

# ULYTAU

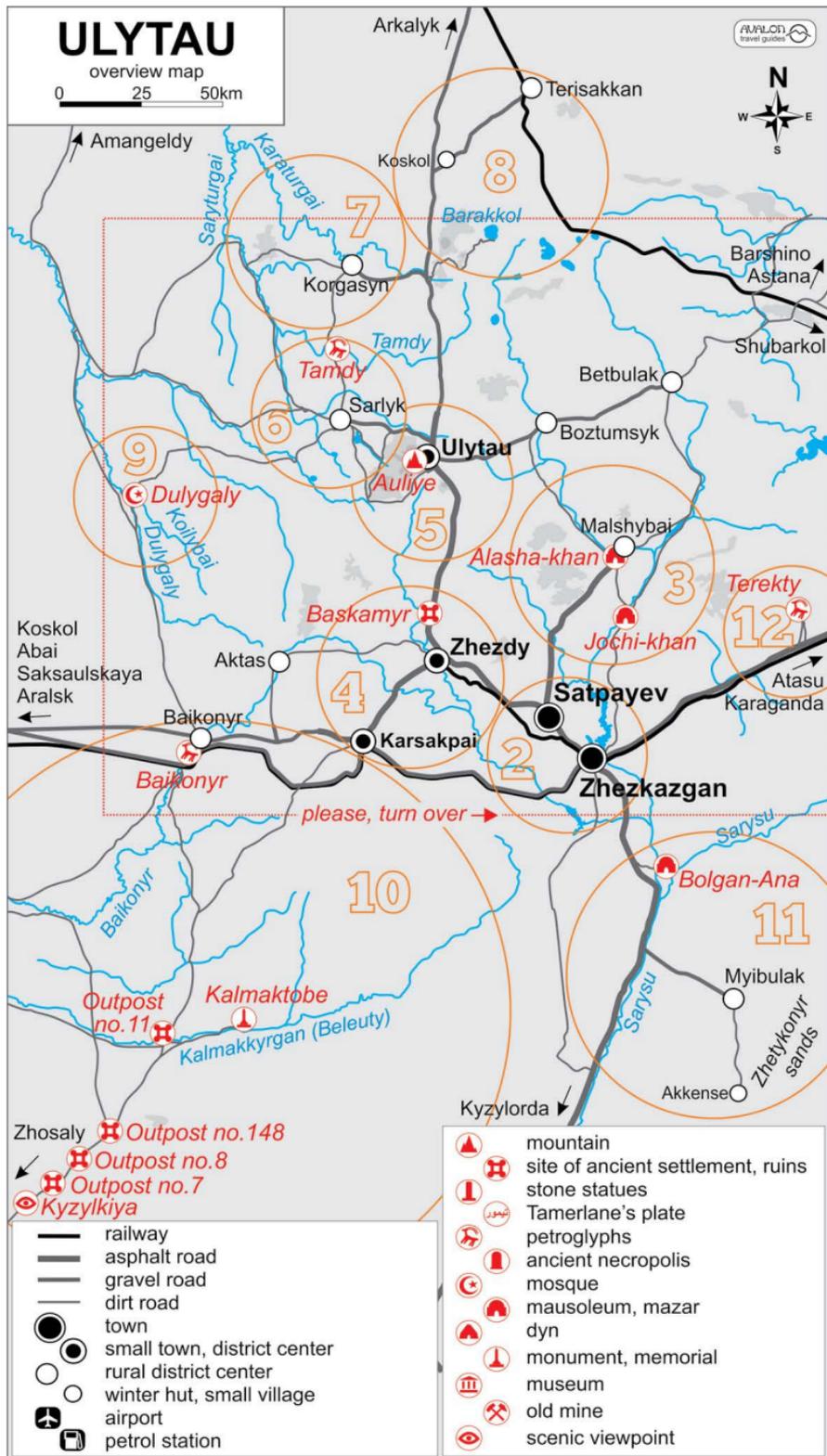
TRAVEL GUIDE

# ULYTAU

overview map

0 25 50km

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travel guides



Zhosaly **Outpost no.148**  
**Outpost no.8**  
**Outpost no.7**  
**Kyzylkiya**

- railway
- asphalt road
- gravel road
- dirt road
- town
- small town, district center
- rural district center
- winter hut, small village
- airport
- petrol station

- mountain
- site of ancient settlement, ruins
- stone statues
- Tamerlane's plate
- petroglyphs
- ancient necropolis
- mosque
- mausoleum, mazar
- dyn
- monument, memorial
- museum
- old mine
- scenic viewpoint





"Kazakhstan National Geographic Society" RPA  
"Avalon" Historico-Geographical Society" PA

# Ulytau

## travel guide



Karaganda  
2016

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**Shuptar V.V.**

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The Ulytau Travel Guide by Avalon Travel Guides is a joint project of Kazakhstan National Geographic Society and "Avalon" Historico-Geographical Society. It tells about travel attractions of Ulytau region, which is located in geographical centre of the Republic of Kazakhstan and is widely considered the heart of the country and the sacred cradle of Kazakh nation. This guidebook will be of interest for the wide range of readers: both organized tourists, who may retrieve a lot of useful information from it, and independent travellers, who may find the book useful for planning and realizing their journeys. The guidebook may also be interesting for someone, who wishes to make (or has already made) a career in tourism and would like to work as a guide in this region.

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I came to Ulytau for the first time on August 13, 2005 with my girlfriend Lena. This journey was planned as a sort of a surprise present, which I wanted to give to her on the anniversary of our first meeting. And it turned out to be a journey to remember. I cannot say that we managed to see much at that time, but the one night spent at the foot of the Auliye mountain was enough for me to understand that this place was worth coming back to. After that time, I kept coming back here again and again, using every chance I had (by the way, it was in Ulytau that Lena and I spent our tenth anniversary).

This guidebook is the product of many years of work and travel in Ulytau: journeys in the framework of the project on ecotourism development in Central Kazakhstan, expeditions of the Kazakhstan National Geographic Society, and a number of journeys in the region in the framework of the projects of "Avalon" Historico-geographical society, including the adventurous bicycle journey from Astana "to the centre of the Kazakh land". I wrote about all these journeys in newspapers and magazines more than once, but as more and more interesting and useful information was piling up, in summer 2014, I hit upon the idea of creating something more practical, something that could actually help other travellers. It took me two years to materialize the idea into this small book and the Kazakhstan National Geographic Society supported me in this endeavor.

I sincerely hope that our guide will help you in your journeys and that you, just like me, will be able to discover your own Ulytau and fall in love with it. It is true that travelling in Ulytau, just like travelling everywhere else in Kazakhstan, often requires a lot of time and effort. But trust me – it's worth it.

Have a good trip! See you in the shadow of the great mountains!

Vitaliy Shuptar  
Author and president of  
"Avalon" Historico-geographical society

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express his gratitude to everyone who took part in the creation of this book, namely designers, consultants, photographers, translators, proofreaders and all "Avalon" employees who were involved in the making of this guide in one way or another.

Moreover, I would also like to thank all the adventurous travellers who accompanied me in my exploration of the Ulytau expanses, and all my friends who made these journeys even more exciting and memorable.

Special thanks goes to the Kazakhstan National Geographic Society and Saulet Sakenov in particular for believing in this idea and supporting it.



*KNGS expedition team in Ulytau, 2014*

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The travel guide you are holding in your hands is the first one of its kind to feature practical information for tourists travelling in the Ulytau region. For starters, the authors would like to draw your attention to some important points:

1. This guidebook will be equally useful for tourists of all kinds. Organized tourists might find it a good educational read, whereas independent travellers will treat it as a practical reference book, which provides answers to all the "whys" and "hows". The guide may also be interesting for someone who wishes to make (or has already made) a career in tourism and would like to work as a guide in this region.

2. The guidebook does not claim to be scientifically accurate and thorough, as it is first and foremost a practical edition. Historical statements (if present) are not to be treated as the ultimate truth, as the book mainly tells its readers about the Middle Ages, one of the controversial periods in the history of Kazakhstan, where legends and historical facts are so closely intertwined that it is often quite difficult (if at all possible) to tell the difference between the two.

3. The guidebook does not claim to be 100% complete, as it only covers those tourist attractions which are likely to be interesting and comprehensible for ordinary tourists (however well-read they may be) rather than for some narrowly focused specialists. In other words, it highlights those tourist attractions which are visually appealing and do not require special knowledge to be understood (this is, by the way, the reason why the book does not cover monuments from the Palaeolithic period). It is also worthy to note that the book does not give an account of the sights which are inaccessible due to objective reasons (e.g. because of their location in restricted industrial areas).

4. As most of the travel attractions described in this guidebook are located far from proper roads and bus routes, travelling in Ulytau is nearly always filled with real adventures, i.e. it constitutes the sort of travelling which is increasingly difficult to find anywhere else on the globe.

### **Names of villages**

Finding your way in Kazakh steppes may often be quite challenging. In addition to the lack of road signs and road indications on maps, travellers may be misled by the fact that some villages tend to have multiple names, i.e. one and the same settlement may be known under 2 or 3, sometimes even 4 or 5 denominations. This may be due to the fact that the names of villages are confused with the names of railway stations located nearby. In some cases it happens because of the fixed use of some historical names or because many settlements were renamed several times in the post-Soviet era. More often than not, the reason for this lies in the complex economic structure of Soviet agriculture (names given to collective farms, the so-called kolkhozes and sovkhoses, in some cases coincided with the names of their central estates and in other cases differed from them; furthermore, there were departments which at times had either numbers or proper names). In order to facilitate orientation in the Ulytau region, this guidebook uses both the official names and the most common unofficial ones.

## CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Ulytau region ("great mountains" in Kazakh) always had a special and sacred place in the history of Eurasian nomads, as it is considered the unique epicentre of nomadic civilization. Numerous mausoleums, petroglyphs, caves, sites of ancient settlements, historical facts and legends, as well as various cult places located here create the special background, against which Ulytau is considered the centre of Kazakh land and the cradle of the Kazakh nation. It was here in Ulytau that newly proclaimed khans were traditionally lifted up on a white felt mat. Jochi Khan, Alasha-Khan, Tamerlane, Emir Yedige, Tokhtamysh Khan, Kenessary Khan, Alkei Margulan, Shokan Valikhanov, Kanysh Satpayev - all these names, which play an important role both in the history of Kazakhstan and in the history of the world, as well as many other prominent names are closely connected with Ulytau in the same way as the entire Kazakh history is closely connected with this region since time immemorial.

Nowadays Ulytau Nature Reserve is located in the territory of the Ulytau region, which occupies hilly areas to the west of Ulytau village (it is quite likely that a national nature park will soon be created from the Nature Reserve). This comes as no surprise, as in ancient times Ulytau lands used to be the khans' nature reserve, i.e. the common lands which did not belong to any clan due to their sacred nature.

Nearly all historical and cultural sights of the region are managed and protected by Ulytau national historical, cultural and natural reserve-museum headquartered in Ulytau village.

The Ulytau region occupies a large territory in the western part of Karaganda oblast (a type of administrative division of Kazakhstan) and is, therefore, located in the geographical centre of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In modern times, a monument to the unity of the peoples of Kazakhstan was erected in the vicinity of Ulytau village and it is believed to be

Abdullah Khan himself together with a group of warriors, who were always present at his high-level meetings and councils, decided to indulge himself in blissful relaxation in this paradise-like area, where the morning wind felt like the paradise wind and clear waters resembled the spring of living water. Happy with his victory, for a few days the Khan rejoiced in celebrating and enjoyed the hospitality of this area, where the capital of Jochi Khan and his glorious sons was located.

*Sharafname-I Shahi*, a history of the rule of Abdullah II by Hafiz Tanish Bukhari (16th century)

situated in the geographical centre of the country (or at least somewhere close to it).

Whereas Ulytau village is considered the administrative centre of Ulytau region, large industrial towns, such as Zhezkazgan and Satpayev, which are located in the central part of the region, are considered towns of oblast subordination.

**WHERE:** There are several ways of reaching Ulytau by motor vehicles: **from Southern Kazakhstan** you may take the road leading from Kyzylorda (to Zhezkazgan: 428 km, out of which more than half is a very bad gravel road), or use a partly disappearing gravel road of dubious quality, running along the new railway line from the motorway M32 and starting from the north of Aralsk (to Baikonyr village: 410 km), or choose the old road, which used to link steppe outposts from Zhosaly (to Baikonyr village: 346 km); **from Central Kazakhstan** – you can reach Ulytau from Karaganda using a relatively good quality asphalt road (to Zhezkazgan: 530 km); **from Northern Kazakhstan** – follow the gravel unpaved road of awful quality from Arkalyk (to Ulytau village: 205m); **from Astana** – via Korgalzhyn and Shubarkol, partly following gravel and steppe roads (to Malshybai village: 480 km). It is also possible to get to Ulytau **by train:** regular trains have already been linking Zhezkazgan and Karaganda for many years, however, the region remained a dead-end destination

**Mobile reception**

In the area of the Zhezkazgan-Satpayev agglomeration, all four Kazakhstani mobile phone service brands, such as "Beeline", "Kcell", "Tele2" and "Altel", operate. You may also receive "Altel" signal at the motorway to the east of Zhezkazgan (for instance, in the Terекty station area) and partly in the Karakengir valley (including the area of Jochi Khan mausoleum). The rest of the region is incompletely covered by "Beeline" (for the most part) and "Kcell". Mobile signal of various strength may be picked up in the neighbourhood of Ulytau, Zhezdy, Malshybai, Karakengir valley and in the areas adjacent to the following mausoleums: Shotkara, Jochi, Dombauyl, Alasha, as well as Bolgan-Ana and Kulan-Ana. Along the railway going from Zhezkazgan to the west via Karsakpai, Baikonyr and Koskol, mobile connection is also provided by these two operators (at times both of them, at times only one) nearly until the very border of Karaganda oblast at Abai village. There is also mobile reception in some places along the railway leading from Shubarkol to Arkalyk (for instance, "Beeline" operates in Terisakkan village). You may pick up a "Kcell" signal approximately at the halfway point of the motorway linking Zhezkazgan and Kyzylorda, in the pipeline area going from the Kumkol deposit, whereas at the old road, which used to link steppe outposts, between Baikonyr and Zhosaly, in the area of the aforementioned deposit, both "Kcell" and "Beeline" operate. Aside from the aforementioned places, it is possible to find so-called "mobile connection islands" here and there, which are usually marked by stones, old automobile tyres, metal barrels etc., some of which are painted in the corporate colours of the respective mobile operators.

for a long time. From 2014 on two new railway branches have been launched, which increasingly simplify the process of getting to the Ulytau area. These are the Zhezkazgan-Saksaulskaya railway line, which links Ulytau with the Aral region and Kyzylorda (it is already open for passenger traffic), and the Shubarkol-Arkalyk railway line, which, as of now, has been so far solely used for cargo carriage. **By air**, Zhezkazgan is linked with Karaganda, Astana and Almaty.

**WHEN:** The most suitable time for visiting Ulytau is from June to September (however, at this time of the year you

should be prepared for 30-40 degrees Celsius heat and constant scorching sun, especially in the southern part of the region). In May, Ulytau is also picturesque (partly due to numerous tulips blooming), however, swarms of midges may be extremely annoying. Furthermore, in May the steppes are still very wet, which makes most dirt steppe roads barely passable.

**HOW:** Ulytau region has great potential for both inbound and domestic tourism development. The region's historical and cultural sights of various periods, as well as its biological and landscape diversity allows to organize journeys of different types here (some Kazakhstani companies, such as "Nomadic Travel Kazakhstan" may help with organizing individual or group tours). However, in its essence, tourism in Ulytau is predominantly adventurous and self-organized. One of the main problems that travellers may face in Ulytau is the lack of adequate accommodation and public catering facilities. For this reason, travelling in Ulytau often involves tenting and cooking food in the field.

## CHAPTER 2. ZHEKAZGAN AND SATPAYEV

Zhezkazgan and Satpayev, which flow into one another, are typical Kazakh industrial cities that appeared due to the exploration of mineral deposits and their processing. These two cities are the region's main transportation hubs, which among other things have some interesting tourist attractions. The latter include a few museums and ruins of one of the Stalin-era camps, Steplag (as a matter of fact, the cities were built by efforts of the camp's inmates). Zhezkazgan is one of the most convenient starting points for travelling in the region.

### ZHEKAZGAN CITY ЖЕЗҚАЗҒАН / ЖЕЗҚАЗҒАН

 **N47°47,6531' / E67°42,1709'**

The history of Zhezkazgan (center of the former Zhezkazgan oblast and a rather large industrial city, located more than 100 km to the south of the Ulytau mountains) is, generally speaking, the history of Steplag and its predecessor, Zhezkazgan correctional labour camp. The city development and the mining and smelting plant construction started in the late 1930's and early 1940's. The city itself, its plant, a huge water reservoir and the railway were built by prisoners from the labour camps. Zhezkazgan was granted city status in 1954. By the way, it is generally believed that, roughly translated from Kazakh, the city name

**GPS-coordinates** in this guidebook are indicated in accordance with an object's geographical or conceptual centre (in the case that the object is comprised of several parts or its area is rather large). In the former case, the coordinates of one of the object's parts may be indicated, orientation from which is most logical and easy to understand with the help of instructions indicated in this guide. In any case, we attempted to present all coordinates in the way and form which will be most useful for localizing geographical objects on site.

**Kanysh Satpayev** (1899-1964) was a scientist, one of the founders of the Kazakh school of metallurgy, Doctor of geological and mineralogical sciences and the first president of the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences. Many people consider him the father of Kazakhstani science in general. Satpayev rose to fame after discovering the Ulytau-Zhezkazgan copper deposit, one of the largest copper deposits in the USSR.

stands for "the place where copper ore was extracted".

Since the city does not have many tourist attractions to offer, it only makes sense to plan a short stay here. That said, here one may discover a few museums, some rather picturesque houses dating back to 1940-50's, as well as some sights, closely connected with important events in Soviet history. Moreover, it seems reasonable to use Zhezkazgan as a starting point for day trips in the Ulytau region, as only here one may find a lot of hotels and restaurants for every taste and budget.

• **Zhezkazgan historico-archaeological museum** (22, *Alasha-Khan Ave.*; ☎ +7 7102 737753; *ist-arh.m@mail.ru*; *www.zhezmuzey.kz*) is open from Monday to Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Entrance fees: 60 KZT (children), 150 KZT (adults), 250 KZT (foreigners). Photography fee: 1000 KZT. We strongly recommend a visit to this museum, especially to collect your first impressions of the region and to get a better understanding of what is worth seeing here.

• **Academician K. Satpayev historico-industrial museum** (2, *Satpayev St.*, 2; ☎ + 7 7102 744393, 748658) is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (lunch break is between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m.). Entrance fees: 75 KZT (children), 150 KZT (adults), 250 KZT (foreigners). Photography fees: 200 KZT (cell phone), 800 KZT (camera). In spite of its small size, it is a rather interesting museum for someone who is interested in geology and the history of exploration in the Ulytau region.

# Zhezkazgan city

0 500m 1km

Satpayev  
Alasha-khan  
Malshybai  
Zhezdy  
Ulytau



Karsakpai

## HOTELS

- 5. Business centre
- 6. Kengir
- 7. Baikonyr
- 24. Metallurg
- 32. Arai
- 33. Cosmos

## CAFÉ, RESTAURANTS AND BARS

- 23. Kok-Tobe
- 28. Maestro
- 31. Arai
- 37. Express

## SHOPPING

- 9. Market
- 10. Sharua market
- 11. Samadi supermarket
- 19. Central department store - TsUM
- 26. NEO supermarket
- 34. Central market

## RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

- 2. Akmet Ishan Orazaiuly Mosque
- 21. Saint Andrew's Orthodox Cathedral

## PUBLIC BUILDINGS

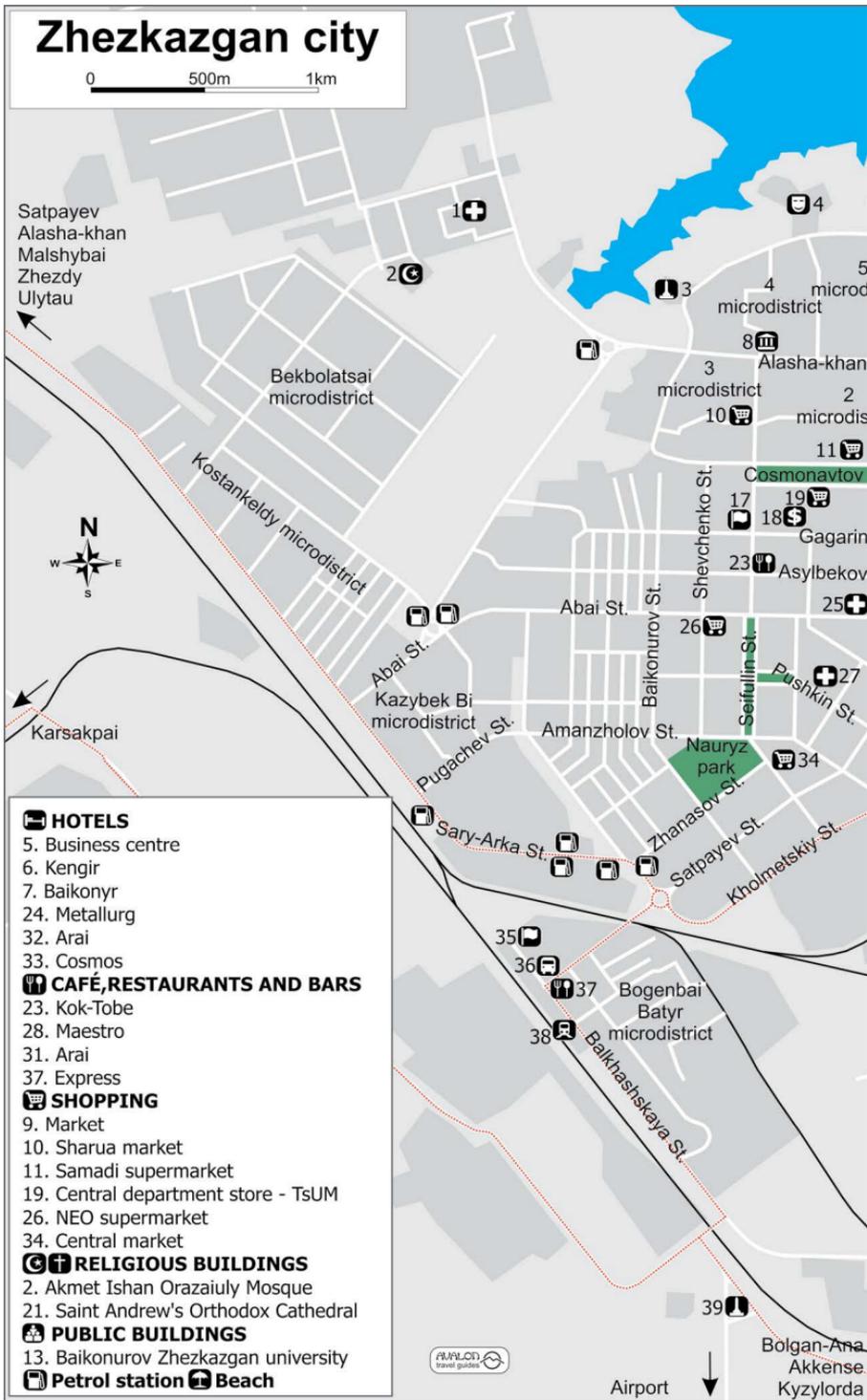
- 13. Baikonurov Zhezkazgan university

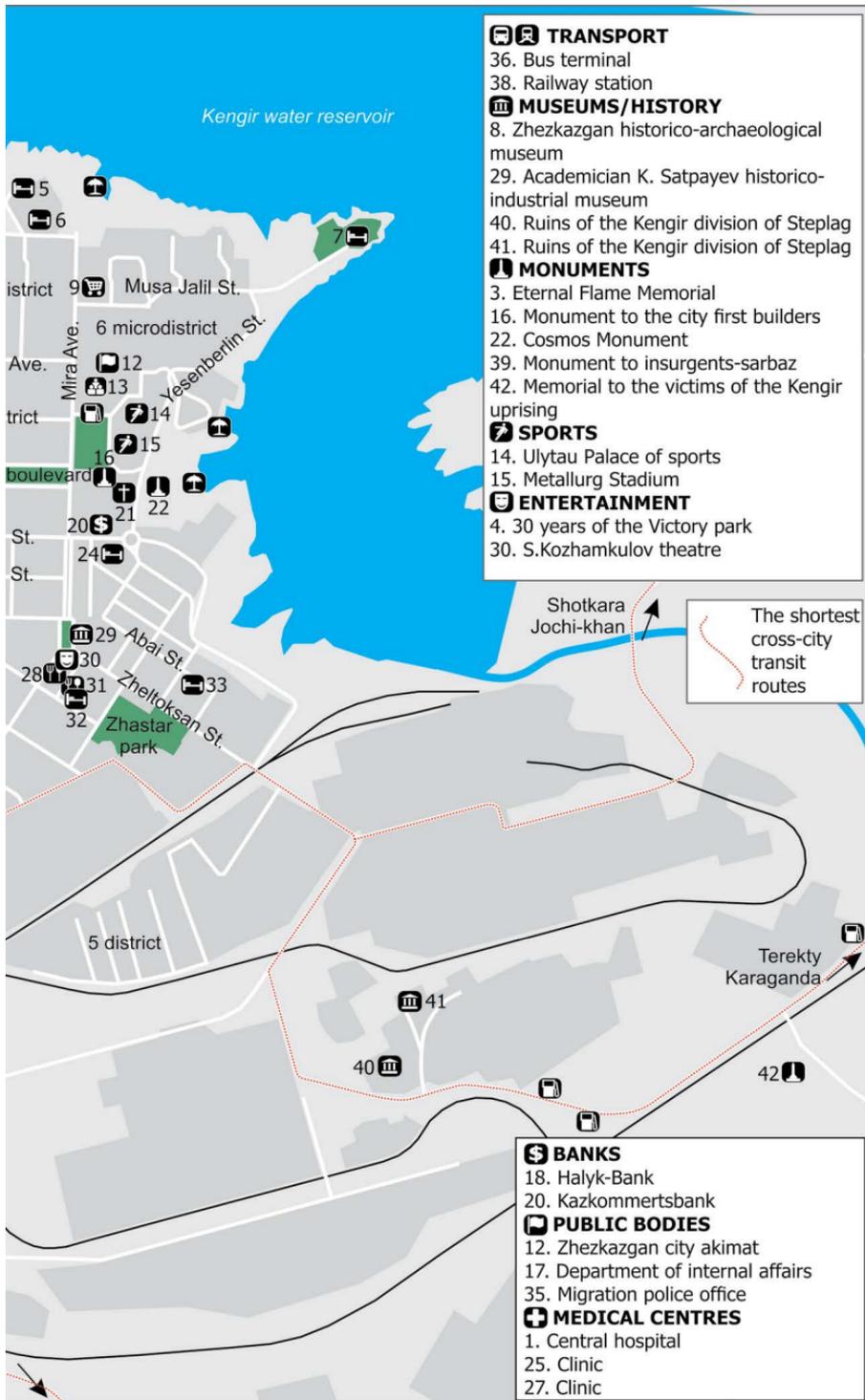
## Petrol station Beach



Airport

Bolgan-Ana  
Akkense.  
Kyzylorda





**TRANSPORT**

- 36. Bus terminal
- 38. Railway station

**MUSEUMS/HISTORY**

- 8. Zhezkazgan historico-archaeological museum
- 29. Academician K. Satpayev historico-industrial museum
- 40. Ruins of the Kengir division of Steplag
- 41. Ruins of the Kengir division of Steplag

