

A close-up photograph of a snow leopard cub sitting in a forest. The cub has a thick, spotted coat with dark rosettes and stripes on a lighter background. It has a white chest and belly. The cub is looking directly at the camera with a calm expression. The background is a blurred forest with green foliage and brown tree trunks.

# **WANDER to WONDER**

**Vol. 42  
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2020**

**THIS  
EDITION:**

**Kazakhstan  
Winter**

# WANDER to WONDER

by MARTINA NICOLLS



**The world will never starve for wonder, but only for want of wonder.  
G.K. Chesterson**

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## editor's note

*Welcome to this edition of WANDER to WONDER*

This edition of Wander to Wonder focuses Kazakhstan in Central Asia in winter.

Until next edition, with another theme,

*Martina*

MARTINA NICOLLS





## central asia map



# kazakhstan map





# kazakhstan

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a large country spanning Central Asia and Eastern Europe. It is the world's largest landlocked country and the ninth largest country in the world with an area of 2,724,900 square kilometres (1,052,100 square miles).

Kazakhstan is bordered by Russia to the north and west, China to the east, and Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to the south. It also joins the inland Caspian Sea.

It has about 18 million people (2018 figures) with a low population density of less than 6 people per square kilometre (15 people per square mile).

Its capital was Almaty (the largest city), but it was changed to the northern city of Astana in 1997. Astana is now called Nur-Sultan.

Kazakhstan was originally the home of nomadic groups. 'Qaz' means 'to wander' and Kazakhstan is the 'land of the wanderers.' People of Kazakhstan are Kazakhs or Cossacks.

The Mongolian Empire ruled the land under Genghis Khan in the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the Kazakhs from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century it was part of the Russian Empire. Kazakhstan was the last of the Soviet republics to declare its independence on 16 December 1991.

Kazakhstan has 131 ethnicities, with 70% practicing Islam and 26% practicing Christianity. Kazakh is the state language and Russian is widely spoken.









## panfilovet's park

Panfilovet's Park on Gogol Street in Almaty, in the centre of the city, is dedicated to the Panfilov heroes. It is a memorial to 28 Almaty soldiers who died near Moscow in the conflict with Germany. Ivan Panfilov was the General during the conflict.

An eternal flame commemorates soldiers of the 1917-1920 Civil War and the 1941-1945 World War II. The eternal flame burns in front of a giant black monument of soldiers from all 15 Soviet republics.













