Kazakhstan

**Location:**
Kazakhstan is located in central Asia, northwest of China. China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan surround Kazakhstan. The coordinates are 48°00' N, 68°00' E. This country is 2,717,300 sq. km., which is about 4 times the size of Texas.

**Geography:**
Kazakhstan is landlocked. This country consists of the Altai Mountains, plains that connect to western Siberia, and even desert. Kazakhstan suffers from earthquakes and mudslides. The capital is Astana. Also, Kazakhstan is divided into 3 time zones, and 14 provinces, and 5 climate areas.

**Climate:**
The climate is known to be continental, with hot summers and cold winters. Also, other parts of Kazakhstan are known to be arid and semi-arid.

**History:**
Genghis Khan was one of the first to conquer this region. The Turkish tribes developed trade routes including the Silk Road that flowed east to west and the Sable Road that connected central Kazakhstan to the Altai and southwest Siberia. The first Kazakh states were formed in the late 15th Century and were ruled by the Khans. In the beginning of the 18th century, the Russian expansion reached Kazakhstan. By 1850, the entire region became known as the Tsarist Empire and Russian settlers began arriving in large numbers. The Soviet era brought terrible famine in the 1930’s and in 1936 Kazakhstan became part of the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan started to develop agriculturally and industrially. They became major producers of natural gas, coal, oil, and ferrous and nonferrous metals for the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nursultan Nazarbayev led the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. Their new constitution was
adopted in August 1995. Under the new constitution, Kazakhstan is now a unitary state with a presidential form of government.

**Important Dates:**
Independence Day is on December 16, 1991. The constitution was adopted on August 30, 1995.

**Population:**
The population (2008) is 15,284,929.

**Currency:**
Kazakhstan’s currency is the tenge. 122.39 tenge is equal to one US dollar (2008).

**Education:**
The population is 99.5% literate.

**Language:**
Sixty four percent of the population speaks Kazakh but 95% speak Russian as well. As of 2001, Russian is the official language and used in everyday business.

**Religion:**
The Religions in Kazakhstan are Muslim 47%, Russian Orthodox 44%, Protestant 2%, and other 7%.

**Agriculture:**
Agriculture is the second largest sector of Kazakhstan’s economy. The largest crop is wheat but other crops include barley, cotton, sugar beets, sunflower, flax, and rice. Majority of the arable land in Kazakhstan was depleted of its nutrients during the Virgin Lands Campaign during the Soviet Era. Sheep, pigs, horses, chickens, and goats are raised in Kazakhstan. Major animal products produced are wool, cow milk, and eggs.
Trade:
Kazakhstan imports machinery and equipment, metal products, and foodstuffs. Their import partners are Romania, Russia, and China. They export oil, ferrous metals, chemicals, machinery, grain, wool, meat, and coal. Their export partners are Italy, Germany, Russia, China, and France.

Food:
Horsemeat and mutton (meat from sheep) are the basis of majority of Kazakh dishes. Three main dishes from Kazakhstan are Kuyrdak, Shuzhuk, and Basturma. Kuyrdak is prepared from a horse, sheep, or cow and consists of the animal’s liver, heart, kidneys and other organs. Shuzhuk is a type of sausage made from smoked horse meat and Basturma is mutton eaten with fresh cucumbers and tomatoes.

Landmarks:
One main attraction in Kazakhstan is the Baikonur Cosmodrome. This is the launch complex where Sputnik 1 was launched. Sputnik 1 was earth’s first artificial satellite. This is the oldest space port in the world. Another place to visit is the Koktyube. You can take a cable car ride up to Koktyube Park and see amazing views of the town. Zenkov Cathedral is one of the Tzarist-era buildings that survived the 1911 earthquakes. In the 1990’s, it became a historical museum but now has been restored as a Russian Orthodox Cathedral.

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