**MONUMENTS**

- 3. Eternal Flame Memorial
- 16. Monument to the city first builders
- 22. Cosmos Monument
- 39. Monument to insurgents-sarbaz
- 42. Memorial to the victims of the Kengir uprising

**SPORTS**

- 14. Ulytau Palace of sports
- 15. Metallurg Stadium

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- 4. 30 years of the Victory park
- 30. S.Kozhamkulov theatre

The shortest cross-city transit routes

**BANKS**

- 18. Halyk-Bank
- 20. Kazkommertsbank

**PUBLIC BODIES**

- 12. Zhezkazgan city akimat
- 17. Department of internal affairs
- 35. Migration police office

**MEDICAL CENTRES**

- 1. Central hospital
- 25. Clinic
- 27. Clinic

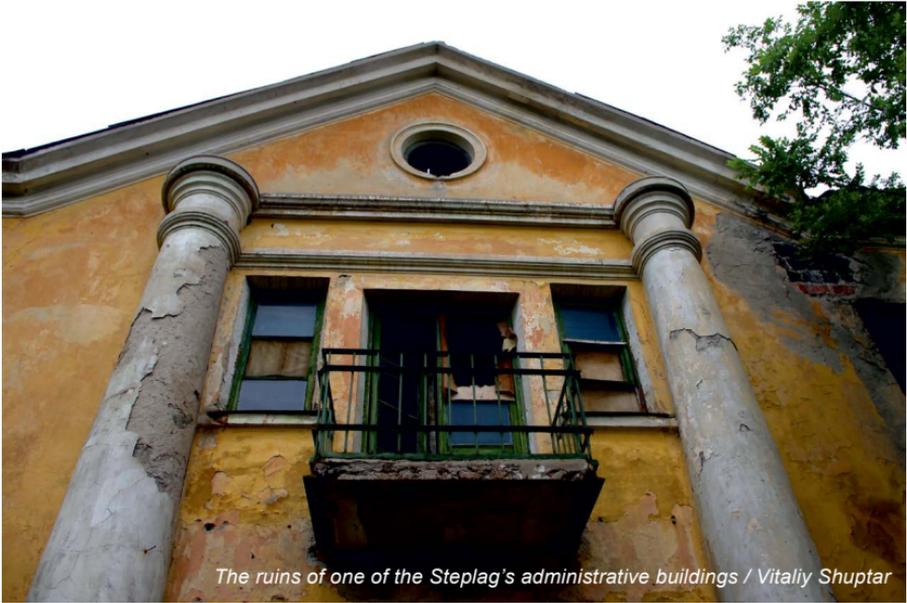
• **Ruins of the Kengir division of Steplag** (located at the entrance to the city's industrial area from Karaganda direction, to the north of the road: after passing Helios petrol station, drive about 700 meters before turning to the right). The third division of Steпноy camp (Steplag) of Ministry of Internal Affairs, also known as Kengir division, was the center of the aforementioned correctional camp, one of the many Gulag camps. Steplag was founded in 1948 as a maximum security facility (based on two camps, first Zhezkazganlag, which functioned from 1940 on and belonged to Karlag camps, and then camp no. 50 for prisoners of war) and confinement conditions there were even more severe than, for instance, in the neighbouring Karlag (historians offer the following comparison: Karlag was set up according to the principles of a Russian correctional labour colony, whereas Steplag was organized according to the principles of Nazi concentration camps). Most of its prisoners were Soviet military men, who had previously been prisoners of war, and members of the scientific and artistic intelligentsia, as well as prisoners of war with various national backgrounds

(mainly Ukrainians and Lithuanians). Steplag had six camp divisions, but Kengir division was the largest and most important one of them all. Like other Gulag camps, Steplag was, in fact, a state within a state: it possessed and serviced its own mines, farm households, roads, planes and shops, as well as had its own army and law-enforcement authorities. Like most of Stalin's camps, Steplag was quite a profitable enterprise, as prisoners, who were treated as a free labour force, worked hard performing all kinds of construction works and extracting large amounts of ore. The economic success was, however, a consequence of the prisoners' inhuman confinement and living conditions: it stemmed from unrealistic work-time standards, extremely long workdays, malnutrition and a lack of warm clothing. In comparison with other camps, Steplag had extremely high morbidity and mortality rates. Eventually all these factors led to the notable Kengir uprising which was meant to shatter the entire Stalin's camp network.

There is not much left of the camp today and those parts of it which are still there are not always accessible to visitors. One may find the remains of



The ruins of the Steplag's female quarter / Djamilé Ayazbekova



The ruins of one of the Steplag's administrative buildings / Vitaliy Shuptar

the fountain, which was once located in front of the camp commander's house (there is practically nothing left of the house itself), as well as some ruined barracks and canteen remains. What is relatively well preserved is the main yard of the administrative part of Steplag. One of the buildings located there is still utilized nowadays, while the other one may be used for exciting, albeit somewhat horrifying, excursions into the recent past. Remains of the camp's female quarter are also quite well preserved, but are relatively inaccessible to visitors at the moment, as the way to them lies through "Kazakhmys" company's motor depot.

- **Memorial to the victims of the Kengir uprising** (*located at the entrance to the city's industrial area from Karaganda direction, to the south of the road: after passing "Kazmunaigas" petrol station, drive about 500 meters before turning to the left – the memorial is visible from the road*). Here you may see memorial obelisks erected by the countries whose citizens were prisoners of Steplag. These countries are Russia, Lithuania and Ukraine.

- **Cosmos ("the space") Monument** (*eastern edge of Cosmonavtov boulevard, to the east of the land foot bridge, 100 meters east of Saint Andrew's Orthodox Cathedral*). Zhezkazgan (just like Karaganda, the center of Karaganda oblast) is often seen as a sort of space harbor, because for many years this region was the place where capsules landed and festive receptions of the cosmonauts (Soviet astronauts) were held. Moreover, it was here that cosmonauts were briefly medically examined in sanatorium after

#### **The Sarysu copper road**

People started extracting non-ferrous metal ores in the Ulytau region long before our times. In the Bronze Age, the metal ores were extracted and used locally (and even despite this fact, the area is regarded as one of the places from where non-ferrous metallurgy originated). By the times of the early nomads, however, metallurgy and trade in metal products caused establishment of the so-called copper caravan road, also known as Sarysu copper road. The Sarysu copper road owes its name to the fact that the main caravan routes went along one of the most important rivers of Central Kazakhstan, the river Sarysu.



Cosmos Monument / Alexandr Yermolyonok

their landing. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that a stela in honour of space explorers was erected here in Zhezkazgan. By the way, in the 1970-1980's there was a tradition among cosmonauts to plant pine trees along Cosmonavtov boulevard (this is the street that stretches west of the monument), which one may still see growing nowadays.

#### • **Kengir water reservoir.**

Zhezkazgan was founded on the bank of the river Karakengir and a water reservoir with a total area of 37 square kilometers was built on this river in 1952, which was initially intended for industrial and irrigational purposes. Nowadays, however, open waters and banks of this manmade lake are quite popular among local holidaymakers. The main city beach, which is located in the eastern part of the city, eastward of St. Andrew's Orthodox

#### **The Kengir uprising of 1954**

By the early 1950's the Gulag system started "to come apart at the seams". In its Kazakh divisions, hunger strikes, riots and uprisings became quite common. The Kengir uprising, which started in May 1954, stands out among all other acts of defiance for its large scale and unprecedented organization. This is hardly surprising, as the camp held a large number of former military men, some of them from senior ranks, i.e. people who were experts in tactics and strategy. It is not quite clear what caused the uprising, but according to one of the most widely accepted versions, it was triggered by the camp guards' use of firearms against some prisoners who were trying to get from the male section to the female section of the camp. In any case, between May 16 and 18 prisoners took both camp areas under their control by seizing residential, household and administrative buildings. They also released their fellow prisoners from the detention unit. Among them was lieutenant-colonel Kapiton Kuznetsov, a veteran officer, who turned out to be a good organizer and eventually became the leader of the uprising. Led by Kuznetsov, prisoners set up the new camp administration whose structure practically resembled machinery of a state in miniature. The prisoners, who demanded the establishment of a governmental committee for investigating law violations within the camp territory and called for improved confinement conditions, put forward their demands to the commander of Steplag. Under the rebels' control, the camp radio station broadcasted information about the uprising. Prisoners also attempted to spread the news about the uprising outside the camp by means of informational paper kites. At the beginning, administrations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Gulag agreed to negotiate with the prisoners and these negotiations lasted for more than a month. However, the political character of the uprising did not leave the administration any other alternatives but to suppress the uprising. On June 24, government forces arrived in the Steplag area and in the night of June 26 they made an assault on the camp, in which more than 1500 soldiers, fire engines and tanks took part. Despite the fierce resistance from the practically unarmed prisoners (both men and women participated in defence), the uprising, which had lasted for 40 days, was suppressed on that same day of the government assault. There is no precise information about the number of victims of the uprising, as different sources report quite different numbers varying from 200 to 1000 people. Leaders of the uprising, including Kuznetsov, were sentenced to execution by firing squad, but this sentence was later changed to lengthy terms of imprisonment. In any case, the Kengir uprising showed that the system would have to change. Consequently, on July 1, 1954, the Kengir division was transformed into a medium-security facility. Soon after that "special" Gulag camps, where prisoners had been forced into hard labour, were dissolved all over the Soviet Union. The topic of the Kengir uprising is highlighted in The Cannibal movie released in 1991. You may also read about it in The Gulag Archipelago, a book by Alexander Solzhenitsin.

Cathedral and Cosmos Monument, is one of the most popular beach leisure areas in the city, which may be accessed free of charge. One may also find paid beaches to the north of the city beach (for instance, next to the former water station).

 • **Hotel Cosmos** (5, *Abai St.*; ☎ +7 7102 724704, 724349; [snsocosmos@yandex.ru](mailto:snsocosmos@yandex.ru)); 8000-15000 KZT per room per night. Rooms are clean and cosy. One of the most optimum options for staying overnight in Zhezkazgan.

• **Hotel Baikonyr** (6th microdistrict, *Yesenberlin St.*; ☎ +7 7102 711744, 711758; [adm.baykonur@zhezhotel.kz](mailto:adm.baykonur@zhezhotel.kz)); 16000-31000 KZT per room per night. The biggest advantage of this hotel is its location on a cape extending to the Kengir water reservoir.

• **Hotel Metallurg** (19, *Timiryazev St.*; ☎ +7 7102 410194; [adm.metallurg@zhezhotel.kz](mailto:adm.metallurg@zhezhotel.kz)); 5500-13500 KZT per room per night. Reasonably priced hotel with basic services.

• **Hotel Arai** (15, *Kurmanbaiyev St.*; ☎ +7 777 8900981); 5000 KZT per room per night. Easy and unpretentious accommodation.

• **Hotel Kengir** (2, *Deyev St.*; ☎ +7 7102 775477; [hotelkengir@mail.ru](mailto:hotelkengir@mail.ru)); 7000-19000 KZT per room per night. The hotel is located on the bank of the Kengir water reservoir.

• **Hotel Business centre** (3, *Deyev St.*; ☎ +7 7102 900680, 900684; [adm.biznes-centr@zhezhotel.kz](mailto:adm.biznes-centr@zhezhotel.kz)); 7000-19000 KZT per room per night. The hotel is located on the bank of the Kengir water reservoir.

 There is great variety of places where you can eat out in Zhezkazgan. And here are some of them:

- **Express** (1, *Balkhashskaya St.*) is an affordable café located right in the middle between the city's railway station and bus terminal.

- **Kok-Tobe** (42, *Asylbekov St.*) has a summer terrace and good assortment of dishes.

- **Arai** (15, *Kurmanbayev St.*) is a café by the hotel of the same name, which has an average price level and is somewhat loud.

- **Maestro** (1, *Satpayev St.*) offers European and Japanese cuisines and is rather expensive.

 **From Karaganda:** by train (7:47 p.m. daily, 12 hour trip, 1238-2930 KZT), by bus (8 departures per day, about 11 hour trip, 1500-3000 KZT), by plane (Friday, Sunday, 7 p.m., 1 hour flight, 12000 KZT), by taxi (about 6-7 hours drive, 24000 KZT per car). Independently by car (via Atasu): 6-7 hours drive (526 km along a relatively good asphalt road).

**From Astana:** by train (every second day, 3:25 p.m., 17 hour trip, 1882-4716 KZT), by bus (daily, 3 p.m. and 7:15 p.m., about 15 hours drive, 4500 KZT), by plane (10:50 a.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays, 08:45 a.m. on Sunday, 1 hour flight, 13915-25912 KZT). Independently by car (via Korgalzhyn, Barshino, Shubarkol and Malshybai): 9-10 hour drive (560 km, but one should realize that one third of this distance is across steppe roads passable only by a good four-wheel-drive). From Astana you may also follow the motorway via Karaganda. **From Almaty:** by train (Monday, Thursday at 1:32 a.m., 27 hour trip, 3786-5890 KZT), by plane (2:50 p.m. on Tuesdays, 4:45 p.m. on Thursdays, 12:35 p.m. on Sundays, 2 hour flight, 20497-32000 KZT). Independently by car (via Balkhash, Aksu-Ayuly and Atasu): about 17 hours (1380 km on a relatively good asphalt road). **From Kyzylorda:** by train (every second day at 10:50 a.m., 26.5 hours trip, 1746-4361 KZT), by bus (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 9:30 a.m., about 28 hours drive, 35000 KZT). Independently by car: about 6-7 hours (428 km, of which less than a half is a good asphalt road, the rest is a broken gravel road). **From Ulytau:** by bus (daily,

**Information services in Zhezkazgan:**

Bus terminal: +7 7102 724009

Railway station: +7 7102 724414

Airport: +7 7102 745757, 748941

**Train tickets**

Prices for train tickets in Kazakhstan are flexible and depend on the purchase date (tickets booked well in advance are considerably cheaper). One should bear in mind that the lower bunk is always a little more expensive than the upper bunk. For this reason, the prices indicated in this guide are to be treated as average and approximate.

4 p.m., 3 hours drive, 400 KZT), by taxi (4000 KZT per car). Independently by car: 1 hour 40 minutes (133 km on a good asphalt road). In Zhezkazgan, the bus terminal and railway station are located in the south-western part of the city, 300 metres away from each other. The airport is situated 6 km to the south of Zhezkazgan.

**SATPAYEV TOWN**  
 САТПАЕВ / СӘТБАЕВ

 **N47°54,1872' / E67°32,1178'**

Satpayev town (initially called Nikolsky) was founded in 1955, just 10 km north-west of Zhezkazgan, as a main housing estate for the workers of the Zhezkazgan industrial enterprises, and remains so to this day.



The town may only be of interest for practical reasons: as a transportation hub (as it has a bus terminal) and as a place where one can refill fuel reserves (there are petrol stations at the city entrance, city exit and within the city limits) or food supplies (the town has a lot of shops and a market).

## CHAPTER 3. THE KARAKENGIR VALLEY

The valley of the river Karakengir is a place that is first and foremost famous for its burial grounds, which are sacred for every Kazakh, namely mausoleums of the eldest son of Genghis Khan, Jochi Khan, and of the legendary ancestor of the Kazakh people, Alasha-Khan. The valley is also known for other architectural witnesses of the past, which mainly belong to the periods of Mongolian invasion, the Golden Horde and Kazakh Khanate foundation. In the Karakengir valley, one may also find other interesting sights, for instance, the Dombauyl mausoleum, whose age is yet older and whose origin remains quite obscure. Zhezkazgan is the most convenient starting point for travelling in the Karakengir valley. However, you may

Most rivers in the Ulytau region, with exception of the most important ones, such as the Karakengir or the Sarysu, tend to dry out by the end of summer. In spring, however, they may be rather abundant and crossing them may prove to be quite challenging.

also start your journey in Ulytau village and then see all the sights in reverse order.

### SHOTKARA ANCIENT SETTLEMENT ШОТҚАРА / ШОТҚАРА

 **N48°04,3728' / E67°44,1781'**

As the notice located nearby this historical monument states, the Shotkara ancient settlement, located on the left bank of the river Karakengir, dates back to the 9th - 11th centuries, i.e. to the age of Kipchak domination in Ulytau. However, many scholars tend to believe that it was built later, namely in the 13th-14th centuries. Nowadays, this ancient settlement located on a small hill is not more than the barely preserved ruins of a rectangular-shaped stone building (28 by 32 meters) with walls and a moat, and one can still make out the ruined towers in its corners. Once archaeologists discovered here a burial site, in which the remains of a warrior and horse were found, along with an iron knife and two gold pendants.

*Shotkara ancient settlement / Vitaliy Shuptar*



 The ancient settlement is situated 40 km to the north of Zhezkazgan and 11 km south-west of Jochi Khan mausoleum. **From Zhezkazgan** you should follow a relatively good-quality road (asphalt road changing into gravel road every now and then) which goes to the north until Korganbai settlement (32 km). After reaching Korganbai, drive another 8 km north-west along a steppe road. The whole trip by car will take 50 minutes.

### JOCHI KHAN MAUSOLEUM ДЖУЧИ-ХАН / ЖОШЫ-ХАН

 **N48°09,3145' / E67°49,0301'**

Jochi Khan (in historiography he is also known as Djochi, Tushi and Tossuk, in the Kazakh tradition he is commonly referred to as Zhoshy) was the eldest son of Genghis Khan and the ancestor of most of the Kazakh khans, who liked the steppes of Sary-Arka so much that he built his main headquarters near the Ulytau mountains. Nearby today's ruins one may see the mausoleum, where Jochi Khan found his last shelter.

### Jochi Khan Mausoleum

The Jochi Khan mausoleum is a red brick building which is rectangular in shape and has a blue dome on a polyhedral drum and a portal with a lancet arch. The notice standing in front of the mausoleum points to the 13th century (as the khan died in 1227). However, one shouldn't blindly believe the dates indicated at the Ulytau mausoleums, as most of the Ulytau mazars in their present look are believed to have been built somewhat later than the burial grounds they stand upon (they were built on burial sites or even in some other places) at the time when the Kazakh elite converted to Islam and decided to validate the "sacredness" of its non-Muslim ancestors in the framework of the new religion. This point of view is quite logical, taking into consideration the purely Islamic character of the buildings and the fact that Islam came to the steppe rather late. For that reason, the version of the mausoleum being built in the 14th – 15th centuries by one of Jochi's descendants seems most plausible.

The Jochi Khan mausoleum was first mentioned in *Sharafname-I Shahi*, a work by Hafiz Tanish Bukhari (16th century) narrating the life and military



Jochi Khan mausoleum and the necropolis located nearby / Vitaliy Shuptar

### **Jochi's origin and his place in the hierarchy of Genghis Khan's descendants**

Was Jochi the real son of Genghis Khan? – this is the question, which no scientist has been able to answer for many centuries. According to one version, Genghis Khan's principal wife, Borte, was taken captive by the Merkit people, and, judging by the time she spent in captivity, Genghis Khan simply cannot be Jochi's father. However, this fact could have been presumably distorted by Jochi's enemies, including his two younger brothers, Chagatai and Ogedei (as according to other data, Borte was taken captive while she was already pregnant).

Jochi's relations with his family were actually quite peculiar. For starters, his brothers (especially Chagatai) constantly accused him of having Merkit blood flowing in his veins (they either sincerely believed it or simply tried to use the rumours to their advantage in the forthcoming struggle for the throne). In fairness it has to be said that Genghis Khan dispelled these rumours and claimed that Jochi was his biological son, even though finally declared Ogedei, not Jochi, as his successor (to become the Great Khan).

Upon dividing the territories, Jochi, being the eldest son, got 9000 yurts, i.e. inherited more than the others (only Jochi's mother together with the youngest brother of Genghis Khan's father inherited more). However, he was allocated the steppes of Sary-Arka (in fact, he was even granted control over the entire Dasht-i-Kipchak, i.e. a larger area), which were the "outskirts of the empire" at the time, even though they somewhat resembled Mongolia in landscape and nature. On the other hand, in historiography, Jochi was the only son of Genghis Khan to be named khan even before his father's death. This fact implies that Genghis Khan initially planned Jochi's ulus (the name for a Mongolian apagan) to have some sort of autonomy (there are even some historical sources which directly or indirectly prove the theory of Jochi being a kind of younger co-ruler with Genghis Khan even before his father's death; some historians furthermore point out that Jochi had the title of Ulus-idi, i.e. ulus ruler).

Jochi's descendants, including his most famous sons Batu and Orda Ichen, took their lawful place in the Mongolian aristocratic hierarchy without experiencing any of the troubles that Jochi experienced regarding his origin. Over the course of history, Jochi's descendants both ruled over their own lands and were invited to the thrones of other states belonging to different branches of Genghisids. For example, all Kazakh khans were the descendants of Jochi Khan.

campaigns of Abdullah II, a Khan of Bukhara. In 1946, the mausoleum was scientifically investigated for the first time and Alkei Margulan's team conducted this investigation. At that time, after opening up the Khan's tomb, archeologists discovered a wooden coffin, whose parts were fastened together with iron nails. Inside of the coffin was a skeleton of an adult man with the right arm detached from the body (some scholars say that the right hand was not found at all). The archaeologists' finds also included boots, clothing, scraps of flags, a camel skull and animal bones. It is obvious that the tomb was robbed a long time ago and this explains the paucity of burial goods found within the tomb. It is worthy of note, that at that time scholars seized the khan's skull for investigations and returned it to the tomb only in 2011, after lengthy searches in archives and museums (after yet another archaeological research and restoration). Scholars believe that the second tomb located within the mausoleum contains the remains of Jochi's principal wife, Bektumysh.

There is no doubt that the building has

been restored several times. For example, the cerulean dome and drum on which it stands were built in modern days, as the old dome has not been preserved to this day.

Nowadays, the mausoleum, which has gone through several restorations, is a sacred place that serves as a popular pilgrimage destination. The area surrounding Jochi Khan mausoleum was used for building a large necropolis (which was used as a burial site in ancient times and remains so to this day) with the mausoleum as its conceptual centre. One can assert with confidence that this place became the first necropolis of the Golden Horde, as the foundations of 24 other mausoleums of this type were discovered in the neighbourhood of the Jochi Khan mausoleum.

### **Ruins of Jochi Khan's capital**

Nearby the necropolis, one may see the ruins of Jochi's main capital, which was called Zhoshy-Ordasy or Orda-Bazar. In historical sources one may also encounter its other names, such as Sarayli and Turaili (that said, it is quite possible that the first

*Jochi Khan mausoleum / Vitaliy Shuptar*

name refers to Jochi's capital, whereas the second one belongs to another place located nearby Jochi Khan mausoleum in the valley of the river Karakengir, for example, the Shotkara ancient settlement). It is generally believed that Jochi's capital had been a large administrative and cultural center for a long time. According to some historical sources, Orda-Bazar became the ulus capital of Jochi's second son, Orda Ichen. Some historians presume that a sort of customs post was located here as well. We can say with certainty that in the first half of the 15th century this was the place where the mint producing silver and copper coins was located. At the same time, ceramic articles discovered in the territory of the settlement point further to the fact that this area was already inhabited in the 13th – 15th centuries.

Unfortunately, there is not much left from the capital and its palace complex. The ruins (collapsed hillocks which hint at the settlement's layout) are organized into three main groups: 40 metres to the east of the mausoleum, 300 metres to its north and 350 metres north-east of it.



**From Zhezkazgan** you should follow the road leading to Shotkara ancient settlement and after reaching Shotkara drive another 11 km along the steppe road until Jochi mausoleum. Driving from Shotkara will take about 20 minutes. You may also drive from Zhezkazgan to Jochi mausoleum directly without passing through Shotkara, however this will not save any time or distance (50 km, 1 hour 10 min). You may also reach the mausoleum **from the road linking Satpayev town and Malshybai village**. This road has several exits (one of them is situated 1 km to the south of Alasha-Khan mausoleum), the way to Jochi mausoleum goes through one of the fords over the river Karakengir (1 km northward of Dombauly, nearby Ishan winter hut and 9 km to the north-east, nearby Otkelbai winter hut) and Dombauly mausoleum itself and takes about 40 minutes (25 km).