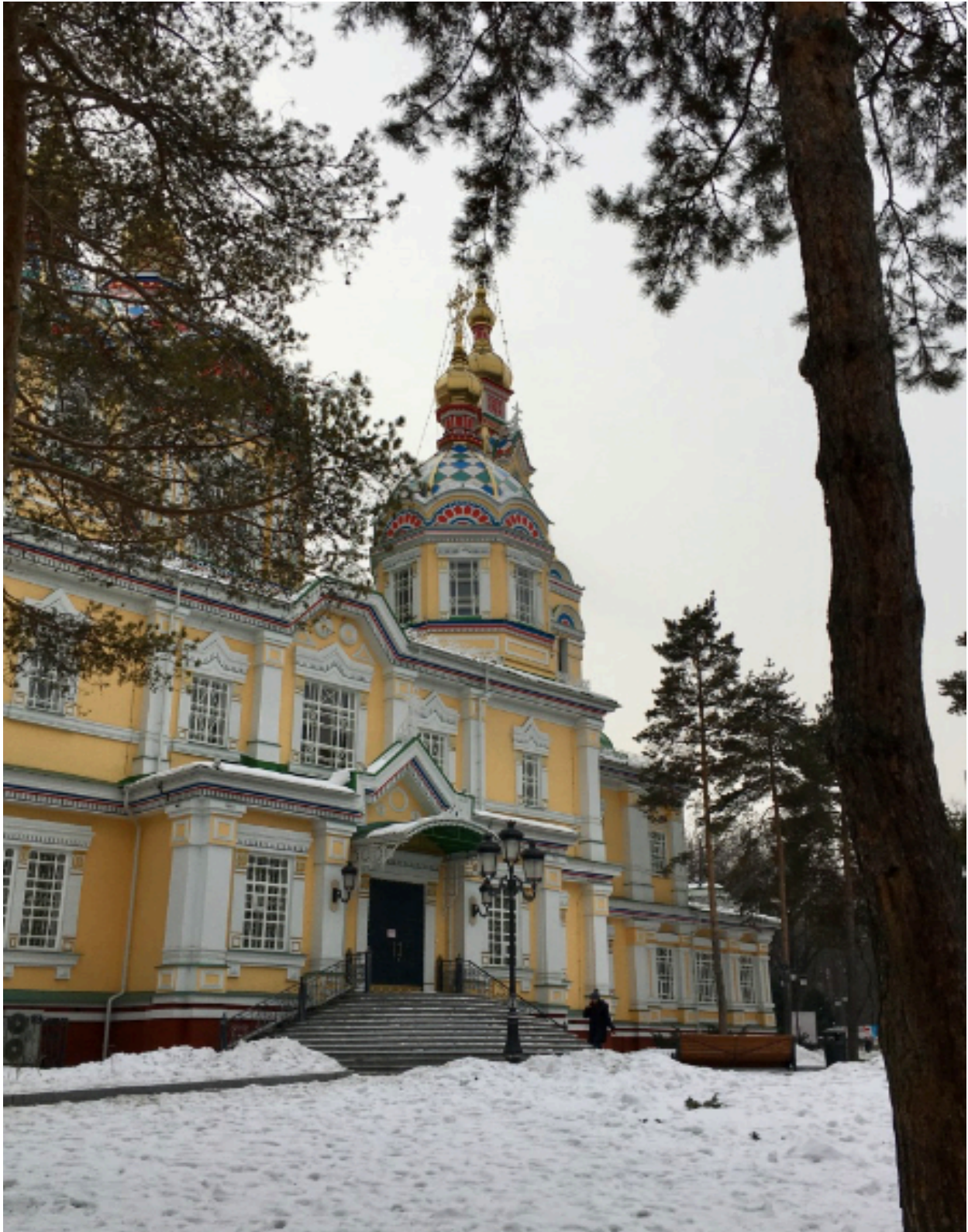
## ascension cathedral

The Ascension Cathedral in Almaty is a Russian Orthodox cathedral built between 1904 and 1907 by the architect Andrei Pavlovich Zenkov. It is also known as the Zenkov Cathedral. It is made out of wood, but without nails.

It stands 56 meters tall and is said to be the second tallest wooden building in the world. The first radio transmitters in Almaty were situated in the cathedral's belfry.

It survived the 1911 earthquake which destroyed many buildings around it. Restoration work on the cathedral began from 1973 to 1976. In 1997, after additional restoration work, it was re-opened for religious services.



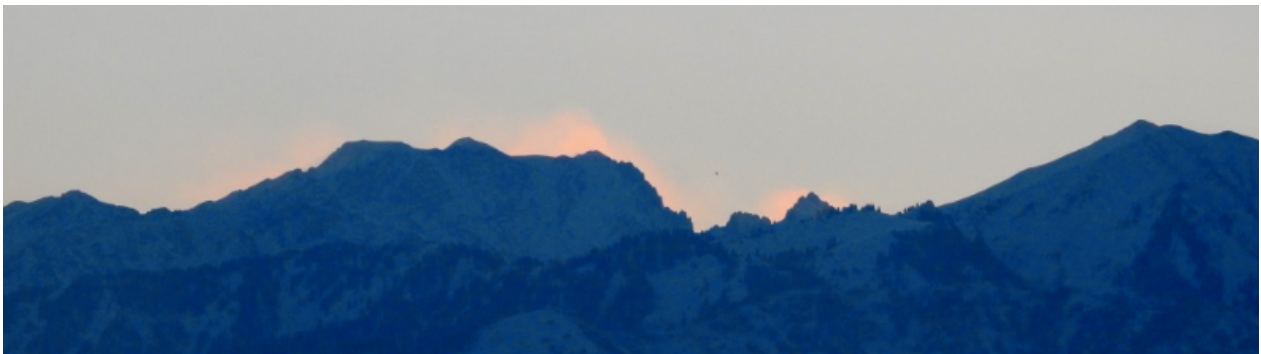




## mountains

The Charyn Canyon is 80 kilometres (50 miles) long, along the Charyn River gorge in northern Tian Shan. Tian Shan means 'Heavenly Mountains' and they are situated 200 kilometres (124 miles) east of the city of Almaty. The mountains are 150-300 metres (490-980 feet) high.

