals hall.

Astana’s train station lies at the northern end of town. The station itself is well signposted in English, Russian and Kazakh.

Astana’s bus station lies at the eastern end of the train station square.

PLACES TO VISIT:

The Baiterek Tower is a well-recognised monument which has become associated with Astana. It is a tribute to the capital’s move to Astana in 1997, the
The tower symbolises an ancient Kazakh legend. Placed on top of the tower is a large golden sphere which represents the golden egg laid by the legendary Kazakh bird Samruk in the crown of a Poplar tree. It costs around 500 KZT to take a lift to the top of the tower, from here, on a clear day, you can see fantastic views of the city and you can appreciate the scale of the construction work going into creating a ‘new Astana.’

The stunning architecture and décor of the **Nur Astana Mosque** is well worth seeing. The mosque is the largest in Kazakhstan and has the capacity to hold up to 5,000 worshippers. Located on the Left Bank of the city, the mosque is designed by a Lebanese architect and built by a Turkish company. The Mosque was a gift from the Emir of Qatar, Hamad bin Qualifa.

**The National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan** is the youngest and largest museum in Central Asia. The museum has been created in the framework of the "Cultural Heritage" State Program on behalf of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. The museum is located on the main square of the country - the Independence Square, which harmoniously blends into the single architectural ensemble with the "Kazakh Eli" monument, the Independence Palace, the Palace of Peace and Harmony, the "Hazret Sultan" cathedral mosque and the National University of Arts. Many values identified during the "Cultural Heritage" State Program constitute the invaluable fund of the National Museum of Kazakhstan. The museum has been developing various kinds of excursions - survey and thematic, philosophical, special programs in the form of interactive sessions and gaming excursions. ([http://astanamuseum.kz/en/museum/history](http://astanamuseum.kz/en/museum/history))

**Double-decker buses**, similar to the famous London red double-deckers are cruising at a regular interval along fixed route. The excursion starts from the Baiterek monument, then the passengers can visit the Central Square of Astana city, Children's Palace, Zher Ana Monument, President's Cultural Center, Duman
entertainment center that houses of city's aquarium, the Museum of the First President of Kazakhstan, Arailym park, Khan Shatyr mall and KazMedia Ortalygy media center. The ticket will cost 2 400 tenge ($16) for adults. The cost for students, pensioners and participants of the Great Patriotic War will be 1 700 tenge ($11). The ticket for 5 to 10-y.o. children will cost 1200 tenge ($8) and for kids under 5 the tour will be free of charge. Professional guides will working at the buses.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

The following are three hotels which cater to a variety of prices and budgets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Hotels</th>
<th><strong>High End:</strong> Radisson SAS Hotel</th>
<th><strong>High End:</strong> Hilton Garden Inn</th>
<th><strong>Budget:</strong> King Hotel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Sary Arka Avenue</td>
<td>4 Sary Arka Avenue</td>
<td>15, Kabanbay Batyr Avenue</td>
<td>7 Valikhanova Str.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 990 000</td>
<td>Tel: 990 000</td>
<td>Tel: 756 756</td>
<td>Tel: 705705</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Food and Drink:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Restaurants</th>
<th>Astana Nury (European)</th>
<th>Vaquero (Mexican, European)</th>
<th>Tiflis (Georgian)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/2 Respublik Ave.</td>
<td>5 Beibitshilik Str</td>
<td>14 Imanov Str.,</td>
<td>14 Kunaev str.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 223 922 or 223 366</td>
<td>Tel 390121</td>
<td>Tel 221 226</td>
<td>Tel 244 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Bukeikhan str.</td>
<td>Tel: 291 500</td>
<td>16 Bukeikhan str.</td>
<td>Tel: 794161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In Kazakhstan there is awareness of the problems faced by disabled people after the President’s address to the nation in 2013 highlighted social assistance to the disabled by the Government. Numerous new buildings, stations, airports, hotels and restaurants and the main public offices in the larger towns have access for disabled people.

The venue for the conference, Nazarbayev University, and Hilton hotel have access for wheelchair users. The British Council selected menu for refreshments and reception that will offer vegetarian and halal options.

The British Council office has disabled access. If you are visiting the British Council or need any other assistance in the conference, please let us know.