### Jochi Khans' mysterious death

Ulytau is not so much connected with the life of Jochi Khan (as he only spent the last years of his life here), but rather with his death in February 1227 (according to the most widely believed version). If Jochi's birth raised many questions, the circumstances of his death appeared to be even more debatable and mysterious.

According to the most popular folk legend, Genghis Khan's eldest son died near Ulytau during a hunting trip, after being attacked by a lame onager (a kind of wild horse, kulan in Kazakh), which he had injured earlier. The onager is said to have dragged down the khan from his horse and gnawed off his right arm. This event is highlighted in Kazakh folklore, namely in a kui (a musical piece) called Aksak kulan (from Kazakh – "lame onager"). Interestingly enough, the archaeological expedition of 1946 indeed discovered a man's body buried in the mausoleum with his right arm detached from the body (according to another version – with no hand at all) and, therefore, partially confirmed one of the versions of Jochi's death. However, some scholars believe that it is not that simple. Moreover, in the history of Central Asia, death during hunting was very often used to merely cover up a murder.

Strangely enough, The Secret History of the Mongols does not say a word about Jochi's death, although it describes everything that had happened in the empire until 1240 in chronological order and in detail. One may assume that for many Mongol chroniclers, the issue of Jochi's death was a quite delicate matter, if not a forbidden topic. However, some historians believe that in the last years there existed a conflict between Genghis Khan and Jochi (as there were many reasons for disputes, including Jochi's reluctance to conquer new territories further to the west), which culminated in Jochi's murder at the hunt by the order of his father. There is yet another version, which names Genghis Khan's second wife, a Merkit woman by the name of Kulan-khatun, responsible for Jochi's death. It is said that for reasons unknown she wanted Genghis Khan's second son Chagatai to take the throne in circumvention of Genghis Khan's first-born Jochi (although actually she had her own son, too). According to this theory, she organized Jochi's murder and, as one version of the theory says, chose poison as her weapon. Thus, a folk legend about Jochi's death by the onager's teeth may just be a description of the murder with a hint about its organizer. By the way, folk legends (which are, however, contradicted by historical data) point out that Kulan-khatun (or Kulan-Ana) herself was also buried in Ulytau. Her mausoleum is believed to be located 100 km to the south, nearby the junction of the Karakengir and Sarysu rivers.

There is, of course, one more simple version of Jochi's death, according to which he simply fell sick and died in his capital (this explanation is offered by some historians, including Rashid-ad-Din, who also briefly mentions some sort of conflict between the father and the son) and Genghis Khan died six months later. This rather simple and not particularly epic version of Jochi's death may be the very truth, which has been sought by so many for so many years.

*Jochi Khan mausoleum / Vitaliy Shuptar*



*Dombauyl mausoleum / Vitaliy Shuptar*

## DOMBAUYL MAUSOLEUM ДОМБАУЫЛ

**📍 N48°11,6002' / E67°50,6923'**

Dombauyl mausoleum (or simply Dombaul) is a six-meter-tall conical construction which was built from stone plates using clay mortar and is square in form. According to scholars, this mausoleum is of special interest as it is one of the most ancient monumental buildings in Central Kazakhstan. Some argue that Dombauyl was built in the period of the Huns domination, which may point to the fact that the building is several hundred years older than is indicated at the memorial plaque set up next to it. Although this monument is generally referred to as a mausoleum, the correct term used for describing it is dyn.

If one chooses to believe the legends, Dombauyl was built in honour of the great musician and warrior Dombauyl, whose very existence lies on the border between myth and history. Some legends call him Genghis Khan's court musician, others say that he was the warrior who destroyed the onager herd which had been responsible for Jochi Khan's death. There is one legend, which tells of a

musician who played kobyz (a Kazakh stringed instrument) and whose name is mentioned in the famous Turkic epic work Oguzname. In other words, just like everywhere in Ulytau, Dombauyl history is full of mysteries yet to be unraveled. However, generally speaking, it comes as no surprise that although its history, period of construction, architects and ordering party are unknown, folklore conceptually linked all the buildings in the valley of the river Karakengir in one storyline centred around the name of Jochi Khan.

Dombauyl was first investigated in

### What is a "dyn"?

Ritual monuments in the dyn style (the Kazakhs also call them uytas) is a kind of pre-Islamic architecture. Dyns resemble a yurt, whose walls are made of stone. These buildings were predominantly erected in the 8th - 9th centuries in the time of Kimak and Karluk Khaganates (and sometimes even later). Architectural monuments of this kind can be mainly found in Central Kazakhstan (especially in the valley of the river Turgai), Zhetysu, Tarbagatai and Mangistau. Examples of other famous dyns in Kazakhstan are Mazar of Kozy-Korpesh and Bayan-Sulu on the river Ayagoz in East-Kazakhstan oblast and Yekidyln in the Amangeldy district of Kostanai oblast.

1946-1947 by the the Central-Kazakhstan Archaeological Expedition led by Alkei Margulan. It was then that archaeologists learnt that the mausoleum had been previously dug up multiple times in the search for treasure (they were aware of the fact that such legends were still quite widely spread among the local population). The monument was restored later, in the 1970's, when the building was floored with stone tiles and its corners and entrance portal were reconstructed. In 2011-2012, the dyn and its surrounding areas were once again restored and reconstructed.

Upon entering the mausoleum's fenced territory, one may see stone statues to the left from the entrance. However, one should not rush to praise their exceptionally good state of preservation, as these stone statues have been erected just recently, i.e. they are nothing but replicas of the ancient statues.

 **From Zhezkazgan** you should follow the road leading to Jochi Khan mausoleum and after passing the mausoleum drive another 5 km (10 min) along a steppe road until reaching Dombauly mausoleum. You may also

reach the mausoleum **from the road linking Satpayev town and Malshybai village** (20 km, 30 min. drive): this route was explained earlier in the subchapter about getting to Jochi Khan mausoleum.

### ALASHA-KHAN MAUSOLEUM АЛАША-ХАН

 **N48°22,0450' / E67°50,5784'**

It is the Alasha-Khan mausoleum that many people consider the most important historical and cultural sight of the entire Ulytau region. Its superiority to other shrines may be stressed by its size and peculiar décor, as well as its rather unusual structure and location on a high hill. But who was Alasha-Khan, this legendary, rather than historical figure?

For one thing, no one really knows for sure if this person, whose name according to different versions literally means "colourful" or "a stranger, an outlander", ever lived. However, his name is mentioned in a great variety of Kazakh legends, and he is in fact considered to be forefather of the Kazakh people (first and foremost according to *Shezhire*,



*Alasha-Khan mausoleum / Vitaliy Shuptar*



Kazakh genealogical tree, which should be treated as a historical source with great caution, as its credibility is questionable due to old age). Furthermore, one should bear in mind that from times immemorial the word "alash" is known to have been a common Kazakh *uran* (battle cry) used by warriors irrespective of their zhuzes, i.e. tribal unions, or clans (both of which also had their own "urans"). It is worthy to note that other Turkic ethnic

groups, such as the Bashkirs, the Tatars, the Nogays, the Kirghiz, etc., also have legends about Alasha-Khan. That said, sources containing these legends date back to various historical periods, give or take one or two thousand years. Alasha-Khan is also mentioned by the famous historian Rashid ad-Din. Many scholars tend to believe that Alasha-Khan most probably was a cult symbol of the time of nomadic consolidation in the Eurasian steppes.

#### Zhuzes and clans

In order to understand the present structure of Kazakh society, one should have a profound knowledge of the tribal and clan relations, which can be an influential factor for many things, including people's social relationships and the existence of certain stereotypes. From times immemorial, Kazakhs were divided into three zhuzes (hordes) – Senior zhuz (South-eastern Kazakhstan), Middle zhuz (Central, Eastern and Northern Kazakhstan) and Junior zhuz (western part of the country). When it comes to the Ulytau region, its territory is mainly inhabited by the Kazakhs belonging to Middle zhuz, which are further divided into three large tribes: a) *Kipchaks* (*kypshak*) of clans *kulan-kypshak*, *uzun* and *toraygir* (they predominantly inhabit the territories bordering upon Turgai hollow, i.e. the region's western area), b) *Naimans* of clan *baganali* (they occupy the region's southern and central parts) and c) *Argyns* of clans *kuandyk* and *suyundyk*, i.e. the so-called *bes meiram* or senior argyns (they mainly inhabit the region's northern and north-eastern parts).

One of the most common storylines in the Kazakh legends, where the name of Alasha is mentioned, is about the origin of the Kazakh tribal unions, zhuzes. The story tells about a Khan (he is referred to as Kyzyl Arystan, Abdullah or Abdul-Azis), who once lived somewhere in the area of the river Syr Darya and had a son by the name of Alasha. For reasons unknown, the Khan banished his son from his lands to the far steppes. After some time he understood his mistake and decided to bring back his son by sending a hundred warriors after him ("zhuz" means "one hundred" in Kazakh). However, after meeting Alasha, the warriors decided to stay with the rejected sultan. In response to this, the Khan sent another hundred warriors but they suffered a similar fate. The Khan's last attempt brought a hundred more warriors to the sultan. It is believed that this is how the Kazakh peoples appeared, divided into the Junior, Middle and Senior zhuzes, united under



the leadership of Alasha-Khan. There is another version of this legend, which has a truly Biblical touch: it describes how a child in a chest (crib) was sent down the river. Later the child was found and raised to eventually become Alasha-Khan.

Based on all the existing legends, there are quite many versions about whose body might have been buried within the walls of the mausoleum. Some people believe that there lies Haknazar (Aknazar) Khan, who ruled from 1538 to 1580 and whose period of rule was marked by the advance in matters of inner and external policy of the Kazakh Khanate. There are scholars who say that "*Alasha*" was actually one of Haknazar's nicknames. That said, many people believe that the mausoleum holds the remains of Urus Khan, who is considered to have been the forefather of the two founders of the Kazakh Khanate, Kerey and Zhanibek. It is worthy of note that Urus Khan pushed for the separation of his lands from the Golden Horde, thereby charting the way towards the very foundation of the Kazakh Khanate. Finally, some people attempt to spread the word that here lies Genghis Khan himself.

The first scholars who explored the area in 1860's reported that the mausoleum contained only one grave which was covered in horse skulls, pieces of fabric and spear-shaped polls with horse tails, all of which clearly indicated the sacred nature of the burial. The results of the

archaeological excavation conducted by Margulan's team in our times, in 1946, also proved that there had been only one ancient burial within the mausoleum, which contained the disparate parts of a skeleton of a man in his early 50's. Other burials, which were carried out within the mausoleum, belong to the first part of the 20th century and are not identified in any way.

In addition to disputing the identity of the person who had been buried in the mausoleum, scholars also have no consensus about the time of its construction. Some of them speculate that it dates back to the 11th-12th centuries (precisely this date is indicated at the notice located in front of the mausoleum), whereas others assume that it was built in the 13th-14th centuries. However, most scholars tend to believe that, based on the architectural properties of the mausoleum (e.g. special shape and texture of bricks, as well as *tamgas*, i.e. turkic clan symbols, carved into the bricks), it dates back to the period between the 15th and 16th centuries, i.e. the mausoleum was erected in the period of foundation and consolidation of the Kazakh Khanate. It is worthy of note that along with the Genghisids' trident-shaped *tamga* of the type which belongs to the aforementioned historical period, some bricks used in the mausoleum construction bear *tamgas* of numerous Kazakh clans. This serves as one more

piece of evidence of the sacred meaning of this place for Kazakhs, and it serves as a symbol for the new state and for the new dynasty.

One way or another, it is obvious that a person who was really important for nomads of the great steppe was buried here. This 10-metre-tall mausoleum made of burned red bricks with a dome on a hexadecagonal drum is, perhaps, the most monumental building in Ulytau. It is also special due to its location: unlike other mausoleums in the region, which were built near ancient settlements, this mausoleum was simply erected on high ground. What is unusual about the mausoleum is that it has a by-pass gallery and staircases leading through the gallery to the roof, which gives grounds for some scholars to assert that the mausoleum rooftop could have been used as an improvised tribune, from where a proclaimed khan, who had traditionally been lifted up onto felt mat, addressed his people.

Because of the sacral nature of the place, a quite large necropolis was developed northward of the mausoleum and burials were carried out here up to the 19th century.

**From Zhezkazgan** you may reach the mausoleum in two ways. First option: after following the asphalt road to Satpayev (20 km), drive another 60 km on the road which leads to the north in the direction of Malshybai village. Shortly before reaching the village, turn left (the mausoleum is located 100 metres from the road and is clearly visible from the road). Second option (if you are starting at **Jochi Khan mausoleum or Dombauyl**): cross the river Karakengir northward of Dombauyl using one of the fords (the first ford is located 1 km to the north of Dombauyl, nearby Ishan winter hut, whereas the second one may be found 9 km to the north-east, behind Otkelbai winter hut). Driving from Dombauyl mausoleum (about 21 km) will take about half an hour. If you are approaching Ulytau from Astana, Alasha-Khan mausoleum is located 2 km to the south of **Malshybai village**. You may also get to the mausoleum **from Ulytau**: leave the village and drive to the east (direction Boztumсыk) on a gravel road, then after driving 36 km turn to the south and continue on a steppe road leading to the south-east, along the right (south) bank



*Mazars nearby the Alasha-Khan mausoleum / Vitaliy Shuptar*

of the river Karakengir, for another 66 km. The drive will take about 2 hours.

### MALSHYBAI VILLAGE МАЛШЫБАЙ

 **N48°23,3495' / E67°51,0931'**

Malshybai village (also known as Sarykengir) can be hardly called the starting point for travelling in Karakengir valley or a good place to stay (as it technically has no accommodation facilities), but here travellers may refill their food and water reserves. Those who are into Soviet history and architecture may take interest in the abandoned House of farming culture located in the north-eastern part of the village (it is a rather well-preserved two-storey building with columns and balconies which, however, does not have any doors or windows anymore).



The village has a secondary school and first aid station. The grocery store is located in the south-western part of the village. There is a standpipe situated in the village center, near the school. "Beeline" mobile phone network (with internet) is available. The village has no petrol station.



Regular transport links are non-existent. Malshybai village is located 2 km northward of **Alasha-Khan** mausoleum, on the opposite side of the river Karakengir. Zhezkazgan and Malshybai are linked by an asphalt road of a moderately good quality. If you are driving **from Astana** to Ulytau approaching it from Shubarkol direction (about 480 km along steppe and gravel roads), Malshybai will be the first village on your way.

### DUZEN MAUSOLEUM ДУЗЕН / ДҮЗЕН

 **N48°28,9507' / E67°38,1174'**

Unlike other mausoleums we have mentioned so far, Duzen mausoleum

**Alkei Margulan** (1904-1985) was the founder of the Kazakh archaeological school and a prominent scientist in various fields of knowledge: e.g. ethnography, orientology, history, literature study. Margulan is author of the following works: Ancient culture of Central Kazakhstan, Begazy-Dandybai culture of Central Kazakhstan, History of the Kazakh SSR in 5 volumes. In 1946, he organized the famous Central Kazakh Archaeological Expedition by the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences and remained its leader for more than 30 years. Rich in ancient monuments of different historical periods, the endless expanses of Central Kazakhstan were the main area of Alkei Margulan's research. Among other things, Margulan made the great discovery of Begazy-Dandybai culture of the late Bronze Age, the largest cradle of civilization and of ancient metallurgy in Central Kazakhstan, and substantiated it. He was also the first scientist to have done scientific research of the mausoleums in the valley of the river Karakengir.

is not particularly ancient. It was built in 1860-1861 by a master named Seraly Yelamanuly on top of the grave of Duzen – brother of Yerden Sandybauly of the *baganali* clan, the senior sultan of Atbasar district.

Interestingly enough, the architect intended to build this mausoleum in the image and likeness of the Alasha-Khan mausoleum and actually succeeded to do so. The new mausoleum certainly lags behind the original in richness of interior, but, in terms of construction, the main details are reproduced quite well. At the moment, however, the mausoleum is in a terrible condition and awaits restoration.



The mausoleum is located on the right bank of the Karakengir river. The best way of getting there is by taking the steppe road going **from Alasha-Khan mausoleum** along the right (southern) bank of the Karakengir (21 km). The distance from Ulytau village to Duzen mausoleum amounts to 70 km (1.5 hours): take a gravel road **from Ulytau** and drive 36 km in the direction of Boztumysk village (Karakengir), then turn to the south and drive on the steppe road going south-eastward, along the river Karakengir.

## KHAN-ORDASY (ALASHA-KHAN) ANCIENT SETTLEMENT ХАН-ОРДАСЫ (АЛАША-ХАН)

**📍 N48°30,0340' / E67°38,9720'**

There is no general consensus among scholars as to what exactly was located at this place which is nowadays known as Khan-Ordasy (or Alasha-Khan, as it is called by many historians) and which ruler's capital was situated here. However, the period of the settlement's construction appears to be known for sure: ceramics discovered here leave no doubt that the settlement dates back to the Middle Ages. This ancient settlement had a citadel and was surrounded by earthen fortress walls. The citadel occupying the area of 50 square metres was situated in the north-eastern part of the settlement and was built from the settlement's corner. It was separated from the main part of the settlement with a moat and a rampart. Nowadays one may still see collapsed remains of towers in the citadels' corners. Despite the fact that the city was built using earth, stones were also used in its construction – often as a basis for further construction works. It

### Mausoleums and mazars

In scientific literature, mausoleums are often defined as monumental burial buildings regardless of the architectural style or period of construction.

Kazakh mausoleums may be round, square or rectangular in form. They may be built from fired or unfired bricks or stones, have portals and domes. The areas surrounding the most sacred mausoleums are usually used for forming large necropolises. When talking about mausoleums, the Kazakhs often use the Arabic term "mazar" (or its Russian variant "mazarka") or tend to call them "kumbez" (this term is particularly applied to mausoleums with domes) or "kesene".

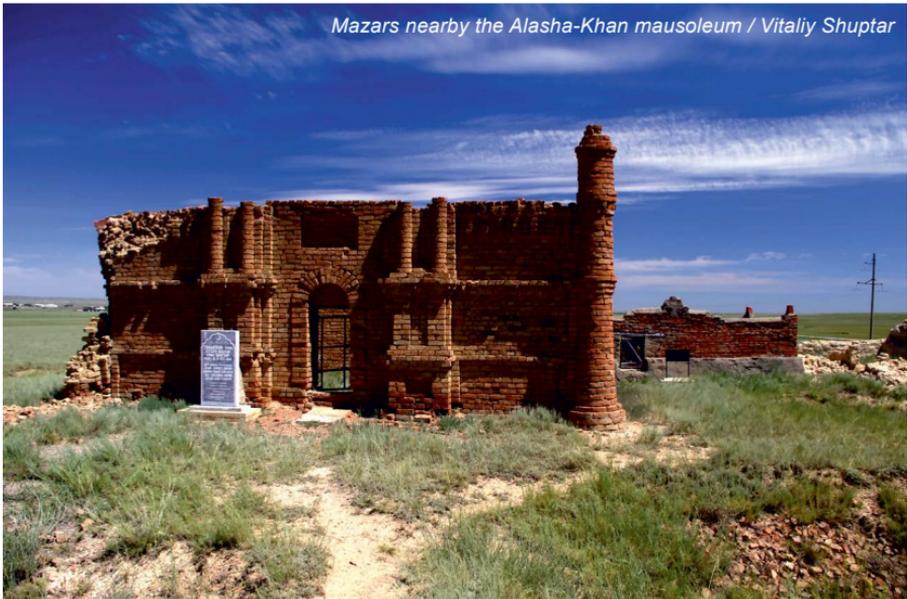
Interesting fact: the entrances of most of the Ulytau mausoleums face south-west.

should be noted that the remaining walls one may see nowadays rising up above the ground are not higher than 20 to 30 cm. In the citadel, houses were located along the walls around its perimeter, while its inner part was nothing but an open area, some sort of a yard. The entrance to the citadel, a two-meter long gate, was located on its southern side.

The archaeological excavations carried out in the area revealed a large number of Oghuz-type ceramic articles, which

*Khan-Ordasy ancient settlement / Vitaliy Shuptar*





Mazars nearby the Alasha-Khan mausoleum / Vitaliy Shuptar

resembled those usually found on sites of the ancient settlements in southern Kazakhstan. A millstone was also discovered here. One should not confuse this ancient settlement with the site of the same name located north of the Ulytau mountains, nearby Sarlyk village. The other Khan-Ordasy is a little younger than this one and is not particularly noteworthy with regard to its conception or appearance.

 The ancient settlement is located on the left bank of the river Karakengir (300 metres north-eastward

of the river). You may get there by using steppe roads leading **from Alasha-Khan mausoleum** on the right (southern) bank of the river Karakengir (24 km, 500 m far behind Duzen mausoleum there is a turn in the direction of the ford) and on its left (northern) bank **from Malshybai village** (24 km), after passing a small winter hut, located right before the settlement. If you are driving **from Ulytau village**, turn left (north) shortly before arriving at Duzen mausoleum and, after crossing the ford, walk another 300 metres to get to the settlement.

## CHAPTER 4. AROUND ZHEZDY

The valley of the river Zhezdy, as well as its adjacent lands may be called Ulytau's second most important industrial area, as Zhezdy and Karsakpai villages were founded because of the region's industrial exploration. One should bear in mind, however, that ore extraction started here much earlier, which is proven by the numerous ancient mines, including those located nearby the medieval settlement of Baskamyр. You may acquire a lot of information about ancient metallurgical traditions by visiting the famous Smelting Museum in Zhezdy village.

### ZHEZDY VILLAGE ЖЕЗДЫ / ЖЕЗДІ

📍 **N48°03,6598' / E67°03,1967'**

In Soviet times, manganese ore extracted in Zhezdy was believed to have almost single-handedly saved Soviet military industry in the years of World War II (manganese was required for producing tank armour). Moreover, the

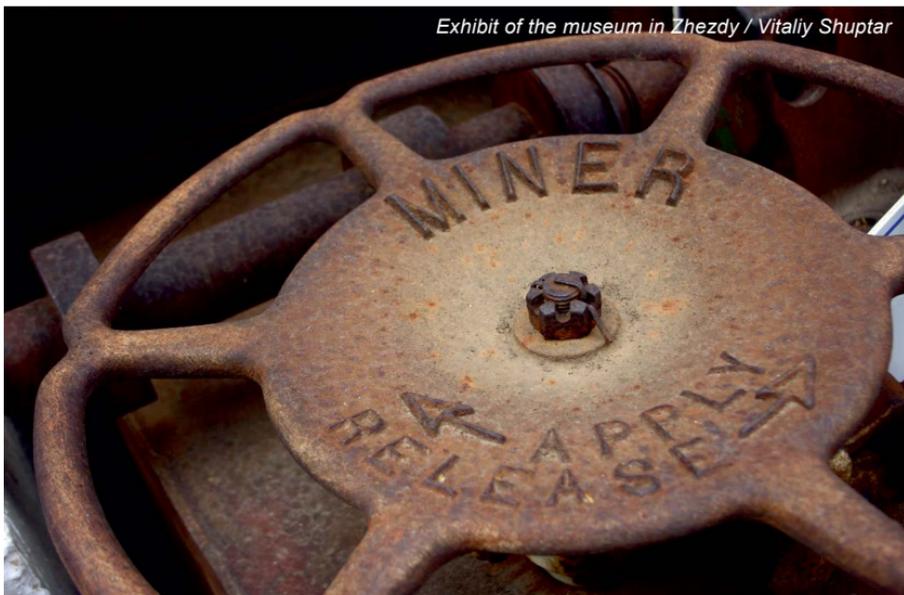
deposit (along with the village, which was called Marganets, i.e. "manganese" in Russian, at that time) was set up here in record-breaking time (its establishment took only a little over a month) and was of course built by the prisoners of local correctional-labour camp. It was due to the Zhezdy deposit that the Soviet Union managed to overcome the so-called "manganese hunger", which followed the Nazis' seizure of manganese deposits in Ukraine and Georgia in 1942.

For many years, Zhezdy remained a rather important industrial centre of Zhezkazgan oblast, as well as the administrative centre of Zhezdy region. However, in the 1990's almost all industrial enterprises in the village were closed, triggering a severe decrease in population. Nowadays, almost 20 years later, the situation has gradually started to improve.

- **Museum of the history of mining and smelting** (4, Kozhabayev St.; ☎ +7 71034 21933, 21725; muzej\_jezdi@mail.ru; www.muzejjezdi.kz) is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (lunch break from 1 to 2 p.m.). Entrance fees: 50 KZT (children), 70 KZT (students), 100



Zhezdy museum exhibition / Alexandr Yermolyonok



*Exhibit of the museum in Zhezdy / Vitaliy Shuptar*

KZT (adults). General guided-tour of the museum for a tourist group in Russian: 200 KZT, thematic guided-tour of the museum for a tourist group (in Russian): 500 KZT. The museum was founded in the 1980's in the territory of the park that had been created by Ukrainian miners in the years of World War II (in the building of the former minihotel which was considerably extended). A part of the museum's exposition is located outdoors, including the "witnesses" of the region's industrial exploration in the 19th -20th centuries, as well as models of some older artefacts, for example, the model of a smelting furnace from the Bronze Age, which, by the way, appears to be a working model. The museum may certainly be recommended as one of the places on your must-see list.

 The village has a bus terminal, a few shops, a school, and "Beeline" mobile connection. There is a petrol station at the entrance to the village from the highway Zhezkazgan-Ulytau.

 **From Zhezkazgan** - by bus (daily, 09: 15 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and

4:00 p.m., 1.5 hours drive, 300 KZT) or independently by car (64 km, 45 min). A taxi service from Satpayev town is also available (500 KZT per seat). **From Ulytau** – by bus (daily, 9:30 a.m., 4:00 p.m., 1.5 hours drive, 300 KZT) or independently by car (76 km, 45-50 min).

### **AYAKKAMYR ANCIENT SETTLEMENT** АЯККАМЫР / АЯҚҚАМЫР

 **N48°06,8986' / E66°59,6262'**

The ancient settlement of Ayakkamyr is located on the left bank of the river Zhezdy, at the inflow of the Karabulak spring into the river. Nowadays this once fortified settlement is just a square-shaped collapsed hillock whose sides are about 60 metres long. In the old times, three sides of the settlement were surrounded by a moat, while its south-western part was reinforced by stone walls. In the

For information on the up-to-date timetable of some of the buses, departing from Zhezkazgan bus terminal, visit the website of Karaganda bus terminal at [www.avokzal.kz](http://www.avokzal.kz). At this website you may also book or purchase a bus ticket.

settlement's corners there were towers, whose height nowadays does not exceed 1 metre. Unfortunately, the guidebook authors do not possess any information as to who built this fortification and in which period.

 The easiest way of getting to Ayakkamyр settlement is **from Zhezdy village**. You should leave Zhezdy following the motorway Zhezkazgan-Ulytau in the northern direction. After driving 9 km (from Zhezdy village's exit to the motorway), you will see the respective sign, as well as an exit in the western direction. Then you will have to drive another 3 km or so on the steppe road between small hills. After passing a small winter hut, you will reach the settlement that is located right before Karabulak village. The overall trip will take about 20-25 minutes.

**AYAKKAMYR  
(TEMIR-KUTLUG) MAUSOLEUM**  
АЯҚҚАМЫР (ТЕМИР-ҚУТЛУГ) /  
АЯҚҚАМЫР (ТЕМИР-ҚҰТЛЫҚ)

 **N48°06,8304' / E66°59,3748'**

This mausoleum built of burnt bricks has been relatively well preserved to this day (except for the dome which has not survived up to know). It belongs to the Golden Horde period and, according to Alkei Margulan, is said to contain the tomb of a Genghisid by the name of Temir-Kutlug. That said, some scholars tend to date this construction to the pre-mongolian period and believe that Ayakkamyр was built by Kipchaks in the second half of the 12th century.

The mausoleum is square in form and surrounded by a one-meter-high earthen rampart. Some scholars presume that in ancient times this rampart with its round towers could have had a defensive function. As many other mausoleums of Genghisids, Temir-Kutlug is located in the center of the medieval necropolis that was built around it later and includes some graves from later periods as well. However, most of the graves are located

**Temir-Kutlug (Qutlugh)**

Urus Khan's nephew by the name of Temir-Kutlug was ruler of the Golden Horde in 1395-1399. He came to the throne in 1395 with the support of Emir Yedige and Tamerlane (Emir Timur). In 1399, supported by Yedige, Temir-Kutlug defeated Tokhtamysн Khan and his ally, Duke Vytautas of Lithuania, on the Vorskla river. Despite his dependence on Yedige, Temir-Kutlug, who had a taste for power, decided that he could rule the country alone and attempted to drive Yedige from power. His failed attempt at Yedige's suspension led to the coup which overthrew Temir-Kutlug (according to one version, he was even murdered) and Temir-Kutlug's younger brother Shadibek was proclaimed khan of Golden Horde. This information is acquired from *Zafarname* (Book of Victory) written by Sharaf ad-Din Ali Yazdi, who actually wrote his chronicles from Tamerlane's perspective.

above the older residential constructions, which may have existed here at the time of the mausoleum's construction.

 The mausoleum is located 300 metres west of the **Ayakkamyр ancient settlement**, on the opposite (right) bank of the Zhezdy river. In order to get there, you should cross the river through a ford. You may also get to the mausoleum directly **from Zhezdy village** using steppe roads: leave the village in the north-western direction and drive about 7 km along the right bank of the river Zhezdy without going to its opposite bank (the trip will take about 20 minutes).

**BASKAMYR ANCIENT SETTLEMENT**  
БАСКАМЫР / БАҚАМЫР

 **N48°12,5789' / E67°01,2673'**

The ancient settlement of Baskamyр is located on a small ravine surrounded with hills, which may be found in Taldysai place south of the Ulytau mountains, and is believed to contain traces of Kipchaks' construction activities. The Kipchaks were one of the tribes that were the basis for the formation of the Kazakh peoples. However, some scholars suppose that Baskamyр may be identified as Khiam, a medieval town of Oghuz tribes known

by the works of Arabic geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi. For this reason, this object's origins are rather vague – it dates to the period between the 8th and 12th centuries.

- **Baskamyр fortress.** This city located at the junction of the rivers Taldysai and Zhezdy was actually quite compact. Its central part (citadel) was square in form (29 by 29 m) and surrounded by a wall with towers (only some partially restored ramparts have been preserved until the present day). On the citadel's territory archaeologists discovered 7 rooms which adjoined the walls, as well as hearths and a furnace. A relatively low tower (slightly taller than 2 metres) was identified in one of the citadel's corners. In the inner northern corner there was a well, which contained drinking water entering the fortress through a trench.

The area behind the citadel's walls was also inhabited: this part of the city was divided from the outer world by an earthen rampart (6 meters in width and 1.5 m in height) and a deep moat. Thus, the subtotal area of the fortress amounted to about 0.64 hectares.

Archaeological excavations have been

carried out at Baskamyр several times, with the first in 1948. They revealed a large number of ceramic, wooden and metal artefacts (including a copper pendant). The fortress in its present appearance and condition was restored in 1994.

Aside from the fortress, the Baskamyр settlement is of interest due to some other sights located there: a necropolis, a watchtower, irrigation system and a cave-mine.

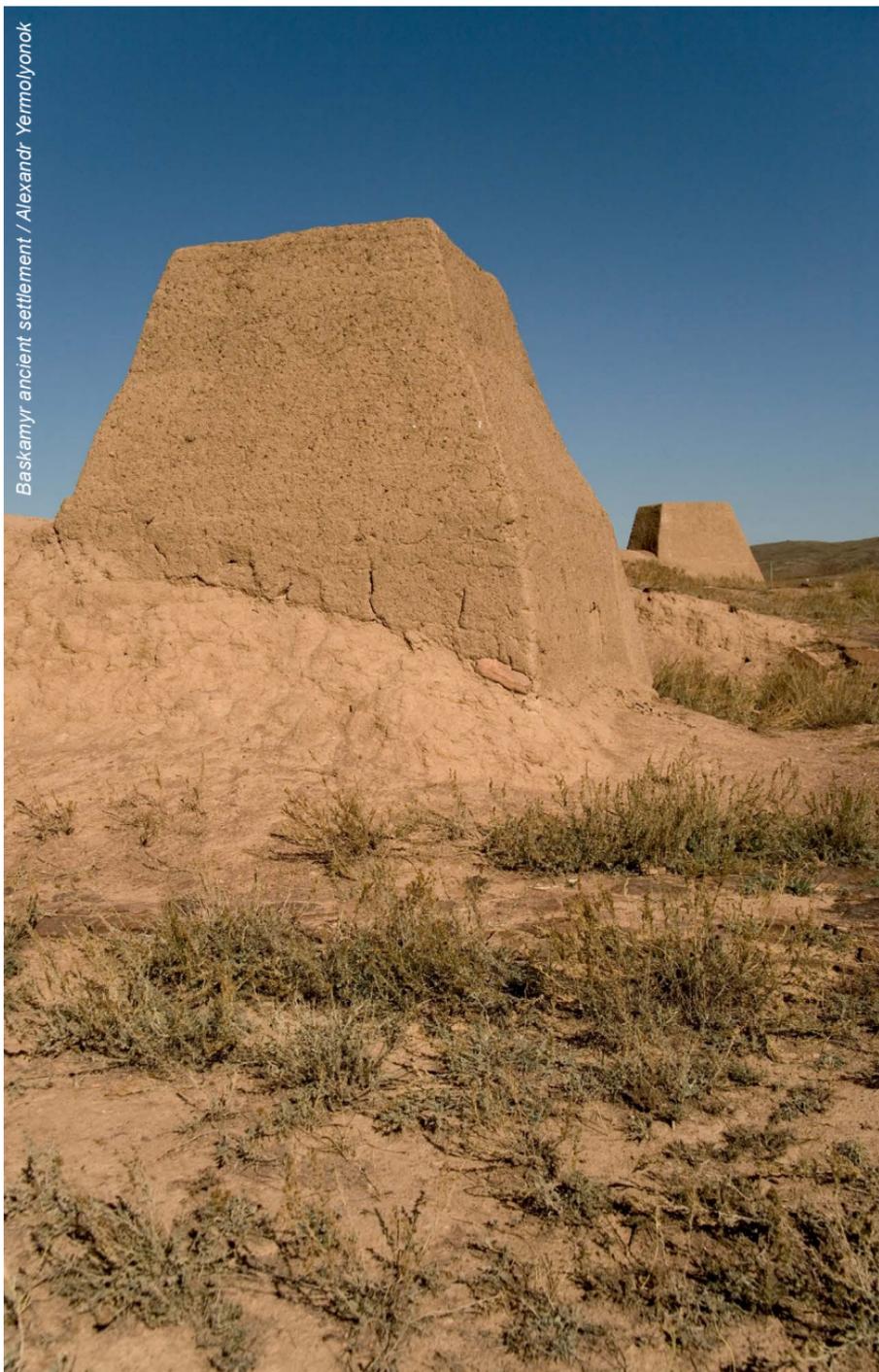
- **Necropolis Baskamyр** is located south of the fortification (right at its southern borders). Some of the graves at the burial ground bear a Y-shaped *tamga* (clan symbol) which belongs to the *baganali* clan of the Naiman tribe.

- **Watchtower ruins** are located 1 km eastward of the settlement (in the hills, on the other side of the motorway). It will take you about 15-20 minutes to get there on foot. The tower was built of stone plates using clay mortar and its current height is over 3 metres. Judging by the great number of stones lying at the tower's foundation, its initial height was much greater.



Baskamyр ancient settlement / Vitaliy Shuptar

*Baskamyr ancient settlement / Alexandr Yermolyonok*



- **Remains of the irrigation system:** all that is left nowadays of the irrigation system that provided Baskamyr with water is a number of trenches. One of the most well-preserved irrigation trenches starts at Sarybulak spring and extends to the fortress' northern corner. In the settlement's territory one may see a rather prominent vegetation-covered depression, which is believed to have been a water reservoir that collected the water flowing onto the territory of the fortress in the past.

- **Cave-mine.** A 20-metre-deep cave-mine is located in a low mountain range, about 1.5 km to the west of the settlement. There is no consensus among scholars as to the origin of this object: some of them believe that this mountain tunnel is a natural cave, whereas others think that it was man-made. Upon entering the cave, one may see the above-mentioned Y-shaped tamga on its walls. Medieval ceramics discovered on site confirm the theory that the cave was used by the settlement's inhabitants.

 The settlement is situated 300 m to the south of Taldysai village, about 200 m west of the motorway Zhezkazgan-Ulytau. You may approach the settlement from the side of Taldysai village, as well as directly from the motorway (i.e. more to the south). There is a road sign. There are several ways of getting to Baskamyr independently by car: if you are coming **from Zhezkazgan**, go through Satpayev - the drive (79 km) will take about 1 hour 10 minutes; **from Zhezdy** follow the motorway going northward to Ulytau - the drive (22 km) will take about 20 minutes; **from Ulytau** follow the motorway going to the south - the drive (54 km) will take about 40 minutes. You may also get to Baskamyr from Ulytau, Zhezdy or Zhezkazgan by taking one of the buses, running between these localities. In this case you will have to ask the bus driver to make a stop right opposite to the settlement and walk the remaining 200 metres on foot.

## KARSAKPAI VILLAGE КАРСАКПАЙ / ҚАРСАҚПАЙ

 **N47°50,0114' / E66°43,7243'**

This village was founded in 1912 near the copper-smelting plant, whose construction was accelerated after the start of World War I in an attempt to meet the growing demand for copper. It was in these years that the transfer of the entire plant from Zhosaly railway station (nowadays Kyzylorda oblast) to Karsakpai started and was carried out with the help of caravans, as well as by building a portable railway to the mine. However, the British industrialists who were building the plant never managed to launch the production, as the October Revolution and the subsequent nationalization of the mine obstructed their plans. The plant was launched much later, in the late 1920's, with the active help of academician Satpayev. As with every industrial locality, Karsakpai's list of sights is dominated by industrial or post-industrial sites, including the Karsakpai copper-smelting plant itself (or, better to say, what is left of it, since the plant was closed in 1973 and several other metallurgical enterprises were opened on its basis) and waste rock dumps. Karsakpai was once inhabited by 6000 people, but its population nowadays has reduced to just over a quarter.

- **Academician Kanysh Satpayev's house-museum** (13, *Satpayev St.*) is open from Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Entrance fees: 50 KZT (children), 70 KZT (students), 100 KZT (adults). General guided-tour of the museum for a tourist group (up to 25 people) in Russian: 200 KZT, thematic guided-tour of the museum for a tourist group: 500 KZT.

- **The old English bridge** (*village's eastern part, nearby car bridge through the Kumola river*) was built by British industrialists in late 1916 for the plant's narrow gauge railway. Shortly before the revolution of 1917, they brought here the entire plant with this portable narrow



*The old English bridge in Karsakpai / Vitaliy Shuptar*

gauge railway, whose length amounted to 13 km (rail tracks were assembled and reassembled as they moved from Zhosaly station in Southern Kazakhstan to Karsakpai).



The village has a school and college, as well as a small clinic and House of Culture. "Beeline" mobile connection is accessible here.



**From Zhezdy:** independently by car (exit in the south-western direction): 39 km (about 50 min). **From Zhezkazgan:** by bus (via Zhezdy, at 11:00 a.m. and 4 p.m., 2.5 hours drive, 400 KZT), independently by car either via Satpayev and Zhezdy (103 km, 1.5 hours)

or on the relatively new gravel road going south-west of Zhezkazgan along the new railway line (77 km, 1.5 hours). Railroad passes 1 km southward of the village and a passenger train Zhezkazgan-Kyzylorda runs along it at present. This train departs **from Zhezkazgan** at 7:12 p.m. (Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays) and arrives at Karsakpai station at 8:53 p.m. (ticket price comes to 1610 KZT for a compartment car, 1215 KZT for a parlor car). It departs **from Kyzylorda** at 10:50 a.m. (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays) and arrives at Karsakpai station at 11:39 a.m. on the next day (ticket price comes to 4040 KZT for a compartment car and 2614 KZT for a parlour car).

## CHAPTER 5. ULYTAU MOUNTAINS

The highest points of the Ulytau mountains, namely the peaks Auliye and Yedige, are not just ordinary mountains, rather, they are iconic places, around which numerous legendary stories about times long gone have accumulated. For this reason, climbing up either of the mountains may be considered a sort of journey in both space and in time. Around the mountain range one may also find many sights, which tourists are likely to find interesting, namely ancient sepulchres, stone statues and petroglyphs. Furthermore, travellers are sure to enjoy the mountains' natural delights: clear spring water, somewhat grim, yet picturesque, rocks and small groves in the mountain valleys. In addition, Ulytau village may become a great starting point for making hiking tours of this kind.

### ULYTAU VILLAGE УЛЫТАУ / ҰЛЫТАУ

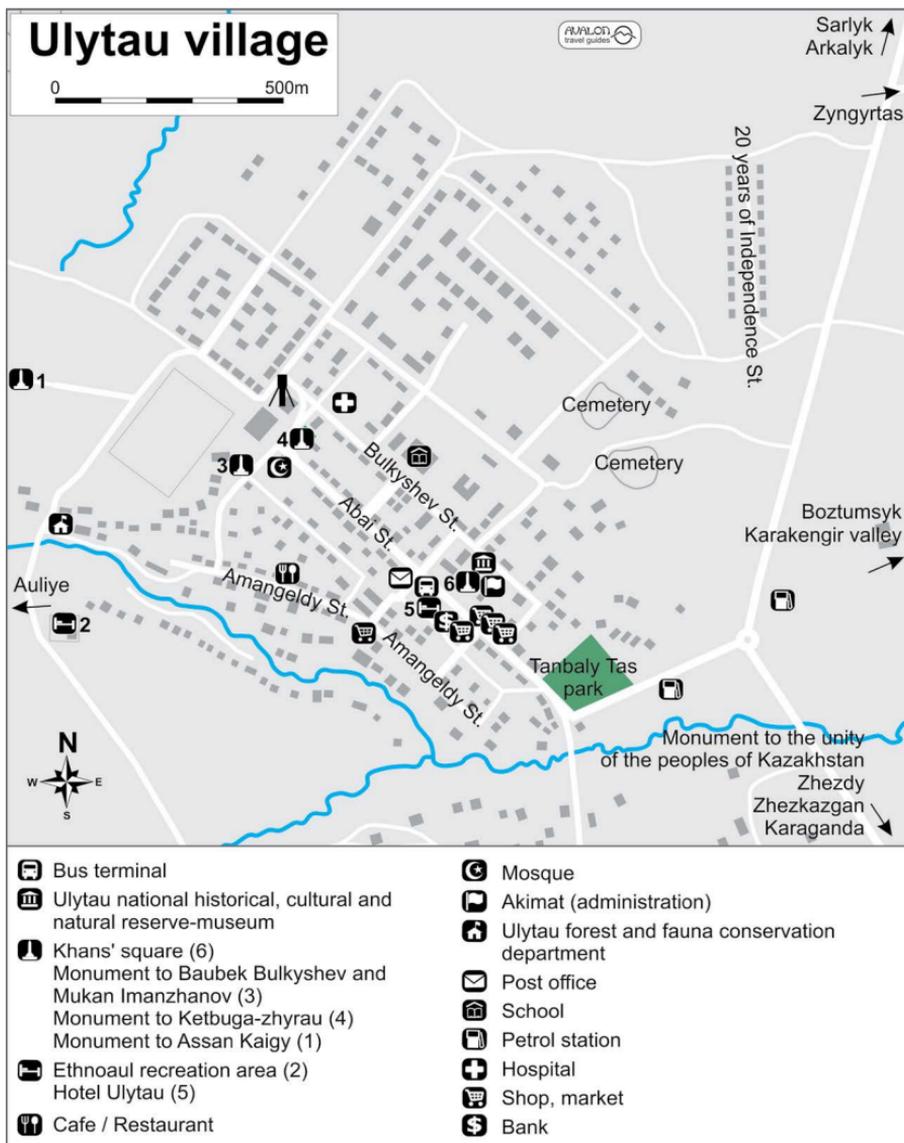
📍 **N48°39,1584' / E67°00,4549'**

Nowadays Ulytau village, with its population of about 2000 people, is the administrative centre of the Ulytau region. It is not quite clear when this village first appeared, but according to the most popular version, a small Cossack outpost was founded on the site of the current village in 1842.

- **Khans' square** (*central square of the village, Abai St.*) is noteworthy due to its monument to a Kazakh khan. Interestingly enough, it does not honour a particular khan, but rather some sort of a collective image.
- **Ulytau national historical, cultural and natural reserve-museum** (*14, Bulkyshev St., tel. + 7 71035 2134222; alashahan-1@mail.ru; www.ulytaureserve.kz*) is open from Monday to Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (on weekends admission to the museum is possible by prior arrangement). Exposition hall entrance fee: 200 KZT



Khans' square / Yerbolat Shadrakhov



(children up to 12 years old), 500 KZT (everyone else). The renewed exhibition opened in December 2015.

- **Monument to Ketbuga-zhyrau** (north-western end of Abai St., opposite the mosque) was set up in honour of a *batyr* (warrior) and *zhyrau* (storyteller) from the baganali clan, who lived around

the early 13th century. According to one legend, it was Ketbuga who told Genghis khan about the death of his son Jochi by performing the *dombra kui* (musical piece) about the lame onager.

- **Monument to Assan Kaigy** (foot of the mountain, located to the west of the village) was erected in honour of the

legendary poet and philosopher-utopist who lived in the second half of the 15th century (i.e. in the period of the formation of the Kazakh Khanate) and was one of its main ideologists. The main topic of his creative works was the search for the Promised Land, the so-called Zheruyik. By the way, according to one of the local legends, Assan Kaigy's wife was buried on the Auliye mountaintop (according to the other legend, it was Assan Kaigy himself).

- **Monument to Baubek Bulkyshev and Mukan Imanzhanov** (*north-western end of Abai St.*) was set up to honour the two Ulytau natives: the former was a poet and essay writer, whereas the latter was a writer and playwright. Among other things, Bulkyshev and Imanzhanov, who lived and created in the mid-20th century, were good friends.

- **Tanbaly Tas park** (*south-eastern end of Abai St.*) is noteworthy due to the fact that one may see here an obelisk with the Kazakh clans' tamgas, as well as stone statues (modern replicas of ancient balbaltases). The park also houses a war memorial honouring the heroes of World War II.

 Ulytau village has all the attributes of a mini-town: there are various shops, places where you can eat or stay overnight, a medical clinic and hospital, a mosque and museum, regional power authorities, a post office and a few petrol stations at the entrance to the village. Here you may pick up a mobile signal of the "Beeline" and "Kcell" mobile operators.

- **Hotel Ulytau** (23, Abai St.;  +7 705 5886463) offers rooms for 2000 KZT per person. It can accommodate 10 people.

- **Ethnoaul recreation area of the Ulytau reserve-museum** (*western edge of Ulytau village*;  +7 71035 21342, *mob.* +77057479616, +7 777 3546181) has several yurts, a small house, a toilet and is supplied with fresh water. You may stay either in the house or in a yurt (a sleeping place and dishes are provided) and it will only cost you 500 KZT per day (from morning until evening) or 1000 KZT per 24 hours (overnight stay).

- **Private entrepreneur Bakayev's cafeteria** (28-2, Amangeldy St.;  +7 71035 21345, *mob.* +7 777



*Ulytau mountains / Vitaliy Shuptar*



KNGS team on the top of the Auliye peak / Makhabbat Nugerbekova

5709917) offers a wide range of Kazakh national dishes (1000 KZT per person on average). Among other things, here you may find transport options to get to Zhezkazgan, top up your mobile phone and use a photocopy service. Free Wi-Fi is available in the cafeteria.

- **Cafeteria Ansar** (23, Abai St., ground floor of Hotel Ulytau) works daily without afternoon breaks from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

#### Travel services:

- **Ulytau national historical, cultural and natural reserve-museum** (14, Bulkyshev St.; ☎ +7 71035 21342; [alashahan-1@mail.ru](mailto:alashahan-1@mail.ru); [www.ulytaureserve.kz](http://www.ulytaureserve.kz)): this reserve-museum's employees (whom you may also find in the recreation area, which belongs to the reserve-museum) may organize a tour to the Auliye mountaintop (3000-5000 KZT per tour), and arrange sightseeing tours in the region.

- **UlytauTurService** (☎ +7 771 6173776, [saga\\_muhambet@mail.ru](mailto:saga_muhambet@mail.ru)) is a group of young enthusiasts who offer 3-day tours in the region, which include visits to the main travel attractions as well

as accommodation in yurts or tents in the Ulytau foothills and at the recreation zone in the area of the man-made lake Kenenbai. The tours start in Zhezkazgan or Ulytau and cost about 12000-17500 KZT per person per night (including three meals per day).



**From Zhezkazgan** – by bus (via Zhezdy, 9:30 a.m. and 4 p.m.; 3.5 hours drive, 400 KZT), by taxi (from bus terminal or Sharua market, 4000 KZT per car). If you wish to get to Ulytau independently by car, exit the city heading to the west (passing by Satpayev) and drive 133 km on a rather good road (partly very good asphalt) - the trip will take you about 1 hour 40 minutes. **From Arkalyk:** drive independently by car towards the south, on a gravel road changing into asphalt road – the drive will take about 4 hours (203 km of awful road).

## ULYTAU MOUNTAINS

The Ulytau mountains with their bare, steep and abrupt slopes mainly have low-mountain topography. In the valleys they are covered with shrubs and

trees (predominantly birches). There is especially a lot of vegetation in the mountains' western part in the valley of the Aibas river. The mountain valleys abound with mushrooms and berries, as well as healing herbs. However, the massif is hardly rich in fauna: only wild bores can be named among its usual and relatively numerous inhabitants.

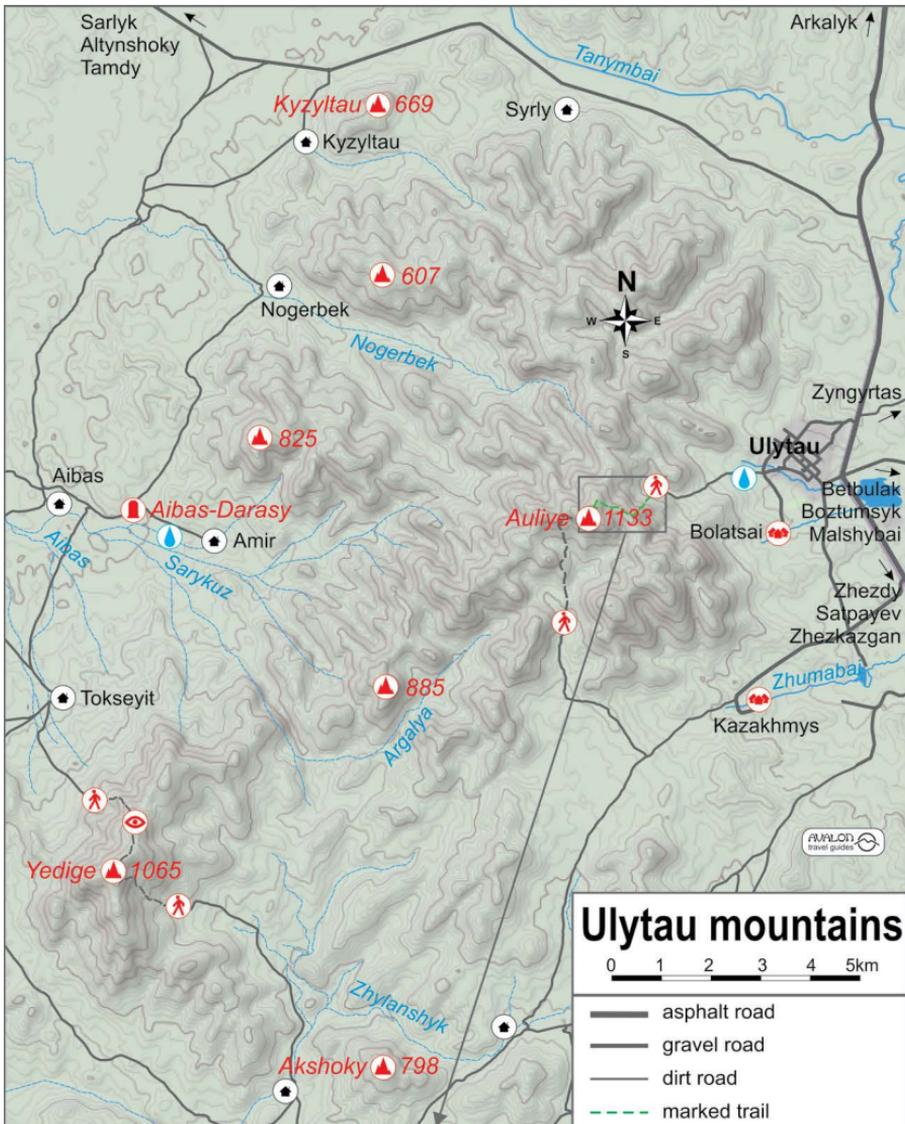
Currently, the largest part of the massif is under the control of the **Ulytau forest and fauna conservation department** (*Ulytau village, 1, Amangeldy St.*; 📞 +7 71035 21161; *ulutau.les64@mail.ru*), which operates from Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Here you may get information about the flora and fauna of the Ulytau nature reserve. It should be noted that visitors to the nature reserve officially have to pay an admission fee, which makes up 0.1 of a monthly calculation index (MCI) per person per day (227 KZT as of 2017). You may pay this fee at the local branch of Narodniy Bank (account no. 105304, marking "za pobochnoye ispolzovaniye", i.e. for secondary use) or (when it comes to weekends) pay it in cash at the department's office. However, it is also worthy of note that admission to the nature reserve is not so strictly controlled.

#### Did Zarathustra ever go to Ulytau?

There exist some less likely (but not entirely fanciful) theories that this area is linked to the name of Zarathustra, whose years and even centuries of life are rather unclear (however, scholars tend to believe that he lived somewhere around 1000 BCE). According to these theories, it was here in Ulytau (perhaps, at the Auliye mountain itself or in a cave located in it) that the legendary Zarathustra received a revelation from Ahira Mazda (Wise spirit), which became the point of departure for the creation of Avesta and development of Zoroastrianism. As usual, these theories are based on folk legends. In general, this point of view has some basis, as Zarathustra (Zerdesh-baba in the Turkic tradition) is said to have come to Iran from the north, from the Eurasian steppes or even from the southern Ural, and it is quite possible that he could have wandered through Ulytau, which already at that time had a sacred meaning for Eurasian nomads. However, his name was always rather linked with the areas between the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya. Furthermore, according to the most orthodox version, he is believed to have had a revelation after walking out of some river.



Auliye Peak / Vitaliy Shuptar



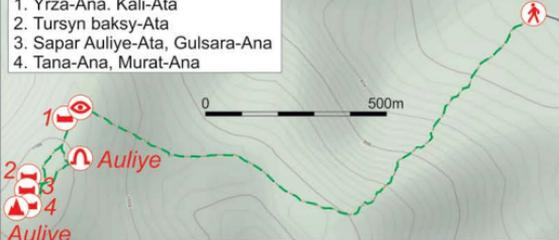
## Ulytau mountains



- asphalt road
- gravel road
- dirt road
- marked trail
- unmarked trail
- mountain
- spring
- cave
- winter hut
- trailhead
- scenic viewpoint
- ancient necropolis
- grave, cemetery
- resort

The tombs of Sufis:  
 1. Yrza-Ana, Kali-Ata  
 2. Tursyn baksy-Ata  
 3. Sapar Auliye-Ata, Gulsara-Ana  
 4. Tana-Ana, Murat-Ana

### Trail to Auliye



Length: 2,1 km  
 Ascent: 388 meters  
 Approximate time of ascent/descent: 1,5 hours / 1 hour

## AULIYE PEAK АУЛИЕ / ӘУЛИЕ

 **N48°38,6618' / E66°56,7162'**

The highest peak of the Ulytau mountains is called Auliye or Auliyetau (i.e. the sacred mountain). The mountain rises to 1131 metres above sea level and serves as place of attraction for pilgrims from all over the country, who keep travelling here despite the necessity of climbing 400 metres up in order to reach the mountaintop and whose number is continually increasing.

Auliye peak is featured in a great number of legends and theories and this per se points out to its significance and popularity. Some scholars believe that Jochi Khan and his descendants worshipped Auliye (Ulytau) as the clan's mountain and that this worshipping was very important for them, even after the rulers of the Golden Horde converted to Islam. However, archaeologists point out that the mountain was already sacred during the Bronze Age. Its peak is of particular interest due to the fact that here, for example, are located graves of seven holy Sufis, most of whom were healers, as well as a cave that is believed to have some magical powers. The tombstones with the Sufis' names were erected at the graves in modern times by Bakbergen Ayashev, an Ulytau villager, who, among other things, is also a famous healer. Furthermore, some people say that Assan Kaigy, a 15th century Kazakh philosopher and poet, was also buried on the top of Auliyetau. Others believe that his wife's grave is located near the cave, which is situated 300 metres away from the peak.

 There are two main trails that are commonly used for getting to the mountaintop:

1) The easiest and most approachable trail leading to the top is from the north-east (you may get to the starting point of the walking trail **from Ulytau village** by car - the drive will take about 15 minutes (3km), the way lies to the west of the village, via a spring, then to the

### What is a winter hut?

A winter hut is a type of small settlement that is usually located quite far away from large rural communities and consists of about two to three residential buildings and a number of household outbuildings (sheds, cattle-pens, etc.). Unlike, for example, Mongols who led a nomadic lifestyle and roamed all year round (also in winter), Kazakhs spent winters on site, i.e. they stayed in one and the same place for 3-5 months each year. During this time, several families teamed up and came together as one aul (i.e. something like a small tribal village community). More often than not, protected places situated close to mountains with small rivers nearby were chosen as locations for winter huts. Historically the establishment of stationary winter huts (i.e. winter huts with buildings) in the 19th century was triggered by the Russian policy of the mass appropriation of lands and reduction of roaming routes, which forced more and more Kazakhs to settle down at winter huts. As pasture areas were reduced, haying became common and agriculture started to develop. Management of such economic activities called for transition to sedentary and semi-nomadic lifestyle. Moreover, people gradually came to understand the advantages of having permanent homes in wintertime: after all the yurt was an ideal place to live in summer, but it stopped being so comfortable as it got colder. Nowadays winter huts are often used as satellites of villages and large settlements. Furthermore, it is usually nearby winter huts that family necropolises are often located. Paradoxically enough, people do not only live in winter huts in winter, but also inhabit them in summer (in fact, even more people live there in summer time, because in wintertime some inhabitants of winter huts move to large villages and towns).

south-west). The ascent of the mountain will take about 1.5 hours (388 m climb, 2.1 km distance), whereas for the descent you will need about 1 hour. The trail is marked with stones (sometimes it even has stone paths), so orientation on site should not pose any problems. At the start of the trail, you should expect a rather steep climb (it is here that one mainly gains altitude): here you will have to climb up the ridge and then continue moving along the ridge using a very flat path. First, the path will bring you to the peak, which is located near Auliye and

serves as a rather good viewpoint. Then you will change the direction of walking: the path will turn to south-west, towards the peak, before branching into two parts, one of which will lead to Auliye cave (also known as Zerdesh-baba cave). Several graves are located right before the peak, in a small intermountain saddle. A white metal yurt stands here as well.

2) The second option is to take the trail from the south-west (you may get to the starting point of the walking trail from **Ulytau village** by car - first drive 7 km on the asphalt road, which leads to "Kazakhmys" recreation area, then leave it in the western direction, turn to the north after 3 km, drive to the gorge by making another 3 km before stopping and crossing a rather serious ford: the whole trip will take about 30 mins). The ascent to the mountaintop starts from a picturesque meadow, where you should leave your car, and takes about 1.5 hours (about 350 m climb, 3.1 km distance). Descent, on the other hand, only takes about 1 hour. The trail is not marked on site, but the direction necessary is rather obvious: first you should climb up strictly to the north, until you reach the ridge (you may orient yourself here by the big rock,

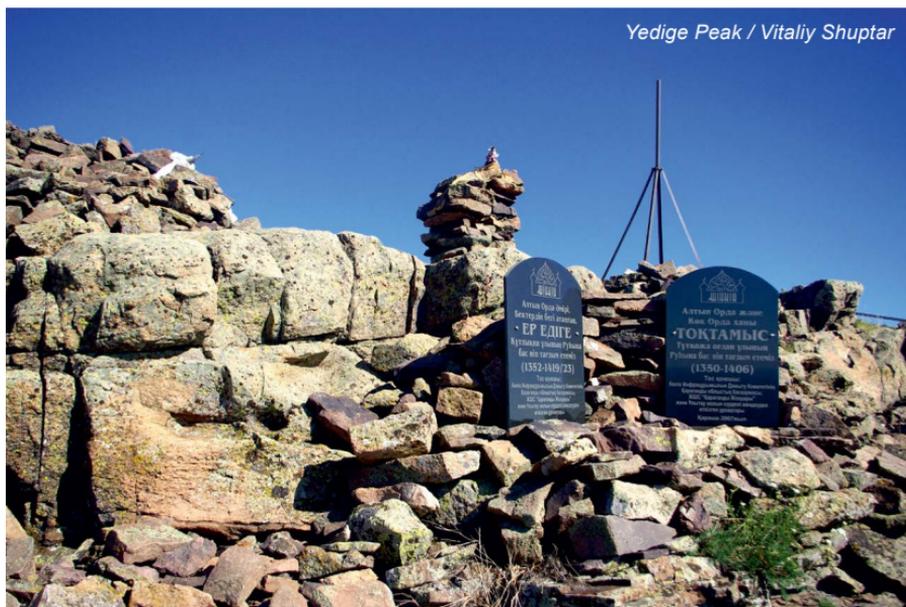
from where you should move further to the north-east until reaching the top.

## YEDIGE PEAK ЕДЫҒЕ / ЕДИҒЕ

 **N48°34,6899' / E66°48,8942'**

Yedige peak is the second highest mountain in the Ulytau mountain range (1065 m). Interestingly enough, there is no historical evidence clearly stating that the two very famous historical figures, namely Emir Yedige and Tokhtamysh Khan, had been buried on this mountaintop. However, local legends were so unanimous in stating this fact that the respective tombstones were erected here in modern times. On the other hand, no archaeological excavation was ever conducted on the mountaintop, which makes it rather impossible to assert anything with 100% certainty.

Tokhtamysh was a khan of the Golden Horde who spent most of his life at war with Ruthenia and struggling with Yedige for power in the Horde, at times as Tamerlane's ally and at times as his enemy. Legends greatly differ as



Yedige Peak / Vitaliy Shuptar

to who killed whom on the top of this mountain, i.e. it is not clear if it was Yedige who murdered Tokhtamysh or vice versa. On the other hand, it is known from more orthodox historical sources (which, however, also contain a lot of unanswered questions and gaps) that Yedige was killed in 1419 near Saraishik by one of Tokhtamysh's sons, whereas Tokhtamysh himself (in accordance with the same more or less historical evidence) is believed to have died much earlier, in 1406, in a battle with the army of Yedige's protégé, Shadibek Khan. Of course, none of these facts rule out the possibility that both Yedige and Tokhtamysh could have been brought to Ulytau from afar to be buried here (after all, many great people were buried in Turkestan even though they died hundreds kilometers away from it), provided that one chooses to overlook the fact that setting up a grave on the top of a granite rock is a hell of a job. It is also worthy of note that the legendary version of Yedige's burial is confirmed by folklore, which tells that a seriously injured Yedige was brought to Ulytau and died in Maily place. Shokan Valikhanov (a great Kazakh traveller and explorer), who once ascended this mountain together with botanist Alexander Shrenk, is likely to have heard this legend-based story told by the local village elders (*aqsaqals*).



You may get to the mountaintop in two ways:

1) from the north-west (the easiest way of getting to the starting point of the walking trail from Sarlyk village by car is to drive to the south-east, pass by Kenenbai lake, a few fords across the Sarykuz river and Tokseyit winter hut – this 28 km ride will take about 1 hour). Some sort of parking area where you can leave your car is located 2 km to the south of Tokseyit winter hut. You will need about 1.5-2 hours to ascend the mountain (420 m climb, 2.6 km distance), whereas descent will take only about 1 hour.

2) from the south-east (the easiest way of getting to the starting point of the walking trail from Ulytau village by car is to cover the distance of 28 km. First drive 7 km on the asphalt road which goes to

### Yedige - the lord of lords

This person, whose most famous title was *beklerbek*, i.e. "the lord of lords", went down in the history of many steppe nations, namely the Kazakhs, Tatars, Bashkirs, Karakalpaks, Kyrgyz, Nogais, etc. and each of them has the right to consider him their national hero. Emir Yedige (approx. 1356-1419) is not only a historical personality but also one of the most legendary heroes of the Eurasian nomads' epics who was not a Genghiside and therefore could not claim the throne of the Golden Horde, but who was, in fact, its ruler for a very long time. It was him who first brought Temir-Kutlug to power and later dethroned him. Through his efforts, Tokhtamysh Khan was defeated and brought down, whereas Tamerlane's protégé, Kuyurchuk (Kyigyryshyk), was murdered and Duke Vytautas of Lithuania was crushed. One should say that Yedige was good at playing political games with the great Tamerlane and was one of the few who succeeded in outwitting the ruler of Transoxiana (Mawarannahr). It is believed that Yedige's descendants subsequently managed to claim an even higher position in Ruthenia than Genghisids and founded houses of noble families including the Yusupovs, the Yunusovs, the Ishboldins and the Urusovs.

the south of the village, then use the asphalt road which goes to the south-west of the motorway towards "Kazakhmys" recreation area, then drive on the steppe road: about 13 km in a south-westerly direction and 8 km in a north-westerly direction – the entire drive will take about 1 hour). The ascent itself will take about 1.5 hours (386 m climb, 2.1 km distance), but be sure to plan another hour for the descent.

In both cases, paths are not marked on site, but the direction to the mountaintop is quite obvious.

### STONE STATUES IN ZHLYLSAI TRACT ЖЫЛЫСАЙ

 **N48°29,6137' / E66°45,7283'**

Ulytau's south-western foothill belt once contained one of the largest collections of stone statues from the Turkic (6th -7th centuries) and Kipchak (8th -12th centuries) periods in the region.

*Zhylysai tract / Vitaliy Shuptar*

Sadly, only a few of them have survived up to now (theft of stone statues was a problem 300 years ago and remains so to this day). However, you should pay a visit to Zhylysai in order to see with your own eyes what a balbaltas is (this is how local inhabitants came to call the stone statues of this type).

The stone statues were erected in front of stone fences (most probably graves), which had been arranged in a row from south to north. Scholars believe that there were 12 balbaltases overall (8 of them date back to the Turkic period, whereas the remaining 4 are from the Kipchak period). The Turkic fences are square-shaped, with sides of 2-6 metres, and built of flat granite plates placed upright, whereas the Kipchak fences are square and built of large stone blocks placed horizontally. Nowadays one may only see three balbaltases (two of them whole and another half-destroyed) standing on site. Furthermore, there are some statues, which are partly destroyed and lie horizontally inside or nearby the stone fences.

 **From Ulytau village:** drive on the asphalt road going to the south,

then turn to the south-west and drive on for a while on the asphalt road going in the direction of "Kazakhmys" recreation area (7 km), then follow the steppe road going to the south-west for about 13 km before changing to a westerly direction. After covering 11 km, you will reach Korgantas winter hut. In order to get to Zhylysai from Korgantas you should drive 3 km more to the south. The whole trip (34 km) will take about 1 hour 20 minutes. You may also get to Zhylysai **from Sarlyk village** (this 40 km drive will take about 1.5 hours): leave the village in a south-easterly direction, pass by Kenenbai lake and, after reaching Aibas winter hut, drive to the south to get to Korgantas winter hut and move further south after reaching it.

### ZYNGYRTAS PETROGLYPHS ЗЫНГЫРТАС / ЗЫҢҒЫРТАС

 **N48°44,8302' / E67°09,9550'**

Zyngyrtas (also known as Zangyrtas and Zengirtas) is a dozen of medium-sized granite boulders lined up on the ridge of a hill located 17 km to the north-



*A stone statue, Zhylyсай tract / Vitaliy Shuptar*

*Ascent to Yedige peak / Vitaliy Shuptar*





east of Ulytau village. The surface of the stones is covered with a variety of paintings made by artists of the Bronze Age, and the main themes here are, as usual, images of people, goats, wild bores, snakes, camels and other animals.

You may also see some erotic paintings here. What is interesting is that almost all stones "clang", i.e. produce an unusual "empty" sound on impact (the place owes its name to this property of the stones).

 There are two ways of getting **from Ulytau** to Zyngyrtas by car. In both cases you should leave the village heading north (direction of Arkalyk). If you wish to take the first route, follow these directions: after passing the roundabout and driving 1200 metres, turn to the road going in the direction of the runway. Then drive about 500 m on this road before changing to the steppe road heading to the north-east. The overall route (from the roundabout) is 17 km and will take about 30 minutes. If you decided to take the second route (it makes more sense to take this route if you are driving to Zyngyrtas from Sarlyk) you should

first drive 8.5. km to the north of Ulytau (and pass the crossing with a gravel road to Sarlyk), then exit to a steppe road which leads through a small winter hut and follow it. This route (about 22.5 km from the roundabout) will take about 40 minutes.

### **MONUMENT TO THE UNITY OF THE PEOPLES OF KAZAKHSTAN**

 **N48°34,9498' / E67°05,3733'**

It is a common belief that the Ulytau mountains are located in the geographical centre of Kazakhstan. In modern times (to be precise, in 2005) the Monument to the unity of the peoples of Kazakhstan was erected in the vicinity of the Ulytau mountains and Ulytau village in order to commemorate the role of Ulytau in the country's history.

 The monument stands 9 km to the south of Ulytau village (10 min by car), and 70 m to the south-west of the motorway, at the foot of the Ayirtau hills.



Zyngyrtas petroglyphs / Alexandr Yermolyonok

*Monument to the unity of the peoples of Kazakhstan / Vitaliy Shuptar*



## CHAPTER 6. AROUND SARLYK

Sarlyk village is the most convenient starting point for visiting a great variety of tourist sights starting from the Bronze Age necropolis of Aibas-Darasy and khan's capital Khan Ordasy and finishing

### Community-based ecotourism

This way of developing ecotourism has spread around Kazakhstan in recent years and is rather popular among foreign tourists. First, the most suitable rural localities in various corners of the country are chosen, then guest houses are set up on the basis of private households, and local residents are trained to work with tourists. This way most of the villagers get an additional source of income, mainly from providing tourists with board and lodging. This system, however, does not presuppose any considerable changes in the lifestyle of local residents, as their lifestyle is one of the things that attract tourists. Sarlyk village is one of the sites where "Avalon" Historico-geographical society and Kazakhstan National Geographic Society have been lately carrying out activities aimed at developing the guest houses network.

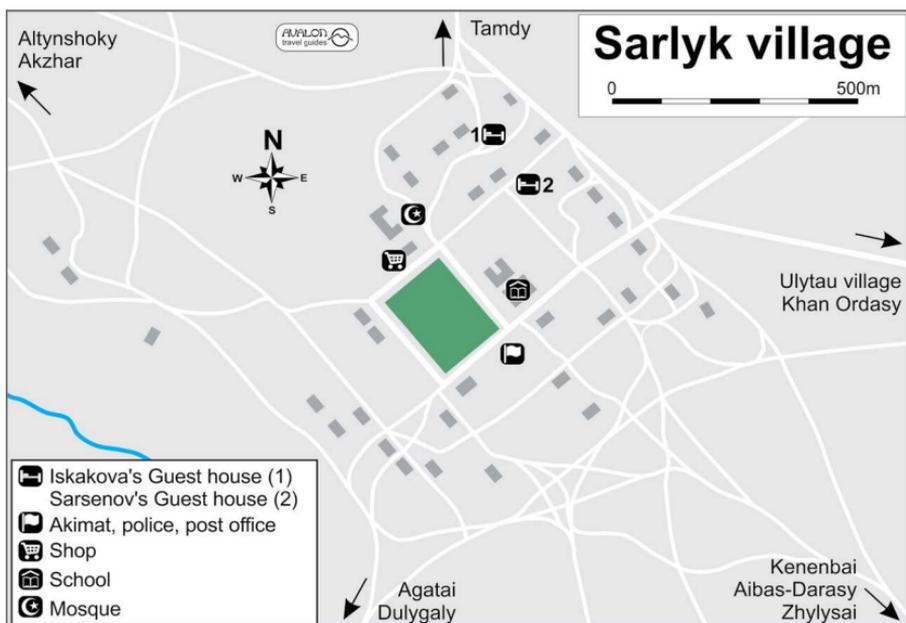
with the plate, left by Tamerlane himself, and a picturesque man-made lake of Kenenbai. Moreover, from here one may quite easily get to the valley of the river Tamdy with its petroglyph galleries, as well as to the north-western spurs of the Ulytau mountain massif. It is also worthy of note that Sarlyk is the place where the rural guest house network is currently making its first steps. Thus, travellers who come here may also gain some ethnographical experience, as well as have good opportunities for enjoying the region's gastronomic delights.

### SARLYK VILLAGE

САРЛЫК / САРЛЫҚ

 **N48°45,4996' / E66°37,6517'**

Sarlyk village (also known as Amangeldy) is the administrative centre of Amangeldy rural district. The Sarlyk and Ulytau-Arkalyk motorway are linked by a gravel road, however, driving outside the village is only possible on steppe roads.



Kenenbai lake / Vitaliy Shuptar



Sarlyk has a school, some shops, a police station, a library and akimat (local administration) with internet access. No mobile reception is available. No petrol stations.



- **Aitzhan Sarsenov's Guest house** (8, Zhumanov St.; ☎ +7 71035 23137): full board and lodging are available for 5000 KZT per person per night.

- **Galiya Iskakova's Guest house** (13-2, Amangeldy St.; ☎ +7 71035 21156, mob. +7-771-2857997): full board and lodging are available for 5000 KZT per person per night.



Regular transport links are non-existent. Getting to Sarlyk from Ulytau by car will take 40 minutes (36 km). For getting to Sarlyk **from Ulytau**, leave the village by taking the asphalt road leading to the north (to the north of roundabout, in the direction of Arkalyk), then drive 5.5 km before turning to the left (to the west), where you will see the respective road sign. After passing the sign, drive a little over 30 km on the gravel road until you reach Sarlyk.

## KHAN ORDASY ХАН ОРДАСЫ

📍 **N48°47,1868' / E66°45,4065'**

What is concealed behind the name of Khan Ordasy (i.e. khan's capital) is a good question. Two adjacent square ramparts, one of them being larger than the other one, is pretty much all that remains today. A piece of fortress wall, a throne and a memorial stone which states that here was located the capital of Turkic khagans and Kazakh khans – all these things have only appeared at the ancient site very recently. According to the Kazakh archaeologist Alkei Margulan, here was once located the capital of Abul Khayr Khan who was the leader of the State of Uzbek nomads in the 15th century. Some scholars believe, however, that the Ulytau fortification, founded by Russian Cossacks in 1845 (according to another source, 1847), was once located here. This way or another, the sign set up next to this ancient settlement contains the writing "9th – 11th centuries".



Driving **from Ulytau** to Khan Ordasy will take about 40 minutes:

leave Ulytau, heading in a northerly direction (to the north of roundabout, i.e. in the direction of Arkalyk), drive 5.5 km before turning to the left (to the west), then drive on the gravel road another 20.5 km before exiting the gravel road to the north (road sign to Khan Ordasy). From the road sign, you will drive 4 km more in a northern direction on a well-used road. In order to get to Khan Ordasy from Sarlyk, leave Sarlyk, heading in an easterly direction and drive 10 km (15 min) on a gravel road until you see the road sign, then also turn to the north.

### **KENENBAI LAKE** КЕНЕНБАЙ

**📍 N48°42,4159' / E66°41,5634'**

The Kenenbai man-made lake (called Kinembai in some maps) is also known as Amangeldy lake. It was created by building a dam across a small river and is now a good place for water leisure in general, and in particular for fishing.



There is a recreation area on the western shore of the water reservoir.



Driving to Kenenbai from Sarlyk (9 km) by car takes about 20 minutes. You should leave the village heading in a south-south-easterly direction.

### **AIBAS-DARASY** **ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMPLEX** АЙБАС-ДАРАСЫ

**📍 N48°38,6945' / E66°49,2703'**

The sepulchre, dating from the Bronze Age, was first excavated by Margulan in the 1970's (it was discovered in 1946). In the centre of this archaeological monument is a square stone fence (11 x 11 m), which is oriented on the cardinal points. The sepulchre's mason walls are several courses thick, inside of it is a 9-square-metre-large stone chest made of vertically arranged granite plates. This sepulchre belongs to Begazy-Dandybai culture of the late Bronze Age. However, aside from it, Aibas-Darasy contains several other sepulchres from the other periods of the Bronze Age, as well as some mounds dating back to the early Iron Age and some monuments from the Middle Ages.



*Aibas-Darasy archaeological complex / Vitaliy Shuptar*



The archaeological complex is located in the valley of the river Aibas, in the western Ulytau foothills, 1.5 km to the east of Aibas winter hut and to the north of the Sarykuz river. The gravel road linking Ulytau and Sarlyk has several southern exits leading to it (one of them is marked with an old automobile tyre). The easiest way of getting to Aibas-Darasy is **from Sarlyk village**: you may either drive on a gravel road and then change to a steppe road or drive the whole way on the steppe road. If you prefer the first option, drive from Sarlyk on a gravel road to the east until the nearest suitable exit to the south (9.5 km), then cover about 18 km, mainly heading to the south. The whole drive will take about 1 hour. If you choose the second option, leave the village heading towards the south-east, drive along the north-eastern edge of lake Kenenbai until halfway, then drive on to the valley of the Sarykuz river after passing Aibas winter hut. The whole drive (22 km) will take about 1 hour. You may also get to Aibas Darasy **from Ulytau village** - this route will take about 1 hour (33 km): leave the village following the asphalt road leading to the north (to the north from roundabout, i.e. in the direction of Arkalyk), then drive 5.5 km before turning left (to the west) and continue driving on gravel road for another 14 km until the nearest suitable exit in the direction of Aibas. From the exit, drive along the steppe 14 km more mainly to the south.

### TAMERLANE'S PLATE ON THE ALTYNSHOKY HILL АЛТЫНШОҚЫ / АЛТЫНШОҚЫ

📍 **N48°46,5125' / E66°27,6445'**

Nearby Sarlyk one may find a rather interesting site, connected with the name of yet another great conqueror who left his distinct mark on world history. In 1391, the great Emir Timur, the ruler of Transoxiana (Mawarannahr), also known in history as Tamerlane, marched through these lands with his army. And it

#### Begazy-Dandybai culture

This culture of the late Bronze Age got its name from the names of two archaeological sites, namely Begazy and Dandybai, which had been discovered by archaeologists in Karaganda oblast in the 1930'-1940's. The Begazy-Dandybai era (12th – 9th centuries BCE) was a time of monumental construction. It was characterized by the highly developed stone architecture (famous "rock mausoleums", which were built from stone plates over three metres high), as well as the variety of forms and high quality of ceramics, bronze and gold articles, and weapons. This was coupled with the highly developed metallurgy (numerous mines have been discovered in the neighbourhood of every settlement of this era).

was precisely here on the Altynshoky hill that he left, in fact, the only documented evidence of his campaign against the Golden Horde and Tokhtamysh Khan.

Tamerlane's huge army marched from Tashkent through Betpak-Dala (hungry steppe) and reached the Ulytau spurs around April. Understanding the importance of these clan lands for Tokhtamysh Khan, Tamerlane decided to leave a reminder of his military campaign on the Altynshoky hilltop, to be visible from the Ulytau mountains. According to one of the versions, he ordered each of his warriors to bring a stone to the hilltop and that is how a stone mound appeared there. Nearby the mound, a sign, i.e. a stone plate with writing on it, was then set up on the order of the great commander.

What was engraved on the plate? The translation which is most detailed and widely accepted in scholarly circles states the following: *"In the name of Allah the Gracious and Merciful! Lord of all the living beings, Sanctuary of truth, Vigilant protector, Omnipotent and Omniscient, the Wisest giver of life and death! In the seven hundred and ninety-third year, the year of the sheep, in mid-spring, Sultan Timurbeg of Turan rose up with three hundred thousand men against the Khan of Bulgaria, Tokhtamysh Khan for the sake of Islam. Upon reaching this area, he built this mound to be a memorial sign. May God render justice! May God have mercy on this*

*Altynshoky hill / Vitaliy Shuptar*



*Tamerlane's plate on the Altynshoky hill / Vitaliy Shuptar*



*country's people! May they bless us with a prayer!"*

Nowadays one may discover a huge furnace on the hilltop (this fact is proven by ventilation holes and a number of collapsed stones). Scholars assert that this furnace was used primary for processing ore, most probably copper ore. According to one of the legends, on his way back from the campaign Tamerlane ordered the burning of all the looted wealth in this furnace in order to show that the campaign was aimed at ensuring justice and punishing Tokhtamysh, rather than at personal enrichment.

Nearly all sources state that this plate was first discovered by Kanysh Satpayev (see page 11 to read more about him). However, it is not exactly true, as its location had been known much earlier. For example, *The map of Tartaria* compiled by a French cartographer Guillaume Delisle and issued in 1706, indicates a point next to the mountains *Oulouc Tac*, which is described as follows: "*Icy Tamerlan sit*

*elever une Auguille avec la date de son expeditio*" ("here Tamerlane set up a sign with the date of his expedition"). In other words, Satpayev simply found the artefact, whose existence had already been known. Based on one of the versions, Satpayev discovered the stone plate with engraved writing himself, whereas another version states that local residents showed it to him. According to the available information, this event took place in 1935. One year later, a scientific expedition was sent here in order to transport the plate to Leningrad or, to be more precise, to the Hermitage. The plate was first brought to Karsakpai (by the way, this plate is often called *Karsakpai writing*, according to the name of the nearest large settlement), then to Zhosaly station and finally by train to Leningrad. After the plate was delivered to the Hermitage in the late 1936, its scientific investigation began. By the way, the plate is still in the Hermitage, whereas on the Altynshoky hill one may only see its replica.

 **From Sarlyk:** leave the village heading north-west, then take the road leading to the west (first drive 12.5 km straight, then, shortly before approaching the hills, turn left and drive to the south-west for another 1.5 km). The trip by car takes 20-25 minutes.

### AGATAI MUD SPRING АГАТАЙ / АФАТАЙ

 **N48°35,5188' / E66°30,3853'**

The salty lake Tuzkol (also known as Agatai among locals) is located in the neighbourhood of the Agatai ruins, to the south of Sarlyk. Its therapeutic muds have been used by Zhezkazgan health and spa resorts for treating skin conditions and musculoskeletal diseases for many years now. That said, one may also try out the healing properties of the lake on site, especially in June-July, as this is the time when the mud bath season starts, according to locals. However, you should bear in mind that very long mud baths are not recommended, especially for those who have heart problems.

 **From Sarlyk** drive 14 km on the steppe roads to the south until reaching the dam on the river Usabaibulak, then drive 10 more km to the south-west until reaching the lake. The whole trip will take about 40 minutes.

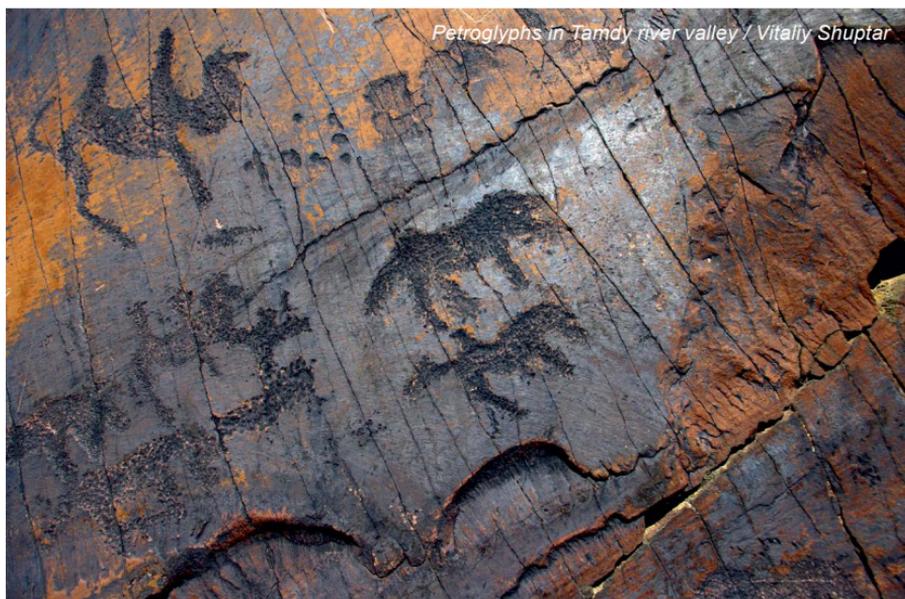
### PETROGLYPHS IN TAMDY VALLEY ТАМДЫ

 **N48°57,4648' / E66°37,0982'**

The area along the curvy Tamdy river is full of petroglyph galleries created by ancient artists. Hunting scenes, the animal world (horses, camels, goats, oxen), and pictures revealing the world view of ancient people: all these things were depicted by ancient artists and are now arranged in three large groups along southern (left) bank of the Tamdy river. In the area of one of the fords through the Tamdy river (the road from Sarlyk comes directly to the ford, but you do not need to cross the river) is located Baitleu winter hut (on the opposite side of the river). The location of this ford may be used for orienting oneself and figuring out the location of the petroglyphs



*Petroglyphs in Tamdy river valley / Vitaliy Shuptar*



*Petroglyphs in Tamdy river valley / Vitaliy Shuptar*

collections. Two of them are situated to the south-east of the crossing going to the ford – in the distance of 1 and 5 km respectively, whereas the third one may be found 4 km to the south-west. The petroglyphs located on an impressively large rock 5 km to the south-east are of special interest but have already been somewhat damaged by present-day vandals. Among the petroglyphs located 1 km to the east, one may see some rather interesting samples: some of them may be found on the horizontal stones nearby water, whereas the others are located on vertical stones nearby the descent start. Unlike the petroglyphs of the first two groups, which are depicted on the brown,

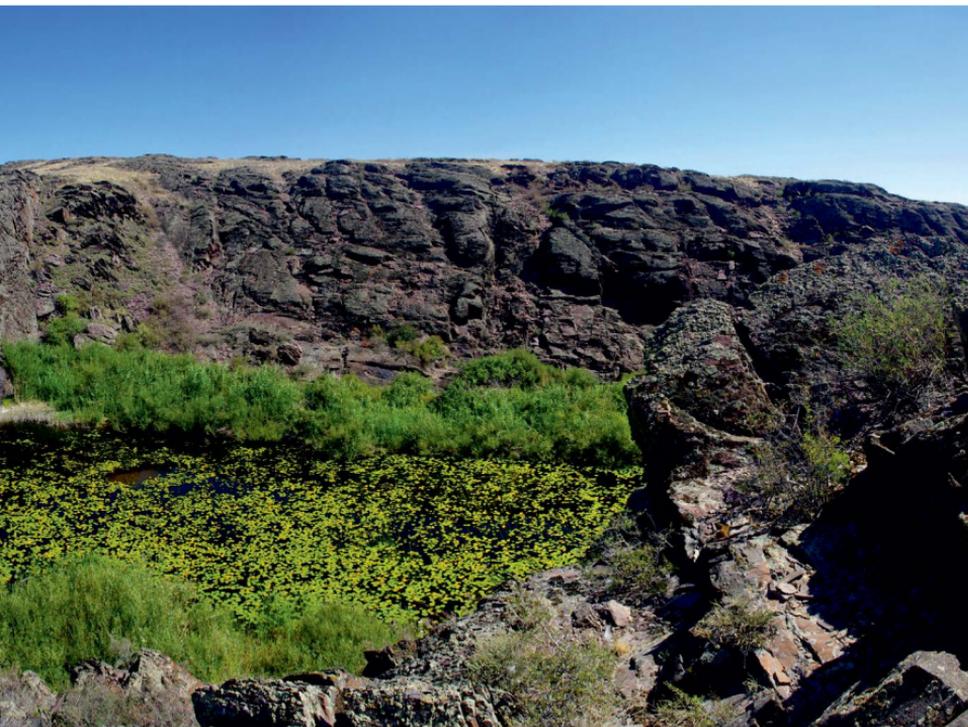
yellow-brownish and gray-brown rocks, the petroglyphs located to the south-west were carved on horizontally arranged black stones.



**Road from Sarlyk** leads to the north via Akmambet winter hut until a turn, shortly before the river Tamdy, and takes about 1 hour (24 km). Then visiting the petroglyph collections is possible if one uses the roads going along the river in both directions. Distance **from Korgasyn** to the ford through the Tamdy river makes 29 km (about 1 hour 20 min): first the road travels towards the south-west and then almost strictly to the south.

*The Tamdy river valley / Vitaliy Shuptar*





*View of the Ulytau mountains from the north-west / Vitaliy Shuptar*

## CHAPTER 7. AROUND KORGASYN

Ulytau's north-western part is of special interest for those who are fond of industrial tourism, as here one may visit a 19th century lead mine, which was developed by British industrialists. Upon visiting this area, you may also see evidence of Turgai rebellion (1916-1917) as well as the Civil War, which came right after the October Revolution and brought about the banishment of the aforementioned industrialists. Korgasyn village is the most convenient reference point for visiting all the notable sights of the region, including the Akzhar mountains, which impress travellers with their truly magical sceneries.

### **KORGASYN VILLAGE** КОРГАСЫН / ҚОРҒАСЫН

📍 **N49°12,8219' / E66°39,5368'**

Korgasyn village (also known as Shenber), which stands on the river Karaturgai, is the center of Shenber rural district and one of the largest inhabited

localities in the northern part of the Ulytau region. The village was founded in the 19th century in the vicinity of the Korgasyn lead deposit (in Kazakh korgasyn means "lead") and is now a rather good starting point for travelling in the valleys of the Karaturgai and Tamdy rivers, as well as in Saryturgai (until the Akzhar mountains themselves). Here you may also start exploring the surrounding area of the village, including mines of the old deposit and a few historical sights dating from the 19th – 20th centuries.

- **English houses** – The village has several houses, whose walls are one metre thick. Compared with local architecture, these houses have a rather unusual design.

- **Dabei Begenuly's Mazar** (*northern part of the village*) Under the roof of this mazar, which dates back to the 1890's, a man by the name of Dabei Begenuly was buried. According to alternative historical sources, this mausoleum bore the name of Zherapai-Maikyn. However, this second name rather points to the name of a person who erected the mausoleum, i.e. most probably, one of Dabei's descendants. The mazar was restored in 2011.



The English house in Korgasyn village / Vitaliy Shuptar

*Dabei Begenuly's Mazar / Vitaliy Shuptar*

### KORGASYN LEAD-SILVER MINING SITE

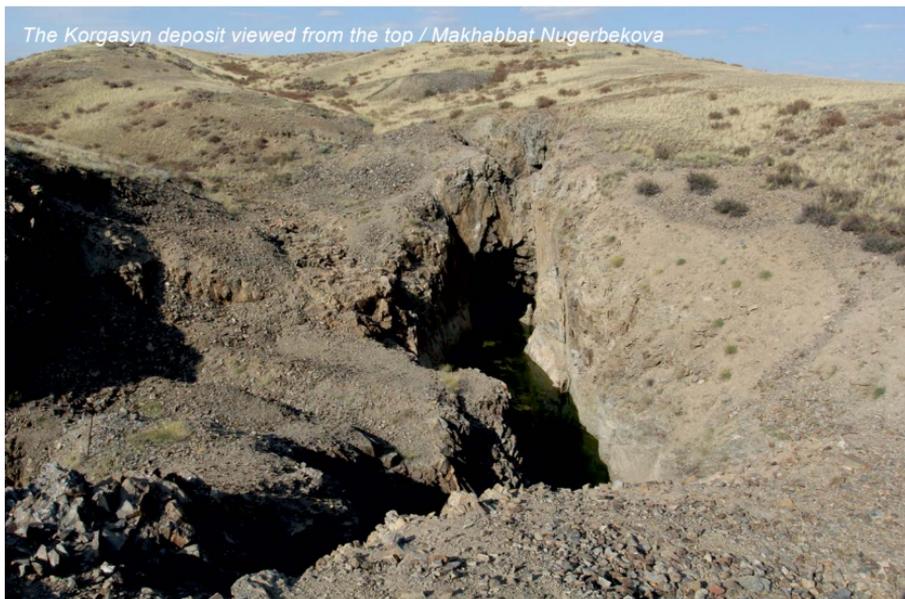
 **N49°13,5762' / E66°39,5926'**

 The village has a first aid station, a school and a couple of shops (located in its central and southern parts). "Beeline" mobile signal (very weak, without Internet) may be only picked up in one particular place in the south of the village, which is marked in the operator's corporate colours (black and yellow). There is a standpipe with drinking water located 50 m south-eastward of this place. The village does not have any public catering services, accommodation facilities or petrol stations.

 Regular transport links are non-existent. You may get to Korgasyn from Ulytau (northern exit from the village, in the direction of Arkalyk) independently by car if you drive on an awful quality gravel road, which at times turns into an asphalt road. Drive 63 km before turning to Korgasyn (about 1 hour 15 minutes). At the turn you will see the respective road sign. After turning, drive 26 km more on gravel road to the west (about 30 min).

A rich lead deposit in this area was discovered in 1813 (according to another version, in 1815) by a mining surveyor by the name of Herman on the traces of ancient mines. It would be wrong to say, however, that the deposits' reserves had not been used before it was discovered. On the contrary, local residents had been extracting lead at this deposit (for casting bullets and manufacturing various household items) for many years and even brought the products of their artisanal lead extraction to Troitsk market. One year later, an expedition led by an engineer Gens was sent here with preliminary data at their disposal. The expedition confirmed positive forecasts for Kurgasyntau mountain by coming back to Orenburg with 100 poods of shining lead ore. One year after this a more serious expedition was sent to the area, with the aim of further discovering the deposit and extracting enough ore for carrying out the first experimental lead casting in the Miasskiy plant. The

The Korgasyn deposit viewed from the top / Makhabbat Nugerbekova



deposit changed hands from the Russian to English mine owners several times. In the period between 1915 and 1918, a small smelting plant operated here. The English heritage in the Korgasyn village and mining site includes one of the most interesting houses located on the road going to the west of mines.

Visit to the mining site is a rather exciting experience. You may spend a lot of time exploring its tunnels and galleries, which are partly open to the sunlight and partly hidden underground, covered with ground water. Please bear in mind that it is recommended to have ropes and safety equipment for getting to some areas of the mining site.

 The mining site is located in close proximity to the village, on the other side of the Karaturgai river, 0.5 km to the north of Korgasyn (across ford). The mines themselves are located to the east (i.e. to the left) of the road going north from Korgasyn. One of them is located 250 m behind the ford, another one may be found 600 m to the north (behind the English house). Both mines are not visible from the road and in order to get to them you should walk about 100 m from the road.

### KEIKI-BATYR MEMORIAL AND CAVE КЕЙКИ-БАТЫР / КЕЙКІ БАТЫР

 **N49°14,9782' / E66°35,8020'**

The small monument with a metal rifle figure and a memorial plaque is located near Korgasyn village, on the bank of the Karaturgai river. Not far from this, in one of the cliffs, is the so-called Keiki-Batyr cave. The latter is not even a real cave, but rather a small grotto, which is reinforced with a low stone wall along the river-side of the cave. According to local legends, a fighter in the Civil War, which took place throughout the former Russian Empire, went into hiding here about 100 years ago. The memorial set up on the rocks, a bit higher than the shelter itself, certifies this fact.

Keiki (Nurmagambet) Kokembaiuly (1871-1923), better known as Keiki-Batyr, was a legendary Kazakh shooter, one of the rebel army leaders of the national liberation movement of 1916-1917. Keiki is believed to have headed the private guard of Amangeldy Imanov (subsequently, one of the main Kazakh red commanders) and to have especially proven himself in the Turgai town siege,

### The Turgai rebellion of 1916-1917

The Turgai rebellion was one of many protests by the people of Central Asia against the policy of Russian authorities. Although these protests were catalysed by different events, the general background was resistance to the authorities' intention of mobilizing people for working in the rear (the supply unit of an army), and a general worsening of the socio-economic situation against the background of World War I. The land question and poverty further escalated the difficult situation. This far-reaching rebellion had many hotbeds, and its Turgai section became one of the most important ones. The rebellion took place in the form of guerrilla warfare as well through direct military confrontations.

The rebels were led by Abdulgafar (Abdigappar) Zhanbosynov, appointed as Khan, (according to some historical sources, he refused to take the title of khan and was proclaimed an emir) and Amangeldy Imanov, appointed a military commander (sardar). The council of 20 people, elected by districts, managed this entire civil and military system. The unprecedented organization of the Turgai rebellion distinguished it from the other rebellion hotbeds, as the existing power structure (which collected taxes and solved all socio-economic problems) existed until the very Revolution in 1917. Against the background of the February and October revolutions, rebellion slowly turned into the Civil War.

It is worthy of note that before leading his crusade, Imanov received a blessing in the Dulygaly mosque, which is also located in the Ulytau region (you may learn more about it on page 78).

as well as in some other major battles.

He started revolutionary struggle together with Imanov and Abdulgafar (Abdigappar) Khan, but later refused to recognize Soviet authority and remained a supporter of independence and monarchy. After Amangeldy Imanov and Abdulgafar Khan were killed, Keiki-Batyr left for Ulytau. A while later, the authorities, who considered the popular shooter a potential troublemaker, ordered his arrest.

Interestingly enough, some scholars believe that the final scene of an old

Soviet movie about Amangeldy Imanov (where Imanov, together with his wife, who gives him ammunition, is firing back at the enemy's superior forces) was actually taken from Keiki-Batyr's life (the only difference being that the two warriors had different enemies). The Batyr is believed to have died together with his wife and brother in a battle, after killing six and injuring nine Red army soldiers who had surrounded his house. After Keiki and his family were killed, his head was chopped off and brought to Orenburg as evidence of his death.

*Inside the Korgasyn deposit / Vitaliy Shuptar*



It is also worthy of note that until recently Keiki-Batyr's skull had been kept in the anthropological fond of the Kunstkamera Museum in Saint Petersburg (it was delivered here in 1926 from Orenburg). The skull returned to Kazakhstan only in October 2016.

 To visit the memorial and the cave, you should leave **Korgasyn village** in the northern direction (i.e. following the road leading past the mining sites), drive 4 km before turning left (to the west), then drive another 4 km before turning to the south, to the river valley, where you'll find both sights after driving 1.5 km. This trip by car will take about 20 minutes (9.5. km). It will take you 5 more minutes to walk down the road from the monument to the cave, which is located on a rocky cliff beneath the memorial.

### MAKAT MAUSOLEUM MAKAT / MAҚАТ

 **N49°15,3868' / E66°35,2005'**

This architectural construction dates back to the early 20th century and

contains the remains of Makat of the clan tulek, a rich and educated man. Makat was the first one to be buried here, but, interestingly, his descendants have also been buried here up to now. What is more, they have been buried in compliance with a rather old tradition: corpses were not buried in the ground, but rather placed in an underground cell, divided into male and female sections. When one more family member died, the bones of the latest dead relative were placed directly in the tomb, and the new corpse took his place in the cell. At present, more than twenty descendants of Makat have been buried here in the mausoleum. There is a very narrow corridor leading to the mausoleum's roof in the portal's wall.

 If you are driving **from Keiki-batyr memorial** heading in a north-westerly direction, the way to Makat mausoleum will take about 5 minutes by car (about 1.5 km). You may also get there without passing by Keiki-batyr memorial: just drive about 8 km **from Korgasyn**, without turning to the south, but rather driving straight, i.e. to the west, for another 1.5 km.

*Keiki-Batyr Memorial / Vitaliy Shuptar*



Zhakuda-ishan Mosque / Vitaliy Shuptar



### ZHAKUDA-ISHAN MOSQUE

ЖАКУДА-ИШАН / ЖАҚҰДА ИШАН

📍 **N49°12,7381' / E66°26,9826'**

This mosque, which, among other things, once housed a madrasa, is believed to have been built in the 2nd half of the 19th century by a person named Zhakuda-ishan. It is worthy of note that the title *ishan* was commonly used for the leaders of Sufi brotherhoods, but sometimes, for instance in Central Asia, this word could also be used for referring to members of the family descended from the prophet Muhammad. All that is left of the mosque today are its walls and a minaret (which one may ascend); the roof does not exist anymore. The building has been restored several times.

The mosques-madrasas of this construction may also be seen in other corners of Ulytau (another good example is the aforementioned Dulygaly mosque, which was also built by an ishan), as well as to the west of it, in other words, on both sides of Turgai hollow.

📍 **Leave Korgasyn** using the road going to the west (that same road

which leads to the valley of the Saryturgai river and the Akzhar mountains). The entire ride (18 km) will take about half an hour. From the road leading to Akzhar, you should turn to the south: the mosque is located 800 m to the south of the main road.

### AKZHAR CHALK MOUNTAINS

АҚЖАР / АҚЖАР

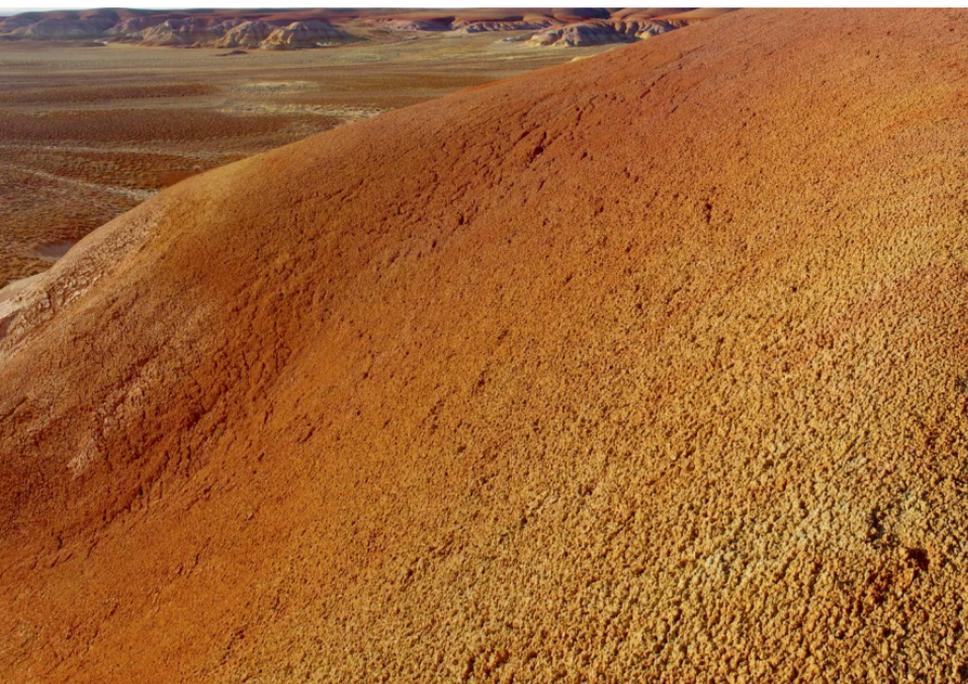
📍 **N49°13,5890' / E66°14,4608'**

The picturesque mountains of the Cretaceous period called Akzhar (or Akzhal) provide a good illustration of the saying "a picture is worth a thousand words". In order to understand the beauty of this place, you should come here on your own. It would be even better if you could take a drone with you, as it is from the birds' eye view that the mountain massif appears in all its glory (some people say that Akzhar has some truly Martian scenery). The Akzhar mountains are comprised of medium-height hills of yellow-reddish colour, which sharply contrast with the surrounding steppe. The mountains are formed from sandy loam



*Akzhar mountains / Vitaliy Shuptar*

*Akzhar mountains / Vitaliy Shuptar*





*Fibrous gypsum in the Alatau mountains / Vitaliy Shuptar*



soils mixed with gypsum (on the hilltops one may see a lot of fibrous gypsum). At the territory of the massif, you may also find some quite spacious caves, which house the nests of large birds of prey.

 You may get to the Akzhar mountains **from Korgasyn village**: simply leave the village using the road going to the west (37 km, a little over 1 hour). You may also get to the Akzhar **from Sarlyk village**. This route (about 72

km) will take about 2 hours 15 minutes. Leave the village in the western direction and after driving 13 km you'll see that the road turns slightly to the north-west, then drive almost strictly to the north until the bed of the Saryturgai river and continue further along its left bank until a ford. After crossing the ford, drive 4 km more to the north-east before reaching the Akzhar mountains. It is better to start exploring the mountain massif from its south-western side.

## CHAPTER 8. ARGANATY MOUNTAINS AND TERISAKKAN RIVER VALLEY

For time immemorial, this hilly plain, which is abundant in low bald mountains and dozens of lakes, has been popular as a hunting area, and has been where the Kazakh aristocracy spent its free time. There was a time when this place was of interest due to its archaeology, but most of the interesting sights, including stone statues and petroglyphs, have not survived up to now. However, nomadic traditions keep on living and the *Terisakkan spring* festival, which is held here annually in early May, serves as proof of it. This festival may easily immerse travellers in the atmosphere of ancient horse breeders' lives.

### **Terisakkan spring Ethnofestival**

In the last few years, the festival has been organized and held annually on May 2 by the Ulytau national historical, cultural and natural reserve-museum with the support of regional authorities. *Terisakkan spring* is all about horses. As more than 300 horses take part in the event, here one may see a variety of horse-related rituals and customs, e.g. *noktalau* (first spring milking of the mares, which have already foaled), the process of mares feeding the foals, the breaking-in of young horses and the wrestling in of non-tame horses. However, the main highlight of the festival is watching the process of horse mating, the so-called "horse love", which is given the name of *biye bailau* (stallion's marriage proposal). This ceremony is connected with the ancient fertility cult and is as old as the Kazakh steppes themselves.

The festival's guests are given a chance not only to learn about the horse-related customs, but also to familiarize themselves with Kazakh culture in general. In the framework of the festival, numerous folk games are organized, including archery, javelin throwing and ankle-bone shooting (dicing). Here ancient customs are demonstrated, and master-classes held in arts and crafts, including felt and rope making. This festival is also a good place to get to know the Kazakh national cuisine (first and foremost, kumis (fermented mare's milk) and the process of its making), as well as music and dancing.

## TERISAKKAN VILLAGE ТЕРИСАККАН / ТЕРИСАҚҚАН

 **N49°43,8182' / E67°26,6261'**

Terisakkan village, located on the bank of the river of the same name, is situated in the northernmost part of the Ulytau region. At the present time, there is a railway next to it (the railway station is located in close proximity to the village), which will quite possibly contribute to the locality's growth and development (as soon as passenger trains start running along this railway line together with cargo trains). At the moment, however, the traditional festival *Terisakkan spring*, which has centuries-old history, is the only thing that this place is famous for.



The village has a school, a few grocery and convenience stores. "Beeline" mobile connection is available (notably with good internet access). No petrol stations.



During the *Terisakkan spring* festival, several guest houses operate in the village, where you may stay for 1500-5000 KZT per person per night (full board and lodging). The guidebook's authors have no information about the working schedules of guest houses at other times.



Regular transport links are non-existent. You may get here **from Ulytau** independently by car on a gravel road of dubious quality - the trip will take about 2.5 hours (drive the first 97 km on the gravel road towards Arkalyk before turning to the north-east, i.e. to the right, following the respective road sign, then drive 43 km more until reaching Terisakkan). If you are coming **from Arkalyk**, first drive 45 km to the south-east until Zhalgyzтал (Kovilniy) station (village) on the gravel road, partly changing into an asphalt road, then pass a ford and drive 38 km more on a well-used steppe road until Terisakkan.

Horses in the steppe / Vitaliy Shuptar



### ARGANATY MOUNTAINS АРҒАНАТЫ / АРҒАНАТЫ

The Arganaty (Zhaksy-Arganaty) mountains are a small low mountain range located 50 km to the north of the Ulytau mountains. The range comprised of sparsely vegetated hills is 60 km long. The mountains' highest point is Dondygul peak (757 metres above sea level). As for fauna, here one may encounter wild bores, roe deer and elks. In wintertime, the area is sometimes inhabited by Argalis (wild mountain sheep). It may also be possible to see saiga antelope here.

Some scholars believe that the mountains' name originates from the name of the largest Kazakh tribe, *argyns* (according to one theory, their name was combined from two words, namely *argyn* and *ata*, i.e. "argyns' father"). There is another theory that argyns perceived these mountains (perhaps, one of the local peaks) as some sort of mystical legendary primal forefather.

There was a time when the Arganaty foothills were nearly considered the largest collection of the stone statues of Turkic period in Central Kazakhstan. They rose on the hills Myk, Dondygul and Ayirshoky, as well as Tulpartas spurs. However, finding them nowadays is quite challenging. At least the guidebook

authors have not managed to find any in the process of field work.



You may get to the south-western edge of the Arganaty mountains **from Ulytau** following the motorway towards Arkalyk. After driving 56 km for about 1 hour (from the roundabout in Ulytau), you will see the hills on your right – this is where the Arganaty mountains start. 1 km later, after passing Itauz winter hut and before reaching the turn to Korgasyn, you should leave the main road using an exit in the eastern direction (i.e. to the right) and follow this road heading in a north-easterly direction – this way you will gradually drive deeper into the southern part of the Arganaty mountains. If you drive more to the north, you will find other exits.

### BARAKKOL LAKE БАРАҚКОЛЬ / БАРАҚҚӨЛ

 **N49°18,9336' / E67°16,5804'**

Lake Barakkol, located east of the Arganaty mountains, is one of the largest lakes in the northern Ulytau and, at the same time, one of the most typical lakes for this area (there are many other lakes

here). The birds typical to the lakes of the Kazakh Uplands nest here: for example, in autumn the lake is inhabited by a large number of laughing geese (*Anser albifrons*) and lesser white-fronted geese (*Anser erythropus*). Furthermore, Greater flamingoes, which nest on the lakes of Korgalzhyn nature reserve, may be observed here on migration. It is worthy of note that Barakkol is situated in the south-western extension of Tengiz-Korgalzhyn depression, on the way to the North Aral sea, i.e. on one of the main migration routes, which makes it one of the popular mass stopover places for waterbirds. The lake is on the list of important bird areas in Kazakhstan, but, truth to be told, is rather more popular among hunters than birdwatchers.

The lake's name is also rather noteworthy. According to one version, its etymology may be traced back to the name of Sultan Barak - one of the notoriously famous characters of Kazakh history, who (according to the most widely spread theory) is said to have been responsible for the death of Abulkhair, the khan of Junior zhuz. Barak's castle was once located somewhere in the neighbourhood

### Blooming Tulips

It is noteworthy that the first data about the Ulytau region's flora was obtained as a result of the travels of the botanist Alexander Shrenk in the mid-19th century. And it is the tulips named after him, which had been added to the Red List (threatened and endangered species list) of Kazakhstan and are of special interest for tourists who come here in late April and early May. The region's territory (in particular, its northern part) offers a large number of places where one may enjoy the blooming of these beautiful flowers. For instance, the neighbouring area of Terisakkan village is famous for its tulips (one may find picturesque tulip fields about 5 km away from the village). One may also find the blooming tulip fields near Sarlyk village; one of them is located about 15 km to the north of the village. Those who plan to visit the tulip fields should bear in mind that every year flowers start blooming at different times and the places of their concentration tend to change with time. Therefore the easiest solution would be to ask locals about the current places where tulips are blooming.

of the lake (to the north-east of it) and his grave is now located there as well.



Follow the route described in the previous subchapter (until the



The Terisairyk water reservoir in northern Ulytau / Vitaliy Shuptar



Arganaty mountains), then keep on driving through the hills: the general direction is towards the north-east, however the road winds in and out due to the peculiarities of the hilly landscape; for

example, it goes around the Myk mountain. The distance from the motorway exit until the lake comes to 38 km. The drive takes about 1.5 hours.



## CHAPTER 9. DULYGALY-ZHYLANSHYK RIVER VALLEY

To the west of the Ulytau mountains, the low mountain plateau of the Kazakh Uplands stretches down to the southern part of Turgai hollow and the northern areas of the Turan depression. Every now and then one may encounter here the unique saiga antelope, a rare inhabitant of the desert expanses. People and signs of their activities, on the other hand, are much harder to find. Furthermore, the valley of the Zhylynskyk river (the same

river upstream is called the Dulygaly river) offers some interesting tourist attractions, some of which are of great importance to Kazakh history.

### **KULMUHAMMET-ISHAN MAUSOLEUM** ҚУЛМУХАММЕТ-ИШАН / ҚҰЛМҰХАММЕТ ИШАН

 **N48°32,2829' / E65°42,5514'**

The religious leader Kulmuhammet-ishan Arystanbauly of kipchak clan lived in the second half of the 19th century – early 20th century. He is mainly famous for being an educator who dedicated his life to teaching village children. After being educated in Bukhara (it was religious education, of course), he returned to his homeland and decided to build the Dulygaly mosque-madrassa (you may read about it below).

 **From Sarlyk** you should drive 23 km to the south-west before reaching the fords across the river Shagyrlly-Zhylynskyk, then drive on 34 km to the west before getting to the ford across the river Koilybai-bakсы-Zhylynskyk. Finally you should drive 30 km more to the south-west until reaching the mausoleum. The entire drive (87 km) will take about 2 hours.

### **DULYGALY MOSQUE** ДУЛЫГАЛЫ / ДУЛЫФАЛЫ

 **N48°32,2043' / E65°42,5749'**

It was in this mosque built of burnt bricks that participants of the rebellion of 1916-1917 received their blessing (read more about the rebellion in a box on page 67). Among them was Amangeldy Imanov, who, by the way, had been educated in the madrasa next to the mosque. For blessing the rebels, a sheep was sacrificed (its head is said to have been kept in the Kulmuhammet-ishan mausoleum to the present day). Therefore, it is believed that this

#### **Saiga antelope**

Nowadays, the northern part of the Ulytau region, and in particular those its areas which are adjacent to Korgalzhyn nature reserve, as well as the slopes of Turgai hollow, are among the places where one may see a rather rare antelope species, which was added to the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) Red List, namely the saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*). According to the IUCN classification, this species belongs to the category "CR", i.e. it is considered critically endangered. In the 1970's, the territory of Kazakhstan was populated by 1.8 million individuals of saiga antelopes, but by the 1990's their numbers had decreased so drastically due to poaching that by 2003 the population of saiga antelope was estimated at a maximum of 21,000 individuals. Environmental organizations' efforts helped to increase the number of saiga antelopes up to 108 000 individuals (according to the data counts from 2016), and this is even despite several massive population losses. It is worthy to note that the territory of Kazakhstan is inhabited by three saiga antelope populations, namely the Ustyurt, Ural and Betpakdala populations (the latter inhabits Ulytau region, as well as the areas north and north-east of it). In May 2015, the Betpakdala population suffered a massive loss: at that time 90% of the total population of 240 000 died. The saiga antelopes still suffer from poaching, albeit not so seriously as about 10-20 years ago. However, years of devastating hunting taught animals to be extremely cautious, which makes it quite challenging to see and take photos of these rare animals, especially taking into consideration their speed (about 80 km per hour).

*Dulygaly Mosque / Vitaliy Shuptar*



ceremony made Dulygaly mosque some sort of spiritual centre of the national liberation movement of the entire Turgai. There is no consensus among scholars regarding the construction date of the mosque. However, it is believed to have been built in 1902 - 1906. The mosque is currently not used. What is left of it is ruins, albeit quite well-preserved ones.

 The mosque is located 120 metres to the south of the **Kulmuhammet-ishan mausoleum**.

### BAKSY KOILYBAI'S GRAVE КОЙЛЫБАЙ / ҚОЙЛЫБАЙ

 **N48°29,7490' / E65°44,2265'**

Koilybai-bakсы of *kipchak* clan, who lived somewhere between the 9th and 10th centuries (the exact dates are, of course, unknown) was a famous healer (in Kazakh – *bakсы*), as well as a follower of Korkyt, the latter being an inventor of *kobыз*, one of the most popular Kazakh folk musical instruments. By the way, according to legends, the skills of playing *kobыз* always meant some sort of connection with the world of

magical and mystical forces. One of the most famous legends associated with Koilybai is a story of how his great skills of playing *kobыз* helped the Kazakhs to achieve victory in a horse race over the Kalmyks (i.e. Dzungars) (here one may already see historical inconsistencies from the very start, as the Kalmyk ethnos was only formed much later). There is another legend, which was retold by Shokan Valikhanov: it tells of how Koilybai's djinns, led by Nadir-Sholak djinn, managed to save their master from the *albasty* army (in Turkic mythology, *albasty* are demonic female creatures who live through exterminating little children).

The grave of Koilybai-bakсы has served as a pilgrimage destination for many centuries. More recently, a mausoleum was built around it, and a place for accommodating pilgrims was established.

 The grave is located 6 km to the south-east of **Dulygaly mosque**. From the mosque, you should drive to the south-west, pass a winter hut in order to get to a ford, then drive on to the south-south-east. In order to get to the grave, you will have to cross the ford one more time. The drive will take about 15 minutes.



Dulygaly Mosque / Vitaliy Shuptar

## CHAPTER 10. BULANTY-BELEUTY INTERFLUVE

This sparsely inhabited and deserted area between the rivers Bulanty (Baikonyr) and Beleuty (Kalmakkyrgan) was once the main theatre of operations in the war between the Kazakh and Dzungar tribes in the first half of the 18th century. It was here that the famous Bulanty battle of 1727 took place. That said, human activities in the area began much earlier, which is proved by the galleries of petroglyphs, stretching far along the rocky valley of the Baikonyr river.

### BAIKONYR VILLAGE БАЙКОНЫР / БАЙҚОҢЫР

 **N47°49,3995' / E66°02,6942'**

This inhabited area under the name of Baikonyr (Baikonur) was founded a while ago, and its foundation was closely connected with the Baikonyr coal mines, whose coal was meant to supply the Karsakpai copper-smelting plant. In our times (perhaps, also back then), Baikonyr village, located on the left bank of the river of the same name, may hardly be called a nice place to visit, as even getting fresh water, let alone finding any travel attractions here, may be quite challenging (the water used by villagers is brought from outside, and standing pipes in the village only contain salty water). However, you may and should use this village as a transit point (especially considering the fact that both motor road and railway go through this locality).



The village has no place where you can eat out or stay overnight. There is a school, a house of culture, a bath house and a few grocery and convenience stores (one of them is *Gulzira*, located in the north-western part of the village). "Beeline" mobile connection is available on site (with moderately good internet connection). No petrol stations are available.

### The Two Baikonurs

The fates and fortunes of toponyms are sometimes truly amazing. But the fact remains that the famous Baikonur cosmodrome (space port) got its name from a small and hardly remarkable village, located in the Ulytau region, over 300 km to the north-east the cosmodrome, which actually had no name of its own at that time. Following the first space rocket launch from a settlement near Tyuratam station, the Soviet military had to make an announcement about the launch for the world community. However, as they did not want to reveal the cosmodrome's real location, they came up with an elegant solution. The specialists-ballisticians announced Baikonur village as the place of the rocket launch to the entire world in accordance with the spacecraft's trajectory or, to be exact, because the village was located perpendicular to the place of the rocket's first stage separation.

This name caught on: from that time on all launches carried out from the cosmodrome were announced in the media as Baikonur launches. That said, all these years the real cosmodrome did have multiple names: Tashkent-90, Zvezdograd, Kzyl-Orda-50, Zarya settlement, Leninskiy settlement and Leninsk town. It was only in 1995 that the cosmodrome was given its present name of Baikonyr (or Baikonur).

By the way, in the vicinity of this pseudo-Baikonur some wooden mockups (and even several concrete constructions) of launching pads and other cosmodrome infrastructure elements were built in order to deceive the USA. There was even a special military unit which was responsible for maintaining this false Baikonur in a worthy condition. However, as people say, it had not prevented the Americans from learning about the real location of the cosmodrome in 1957 based on the photos received from their spy-plane.



Getting here independently by car from **Zhezkazgan** (via Zhezdy and Karsakpai) will take about 3 hours (156 km). That said, about one third of the route (its final part) goes on a rather damaged gravel road. Driving from Zhezkazgan, you may alternatively take at once the gravel road, going to the south-west of the city along the new railway line, but this will hardly make your trip easier or faster (139 km and 3.5 hours drive). The route from **Aralsk** (to be

*Baikonyr petroglyphs / Vitaliy Shuptar*



more precise, from the M32 motorway exit, located slightly to the north of Aralsk) will take about 10 hours (410 km) on an occasionally disappearing gravel road, going alongside the new railway line. You may also get to Baikonyr **from Zhosaly town** – this route will take more than 10 hours (346 km) on the old road, which used to link steppe outposts and whose initial section goes alongside the Aryskum-Zhosaly oil pipeline. You should bear in mind, however, that this road goes through the huge area of the Kumkol oil-gas deposit and along the oil pipeline, which may be problematic unless you get the permission from the deposit's administration for driving across this area. The **railroad** passes nearby the village and only one passenger train Zhezkazgan-Kyzylorda runs along it at present. This train departs **from Zhezkazgan** at 7:12 p.m. (on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays) and arrives at Baikonyr station at 10:19 p.m. (ticket price comes to 1400 KZT for a compartment car and 939 KZT for a parlour car). This train departs **from Kyzylorda** at 10:50 a.m. (on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays) and arrives at Baikonyr Station at 10:12 a.m. the next

day (ticket price comes to 1800-2000 KZT for a compartment car and 1300-1400 KZT for a parlour car). Baikonyr railway station is located 1.5 km to the south-east of the village.

### БАЙКОНЫР ПЕТРОГЛИФС БАЙКОНЫР / БАЙҚОҢЫР

📍 N47°48,9814' / E66°00,7824'

The Baikonyr (Baikonur) petroglyphs are located on the rocks stretching along both sides of the Baikonyr river for many kilometres. Most of the petroglyphs are depicted on flat stones and are located not higher than 4 metres above the river level. Here you may see horses, camels, goats, horse riders, hunting archers, men with prominent sexual characteristics, as well as sun-headed deities. The most accessible area with petroglyphs is located in close proximity to Baikonyr village. The petroglyphs here are, however, the most damaged ones, as present-day vandals have painted the rocks with modern inscriptions right over the ancient rock carvings. If you walk along the right riverbank down the stream (i.e.



Baikonyr petroglyphs / Vitaliy Shuptar

south-west), you may find many other petroglyph collections. A (lesser) part of them is also located on the left riverbank.

 The most accessible collection of petroglyphs is located 3 km away from **Baikonyr**. After leaving the village and driving strictly in a south-westerly direction, you will gradually turn to the west and pass by a small cemetery on your right. Afterwards the direction will shift to the north-west and you will finally reach the river. After crossing a foot ford, on the steep right bank of the river you will find the first rock with petroglyphs. Driving by car will take about 10 minutes. Then you should walk along the river valley in a south-westerly direction.

### BULANTY BATTLEFIELD

Nowadays it is quite hard to understand why these deserted and unwelcoming areas were so attractive for nomads and their herds. But these lands between the rivers Bulanty and Beleuty have not always been deserted. On the contrary, once valuable pasturelands were located here, something which has always been very important for nomadic tribes. It is believed that a rather obvious border between two geographical zones passed through here and that official borders were established in accordance with it, be it borders of clans' roaming areas or the sphere of influence of the Tsarist Russia during certain historical periods.

It is worthy of note that the Kazakh and Dzungar tribes, who met on this battlefield, did not only fight for pasturelands but also for the control over caravan routes and lands of strategic importance. At the same time, the results of this battle had a much greater impact on the course of this long-lasting confrontation than it may seem at first glance.

There are several interesting sights in the territory of Bulanty-Beleuty interfluvium which are associated with the Bulanty battle and are worthy of visiting. We would also like to point out that aside from the places mentioned below there are some fortification ruins and ancient

graves located here. However, these sights are rather of interest for narrowly focused specialists and are quite difficult to localize.

### Bulanty battle monument

 **N47°42,3818' / E65°55,0692'**

It is generally believed that the area located on the high right (western) bank of the Baikonyr (Bulanty) river and marked Uytas-Kumbez on the maps is the place where a commemorative memorial was built in the 18th century to the warriors who had died in the Bulanty battle. It is, therefore, the place where the battle took place, which resulted in the defeat of the Dzungar army. More recently, during our times, a seven-metre-tall stela (an upright commemorative slab) made of marble and brass was erected here. The stela combines four round shields and a spear. At some distance from the stela, and in line with its four sides stand stone plates with the names of the battle's heroes and commemorative writings carved on them.

 Leave **Baikonyr village** heading in a south-westerly direction and drive on, without turning to the petroglyphs located at the river, but rather continuing on in the same direction. After 8 km, the road will cross the river mouth under the railway bridge, then after 3 km it will go back to the left bank. Finally, after driving 14 km, you should cross the ford before Lakbai winter hut to get to the right riverbank. Then drive another 3.5 km to the south-west before reaching the monument. Driving from Baikonyr village will take about 40 minutes (18 km).

### Kalmaktobe (Kalmaktepe) hill

 **N46°59,7658' / E66°17,1331'**

In 1998, on the top of a small hill, located to the north of the river Beleuty (Kalmakkyrgan), a commemorative stone was set up on which words describing the victory of the Kazakhs over the Dzungar invaders were carved. It is known that

*Bulanty battle monument / Vitaliy Shuptar*

### **The Bulanty Battle of 1727**

It has to be told straight off that Bulanty battle was not a classical battle, which took place on one field within a short period of time, as our minds may picture it. On the contrary, it was rather a series of confrontations and clashes that had been going on for a rather long time.

In the early 18th century, tensions between the two nomadic nations, who from time to time had tried to co-exist peacefully, ended up in military confrontations. The situation was further escalated by the fact that the Dzungar Khanate continued expanding its presence and annexing the lands of the present-day Central and Southern Kazakhstan. Some scholars tend to refer to these years (1723-1730) as a patriotic war, which is, perhaps, a bit of an exaggeration – after all, the Kazakh-Dzungar relations were not that straightforward. One way or another, the winter of 1723 marked the beginning of the period which came to be known in Kazakh history as "the years of the great disaster". These were the years when the Dzungars started to ruthlessly oppress Kazakh tribes, resulting in the loss of rich pasturelands and cities, livestock reduction, and the interruption of trade relations and routes. It was at that time that representatives of three Kazakh zhuzes gradually started to join forces against the Dzungar invaders. In 1726, in a place called Ordabasy in Southern Kazakhstan, they came to the important decision of forming the all-Kazakh militia, headed by the Khan of Junior zhuz, Abulkhair.

Back then, lands to the south of present-day Zhezkazgan were in the possession of the Dzungar tribes, who had built the entire fortification system along the Beleuty river. By the way, it was this river's midstream that was subsequently called Kalmakkyrgan (i.e. "place of the Dzungars' death").

However, truth to be told, the term "Kalmakkyrgan" may be considered a quite "slippery" one, as the Bulanty river, where the battle was finished, is sometimes also called this way.

Now let us try to set forth the battle's chronology by using the most popular version. The Kazakh army approached the to-be battlefield from the south-east, coming from the Karatau mountains region. Historians assert that the Kazakh army, made up of about 30 000 warriors, met the Dzungar army, made up of about 40 000 warriors, at the junction of the rivers Beleuty and Karagaily. It was here that the Dzungars suffered their first heavy losses. Later the two armies clashed in the valley of the Kuraily river and to the north of Maitobe mountain. The Kazakh militia (now supported by the armies from Irgiz and Turgai, which joined them later) tried to stop the Dzungar divisions from going northward, to the Ulytau mountains. This is how the main theatre of operations in this war moved to a large plain called Karasuyir (or Karasiyr). Finally, the Dzungar armies were trapped in the valley of the river Bulanty and here, in canyons and ravines, most of their warriors met their doom.

The victory in the Bulanty battle became a sort of turning point in the long-lasting confrontation: it was the first time that the Kazakhs united their forces and achieved their first serious victory. In the end, this victory, which then led to a number of other victories, resulted in the liberation of the Kazakh lands from Dzungar tribes.

Dzungar fortifications and guard posts were located along the river in past. Taking into consideration this fact and the hill's name, which clearly speaks for itself (*Kalmaktobe* in Kazakh means "the Kalmyks' hill"), we may safely assume that some sort of a military object was at first situated on the hilltop, which was then taken and, perhaps, destroyed.

 **From Baikonyr** village you should first take the same road that also leads to the Bulanty battle monument. However, before Lakbai winter hut you do not need to get to the opposite river bank but should rather continue driving past the winter hut on the left bank of the Baikonyr river. After reaching the winter hut, drive about 24 km to the south to the ford across the Kuraily river, then drive another 25 km to the south until you reach the ford across the Koptal river and 50 km more before getting to the ford across the Beleuty (Kalmakkyrgan) river. From here you should continue driving to the east along the river. It is logical to do so by first going to the southern bank of the river and then driving to its northern part after 22 km. Then you should drive another 10

km on the northern bank of the river before reaching Kalmaktobe. A one-way drive will take about 4-5 hours (145 km altogether).

What is interesting is that later the Dzungars returned to this area again. However, it was not the conquests that became the reason for their return. For some reason, this fact is not really highlighted in Kazakh history textbooks and we would like to compensate for this shortcoming. Because of this, we recommend that you familiarize yourselves with the text in the box on page 87.

### THE NETWORK OF STEPPE OUTPOSTS

 **N46°57,4886' / E65°52,9017'**

It is generally believed that the network of steppe outposts in southern Ulytau was built in the late 1920's in the period of exploration of Zhezkazgan deposits. It was then that the steppe outposts (assuming that there were 18 such outposts altogether) were built along the way from



*KNGS team at the ruins of a steppe outpost / Vitaliy Shuptar*

### The Dusty march of 1771

The Kalmyks (i.e. western Oirats or Dzungars), who settled in the Volga region (on the right bank of the Volga), on the territory of present-day Kalmykia in the early 17th century, had been Russian subjects for more than 150 years. Their relations with the neighbouring Kazakh tribes were not entirely peaceful, as past confrontations had left their traces in people's memories and this was passed down through generations, with old insults surfacing every now and then. However, some sort of shaky peace between the two nations was achieved. At the same time, the Kalmyks' socio-economic situation and their relations with the Russian empire began to deteriorate. The Tsarist administration was increasingly oppressing the Kalmyks by reducing their pasturelands and considerably restricting their rights, including the right to self-government. The state of affairs prompted the Kalmyks, under the leadership of Ubashi prince (khan), to migrate south and thus attempt to return to their ancestral homeland. After all, these lands had become vacant after the Qing dynasty committed genocide against their fellow countrymen, the eastern Kalmyks, who had lived on the territory of the present-day Xinjiang (about 1 million people were killed).

According to one version, this "great migration" was aimed at restoring the Dzungar Khanate and was initiated by the powerful Kalmyk noblemen, including those who survived the genocide in Xinjiang. In accordance with another version, it was the Chinese who invited the Kalmyks, claiming that they had no problems with the Kalmyks and pointing out that the good pasturelands were left idle. One way or another, in early January 1771, about 180,000 Kalmyks crossed the Volga and set off on their long journey (they had to cover more than 3500 km), which turned out to be rather unsuccessful and was later called "The dusty march" in the Kazakh historiography.

Some historians, especially lately, tend to refer to this Kalmyk migration as to yet another Kazakh-Dzungar war, although the latter had, in fact, no expansionist aims and it is quite unlikely that there was any war at all. Most probably the Kazakhs, who had good reasons for taking revenge for old insults, used the situation and attacked the Kalmyks, who most likely did not intend any aggression. Furthermore, by driving their herds through the Kazakh territories, the Kalmyks in any case inflicted damage on the pasturelands and the Kazakhs certainly wanted to get compensation, be it by an easy or hard way. There is some evidence, that the Russian authorities further poured oil on flames by misinforming the Kazakhs and disseminating news of the coming Kalmyk attacks.

In spring 1771, the Kalmyks entered the Ulytau area, i.e. the realm of Middle zhuz, followed by the army of Junior zhuz led by Nuraly Khan. The Russian military units from Orsk led by General-Major Traubenberg, who were supposed to confront them there, arrived somewhat late, thereby giving the Kazakhs a chance to attack the enemy on their own and allowing the Russians to save their own human resources. The head of Middle Zhuz, Ablai Khan, was not very zealous in his pursuit of the Kalmyks, as he was being pressured by the Chinese to allow the Kalmyks safe passage through Middle Zhuz lands. However, some of his warriors had opinions of their own and so the pursuit of the Kalmyks went on. In the meantime, the Kalmyks kept on moving across the lands located in the south of the Ulytau mountains and went further east.

The battle (if one may call it such) at the Moiynly river (500 km to the east from the Ulytau mountains) became the climax of the entire migration campaign. After 3 days of confrontation (in fact, these were negotiations, coupled with occasional minor clashes), the Kalmyks managed to break through, divided their people into two groups and continued their journey home using the roads to the north and to the south of the Balkhash, still pursued by the Kazakhs. Only about one tenth of the Kalmyks who had left the banks of Volga eventually made it to Xinjiang.

We would like to point out that "the dusty march" left its traces in the Ulytau lands, just like in many other regions of Kazakhstan, in the form of numerous toponyms that speak for themselves. Because of the aforementioned reasons, the "Kalmakkyrgan" toponym may have either originated in the period of Kazakh-Dzungar wars or in the times of the Kalmyks' "dusty march", which had nothing to do with these wars.

Zhosaly railway station (which was the nearest to the deposit) to Karsakpai. Their main purpose was to service the camel and horse caravans bringing lumber, equipment and building materials to Karsakpai. However, some sources suggest that some of the steppe outposts (if not all) appeared a bit earlier, at least 15 years before the

described events and it was the Englishmen who set them up, notably for the same purpose, namely in order to enable the operation of the Karsakpai plant and deposits located nearby (simultaneously with the building of the portable railway line which had linked Zhosaly station and Karsakpai for 3 years).

However, some scholars assert that the building of the steppe outposts (or, at least, some of them) already started in the mid-19th century, at the time when the Russian empire was actively exploring the Kazakh steppes. Back then, these outposts were like "islands of life" in the steppe-cum-desert, which helped travellers orient themselves and survive. Water and food supplies were always stored here, and working water wells were located nearby. The steppe outposts were used for transporting the post, as well as for maintaining control over the territory in general.

At present, getting to the bottom of this matter is unfortunately quite difficult, partially due to the fact that the steppe outposts are not considered historical monuments and, therefore, are not in any way investigated or protected by the state.

 You may only get to the ruined steppe outposts independently by car using steppe roads. The nearest rather well-preserved steppe outpost (no. 11) is located 115 km to the south of **Baikonyr village**. If you drive 44 km more to the south-west, you will see the ruins of the steppe outpost no. 148. If you further

drive 19 km to the south-west from it, you will discover the ruins of the steppe outpost no. 8, whereas driving 15 km more to the south-west (to the very border of Karaganda and Kyzylorda oblasts) will bring you to the ruins of the steppe outpost no. 7. The steppe outposts are indicated under these numbers in Soviet topographical maps. The drive to the steppe outpost no. 7 will take about 6 hours. Alternatively, you may also get to the outposts **from Zhosaly town** using the old steppe road, which used to link the outposts in the past and now goes along the Arys-kum-Zhosaly oil pipeline. Getting to steppe outpost no. 7 will take about 4.5 hours (153 km). On the way, in the territory of Kyzylorda oblast, you may also see the ruins of the steppe outpost no. 4. You should bear in mind, however, that this road goes through the huge area of Kumkol oil-gas deposit and along the oil pipeline, which may be problematic unless you get the permission from the deposit's administration for driving across this area.

*KNGS team at the ruins of a steppe outpost / Vitaliy Shuptar*





**KYZYLKIYA TRACT**  
 КЫЗЫЛКИЯ / ҚЫЗЫЛҚИЯ

📍 **N46°25,4080' / E65°13,4324'**

This is one of those places whose beauty is rather difficult to express with words. In Kyzylkiya you may see some steep and rather large layered cliffs made of red loam, which paint a rather scenic picture. In a word, it is a paradise for photographers.



The tract is located to the west of the road connecting the steppe outposts and its total area is rather large. One of the most convenient viewing platforms is located 6 km to the south-west of steppe **outpost no. 7** (see the route description in the previous sub-chapter).

## CHAPTER 11. THE MIDDLE COURSE OF THE SARYSU RIVER

The local scenery may amaze even the residents of Karaganda oblast who certainly do not expect to see real desert dunes and camels, so typical in deserts, so close to their home. In order to make the impression of the desert more complete and organic, we would like to point out that one of the main caravan routes linking the central areas of Kazakhstan and the Syr Darya river valley once went through these areas, along the banks of the Sarysu river. The Zhetykonyr sands located on this route were one of the main oases.

### **BOLGAN-ANA AND KULAN-ANA MAUSOLEUMS** БОЛҒАН-АНА АНД КУЛАН-АНА / БОЛҒАН АНА АНД ҚҰЛАН АНА

**📍 N47°28,0062' / E68°00,5034'**

- **The Bolgan-Ana mausoleum** located on a high hilly riverbank is a rather good landmark in the steppe. According

to a legend, it was built for Alasha-Khan's daughter-in-law (according to another legend, for Jochi Khan's daughter-in-law). That said, other legends point out that Bolgan was a female ruler who lived in this area in the early 15th century before the Kalmyks (Dzungars) invasion, i.e. in the period of formation of the Kazakh Khanate. So, as with other historical monuments in Ulytau, it is practically impossible to say for sure who was buried here and when.

Despite the lack of trustworthy historical sources describing the origin of this construction, one may safely assume that it appeared in the neighbourhood of the fortified castle, which had belonged to a khan or sultan. On the western part of the hill (to the south of the mausoleum), one may still see the ruins of large stone constructions, which archaeologist generally classify as fortifications on the basis of the following properties: a considerably large territory, existence of a basement area, and location on a steep cliff.

According to the sign set up next to the mausoleum, the latter was built in the 11th – 12th centuries, i.e. belonging to the Karakhanids epoch. However, some



*Bolgan-Ana and Kulan-Ana mausoleums / Makhabbat Nugerbekova*



Inside the Bolgan-Ana mausoleum / Vitaliy Shuptar

scholars assume that this construction originated in the period of the Golden Horde, whereas others believe that a building of this kind could not have been built before the early 15th century. One way or another, this historical monument was already mentioned in *Sharafname-I Shahi*, which dates back to the 16th century.

The mausoleum, the height of which amounts now to about 5 metres, was built from burnt bricks and was initially covered with a dome that has not survived to this day.

- **Kulan-Ana mausoleum**, located 15 metres to the right (to the southeast) of Bolgan-Ana gives rise to many questions and is associated with a great deal of legends, just like its neighbour. Folk legends link it to the name of a Merkit woman by the name of Kulan-khatun, who was Genghis Khan's second wife and the mother of Gelejian. By the way, Gelejian was Genghis Khan's only son who was born to a woman other than Borte, but still had nearly the same rights as Genghis Khan's first four sons. According to a legend, Kulan-khatun was, in fact, the woman who was allegedly involved in Jochi's murder (find out more

about this matter by reading the text in the box on page 23). Historical sources, however, differ with regard to her biography and date of death. According to one version, she died even before Jochi Khan, long before the Ulytau lands came under the control of the Mongols. According to another version, she accompanied Genghis Khan on his campaigns to Khwarezm, died during one of them and was later buried under thick ice. One way or another, neither of the aforementioned theories make it possible to assert that Kulan-khatun was buried on the bank of the Sarysu river. However, folk legends are quite persistent and often claim to be the sole possessors of ultimate truth.

While folk legends are quite vague in naming the construction date of the mausoleum, most historians have quite solid opinions about it. They assert that this mausoleum is certainly younger than its neighbour and, most probably dates back to the 14th – 15th centuries.



In this area you may pick up mobile and mobile internet signals ("Beeline" and "Kcell").

 Both mausoleums are located on the left bank of the Karakengir river, 10 km from its influx to the Sarysu river, in a place called Karazhar. The easiest way of getting here is **from Zhezkazgan**. Leave the city using the motorway heading south-east and follow it for 37 km. Then, after seeing the respective road sign, turn left (i.e. to the east) and drive 12 km more to the east on a well-used road. On the way, among other things, you will have to cross the ford through the Karakengir river.

### ZHETYKONYR SANDS ЖЕТЫКОНЫР / ЖЕТИҚОҢЫР

 **N46°48,4591' / E68°19,5641'**

*Zhetykonyr* is actually a common noun: this is what the Kazakhs call immovable sand dunes covered with drought-resistant vegetation. By the way, the Zhetykonyr sands have always been a sort of oasis (as strange as it sounds), as at the sands' edges there were a lot of wells with drinking water, with rich pasturelands nearby. It was here that archaeologists discovered a large number of artefacts, namely arrowheads, lanceheads, as well as the stone, copper and bronze weapons

and other pieces of evidence proving that the area was inhabited by humans for a long period of time. Some scholars believe that starting from the 8th century onward, the route through Zhetykonyr was used quite extensively: trade caravans moved through the oasis and armies marched through it on their quests.

 The tiny village of Akkense, located to the west of the Zhetykonyr sands is, in fact, a meteorological station and only a few families live here. The house, which is located right next to the dunes, has a landline.

 **From Zhezkazgan** you should leave the city heading south-east and drive 60 km on the motorway. After passing the road sign to Myibulak, turn onto the gravel road going to the south-east and drive 46 km on this road until reaching Myibulak village. From Myibulak you should drive about 16 km to the south using one of the many steppe roads leading to Akkense village. When driving, stay in between the sands (in the east) and salt marshes (in the west). The drive will take about 2.5 hours.



Zhetykonyr sands / Alexandr Yermolyonok

*A lizard, Zhetykonyr sands / Alexandr Yermolyonok*



## CHAPTER 12. THE EASTERN PART OF THE ULYTAU REGION

The Terekty-Auliye tract is the main travel attraction of eastern Ulytau. Despite the fact that Terekty-Auliye is located quite far from the rest of the Ulytau tourist sights, it is definitely worth visiting. This place is mainly famous for its petroglyphs, the oldest of which date back to the Bronze Age (2000 BCE)

### TEREKTY-AULIYE TRACT

ТЕРЕКТЫ-АУЛИЕ / ТЕРЕКТИ ӘУЛИЕ

 **N48°12,7271' / E68°36,7788'**

Terekty is one of the most sacred places in the entire Ulytau region. Aside from the petroglyphs, for which this place is especially famous, one may also see here some ancient settlements and tombs, mines and springs. Furthermore, Terekty is associated with a great number of legends, so pilgrims and all sorts of mysticism fans are frequent guests at this place.

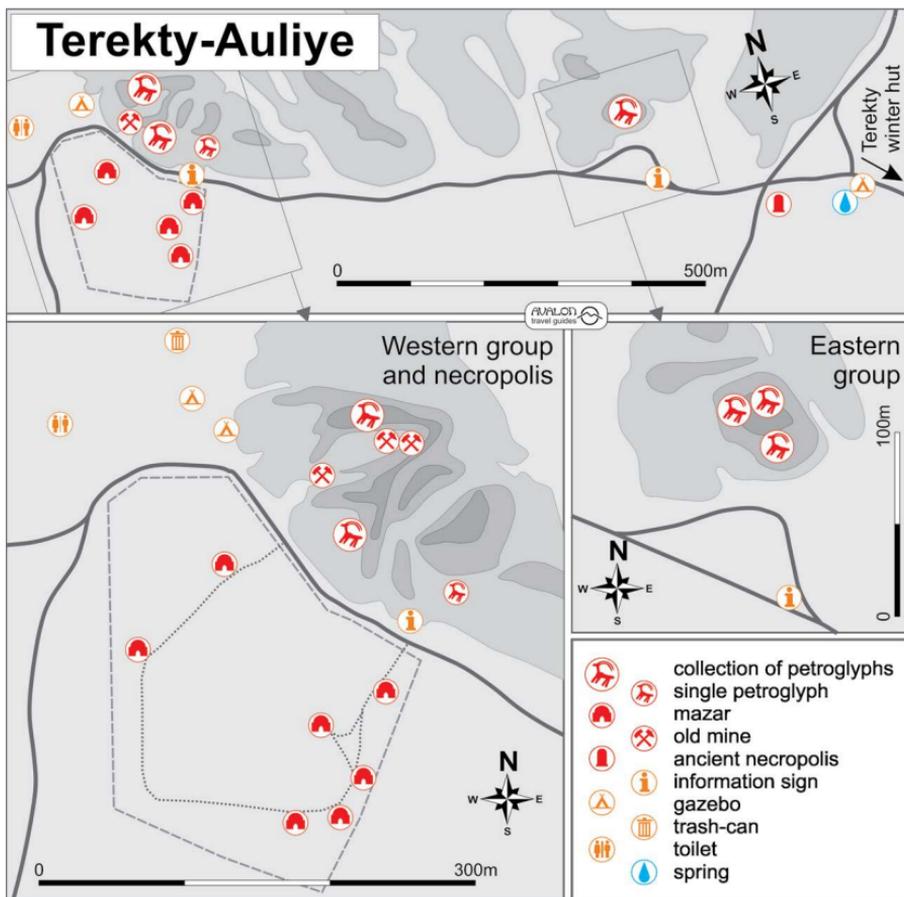
The folk legends associated with

Terekty-Auliye, as usual, have nothing to do with reality. For instance, in the western part of the complex one may find small holes in the granite rock whose shapes resemble a humans' foot and a horse hoof, as well as a large hole, where a person could easily fit. Their origin is linked with Hazret-Ali (also known as Imam Ali, who was a cousin and the closest follower of Prophet Muhammad). Ali is said to have come to this place on his horse in order to meet his death after a battle with the local nomads (based on the historical facts, however, Imam Ali never came to the territory of modern-day Kazakhstan and could not ever have even been here, as he died in 661, long before the era of Arab campaigns in Central Asia, which, by the way, never went further than Southern Kazakhstan). According to the legend, Ali drank some water from a local spring and lay down in the comfortable hole in the ground. On the next morning all his wounds were miraculously healed.

Unfortunately, most of the pilgrims coming to Terekty (if one can call them pilgrims at all, as they are often quite ignorant about the meaning and origin of this place), consider this area a mere "place of power" or a place with a strong



*Terekty petroglyphs / Vitaliy Shuptar*



energy field. This, of course, has nothing to do with Islam. At times, simplification of historical data reaches its limits, which brings here all sorts of psychics, healers, astrologists and other fans of esotericism. Of course, many ill people who lost hope in being healed by conventional medicine also come to Terekty.

- **The Terekty petroglyphs** carved on flat granite hills are divided into two groups (western and eastern) located about 400 metres distance from one another. The western hill is visited more often as it is located near the parking lot, gazebo and necropolis.

The Terekty petroglyphs date back to the period between the Bronze Age and

Middle Ages, i.e. the oldest rock carvings located here are more than 4000 years old. The most widely spread motifs are related to animals: petroglyphs mainly depict horses, but one may also see camels, oxen, goats, argalis and deer. Furthermore, one may see here the carvings of solar signs and chariots. Hunting scenes are also a popular theme.

- **Terekty necropolis.** Aside from its petroglyphs, the Terekty-Auliye tract is of special interest due to the necropolis, located to the south-west of its western hill. If one chooses to believe the plaques located here (it is a really controversial issue and few people believe them), the oldest graves in this necropolis date back





*Terekty petroglyphs / Vitaliy Shuptar*

to the 9th – 12th centuries. The following names are mentioned: Mutalip-Baba, Ospan-Baba, Zhylkaidar-Ata, Zhankar-Ata and Abylkaiyr-Ata. However, historical sources provide no information as to who these people were. In addition to the aforementioned graves made of adobe, the necropolis houses some mazars, which were built much later in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

- **The spring.** The spring, whose waters are said to have healing properties, is located to the south-east of the eastern hill, in a small depression.

- **Ancient mines.** In the western hill area one may see several mines, whose age is rather impressive. It is believed that precious stones and ore were extracted here in ancient times, whereas in modern times people attempted to extract granite here. Folk rumours, of course, turned the mines into wells, and one of them is now considered to be a "cave", which is allegedly inhabited by a two-headed snake, the guardian of Terekty.



In the north-western part of the complex one may find several gazebos, a parking area and toilets. Additionally, there is a gazebo right next to the spring.



Drive about 80 km from **Zhezkazgan** before reaching the turn to Terekty (you will see the respective information sign at the motorway). Here you should take the exit leading in the northern direction and drive on this road about 10 km to the north before getting to the winter hut. After passing the winter hut, drive another 350 m before turning to the left (i.e. to the north-west) and continue on 1.5 km until you reach the spring. If you continue 400 m further you will reach the eastern hill of Terekty and after driving another 750 metres you will get to the parking area at the western hill. The entire drive will take a little more than 1 hour. If you are driving to Ulytau from **Karaganda**, it makes sense to come here on the way: the distance from Karaganda until the Terekty exit amounts to about 450 km (5-6 hour drive).

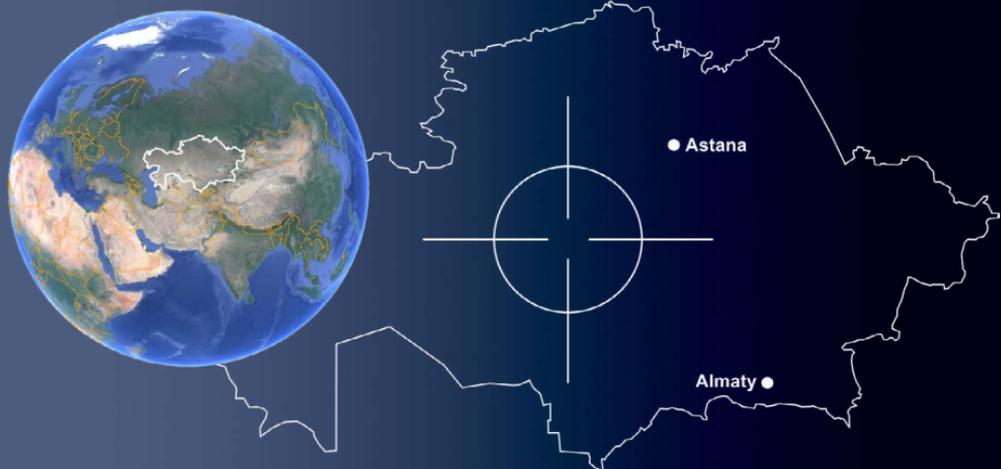
## USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

- **"Avalon" Historico-geographical society** (49/6, Bukhar-Zhyrau Ave., office 209b, Karaganda; +7 7212 996263; [avalon@guide.kz](mailto:avalon@guide.kz); [www.guide.kz](http://www.guide.kz)): activities on tourism development in Ulytau, including the elaboration of the regional ecotourism development concept, creation of the first Ulytau travel map, and guest house network development in Sarlyk village, etc. "Avalon" is the place where you can always get the most detailed information and consultation on all kinds of questions about travelling in Ulytau and Central Kazakhstan in general.
- **"Nomadic Travel Kazakhstan" Travel company** (49/6, Bukhar-Zhyrau Ave., office 209b, Karaganda; +7 7212 412165, 996165; [info@nomadic.kz](mailto:info@nomadic.kz); [www.nomadic.kz](http://www.nomadic.kz)) organises 3-7 day individual and group tours to Ulytau from Astana and Karaganda, as well as all kinds of journeys in Central Kazakhstan and its adjacent territories.



Yelena Kim ("Avalon" HGS), Auliye peak / Vitaliy Shuptar

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Kazakhstan is an amazing country located in the very centre of the Eurasian continent. It is a country with a very rich historical and cultural heritage, which has existed on the crossroad of civilizations since times immemorial. It is the ninth largest country in the world and cannot but impress with its diverse natural beauty.

Kazakhstan combines things, which may seem incompatible: endless steppe expanses of Sary-Arka, the snowy peaks of the Tien-Shan and Altai mountains, hot sands and ancient settlements of Southern Kazakhstan, deserts alternating with the sea in the western part of the country, and pine trees and clear lakes in the north.

Ulytau, a large region in the geographical centre of Kazakhstan, could be considered the heart of the country, a sort of sacred cradle of the Kazakh nation and, therefore, a rather attractive place for every traveller.

Ulytau is...

- the sacred mountain peaks of Auliye and Yedige
- the grave of Alasha-Khan, the legendary forefather of the Kazakh people
- the ancient petroglyphs of Terekty and Tamdy
- the grave of Jochi Khan, the eldest son of the great Genghis Khan
- the martian-like sceneries of the Akzhar chalk mountains
- the Terisakkan spring festival of the ancient horse breeders
- Tamerlane's plate on Altynshoky hill
- the ruins of the medieval fortresses of the Oghuzes and Kipchaks
- steppe tulips blooming and encounters with saiga antelopes
- guest houses run by locals in Sarlyk village
- the unique museum of the history of mining and smelting in Zhezdy
- visits to the sites associated with the Bulanty battle, and much more...

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