Apart from mountains, Kazakhstan is a land of flatlands, steppes, taiga, rock canyons, hills, deltas, and deserts.



## extreme climate

Kazakhstan has an extreme continental climate with warm summers and very cold winters. Nur-Sultan in the north of the country is the second coldest capital in the world, after Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia.

Nur-Sultan varies from an average of -10C to -18C (14F to -1F) in January (winter) to 27C to 15C (80F to 59F) in July (summer).

Almaty, further south, varies from 0C to -8C (33F to 17F) in January and 30F to 18F (86F to 64F) in July.



















## food































## tea







## wildlife

There are 10 nature reserves and 10 national parks in Kazakhstan. Its wildlife include wolf, red fox, corsac fox, moose, argali (the largest species of sheep), Eurasian lynx, Pallas's cat, and snow leopards.



## corsac fox

The Corsac Fox (*Vulpes corsac*) is also known as the Steppe Fox or the Sand Fox.

The Corsac Fox has yellowish-brown fur with paler underparts. It has pale markings on its mouth, chin, and throat. It has pointed ears with excellent hearing. It also has small eyes with excellent vision. It has small teeth. It measures 45-65 centimetres (18-26 inches) in length. Its tail is 19-35 centimetres (7-14 inches) long.

The Corsac Fox is native to central Asia, from Mongolia to north-eastern China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. It prefers open steppes, semi-deserts, and deserts. Unlike other foxes, the Corsac Fox stays away from humans.

The Corsac Fox is nocturnal, hunting at night. It is also nomadic, moving constantly to search for food. It is an excellent climber, but not a fast runner. Sometimes it forms a pack, but mostly it is solitary. It lives in shallow burrows underground, about one metre (3 feet) deep.

It mates for life. The female makes a nest, but when the pups are born, she moves them to the burrow. She has 2-6 live young, after a pregnancy of 52-60 days. The average lifespan of the Corsac Fox is 9 years.







## eurasian lynx

The Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) is a medium-sized wild cat. It has short reddish or brown fur in summer and thick, silky silver-grey to greyish-brown fur in winter, with a long grey and white ruff. Its underbelly, neck and chin are white. Its fur has black spots. It has black tufts of hair on its ears. It has a bobbed tail with a black tip.

It grows to 80-130 centimetres (31-51 inches) long and 60-75 centimetres (24-30 inches) to shoulder height. Its tail measures 11-24 centimetres (4-10 inches) long.

The Eurasian Lynx is native to northern, central, and eastern Europe, central Asia, Siberia, the Tibetan Plateau, and the Himalayan mountains. It prefers temperate forests and rugged country. The female is pregnant for 67-74 days, before giving birth to 1-4 kittens. The kittens have plain greyish-brown fur, and gain their colouring at around 11 weeks. The Eurasian Lynx lives, on average, for 20 years in captivity.













## pallas's cat

The Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*) is a wild cat. It is also known as a Manul. It has a shortened or flattened face. It is a stocky cat with long, dense grey fur with dark vertical bars on its body and front legs. It has white cheeks with narrow black stripes from the corners of its eyes. It has a white chin and a white throat. It has black rings on its tail. Its legs are short.

It is about the size of a domestic cat. It measures 46-55 centimetres (18-26 inches) in length with a tail measuring 21-31 centimetres (8-12 inches) long.

It is native to central Asia, in countries such as Afghanistan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, southern Russia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and western China. It is solitary. It spends the day in caves, rock crevices, or burrows. It leaves the cave in the late afternoon to hunt for food. The female Pallas's Cat is pregnant for 66-75 days, before giving birth to 2-6 kittens. The kittens have thick fuzzy fur, which is replaced by the adult coat after around 60 days. The Pallas's Cat lives up to 11 years.







## siberian sturgeon

The Siberian Sturgeon (*Acipenser baeri*) is a freshwater fish. It is elongated, similar to a shark. It has smooth scaleless skin (unlike fish that have scales). It has five lateral rows of bony plates called scutes. It grows up to 200-350 centimetres (79-138 inches) long.

It is native to all of the major Siberian rivers, mainly in the Ob River and its tributaries. It is also found in the rivers of Kazakhstan and China. The female lays more than 100,000 eggs called roe. People eat roe, called caviar. She lays the eggs upstream. The eggs hatch after 8-15 days into larval fish. The water current carries the larval fish downstream. The Siberian Sturgeon lives, on average, for 50-60 years.



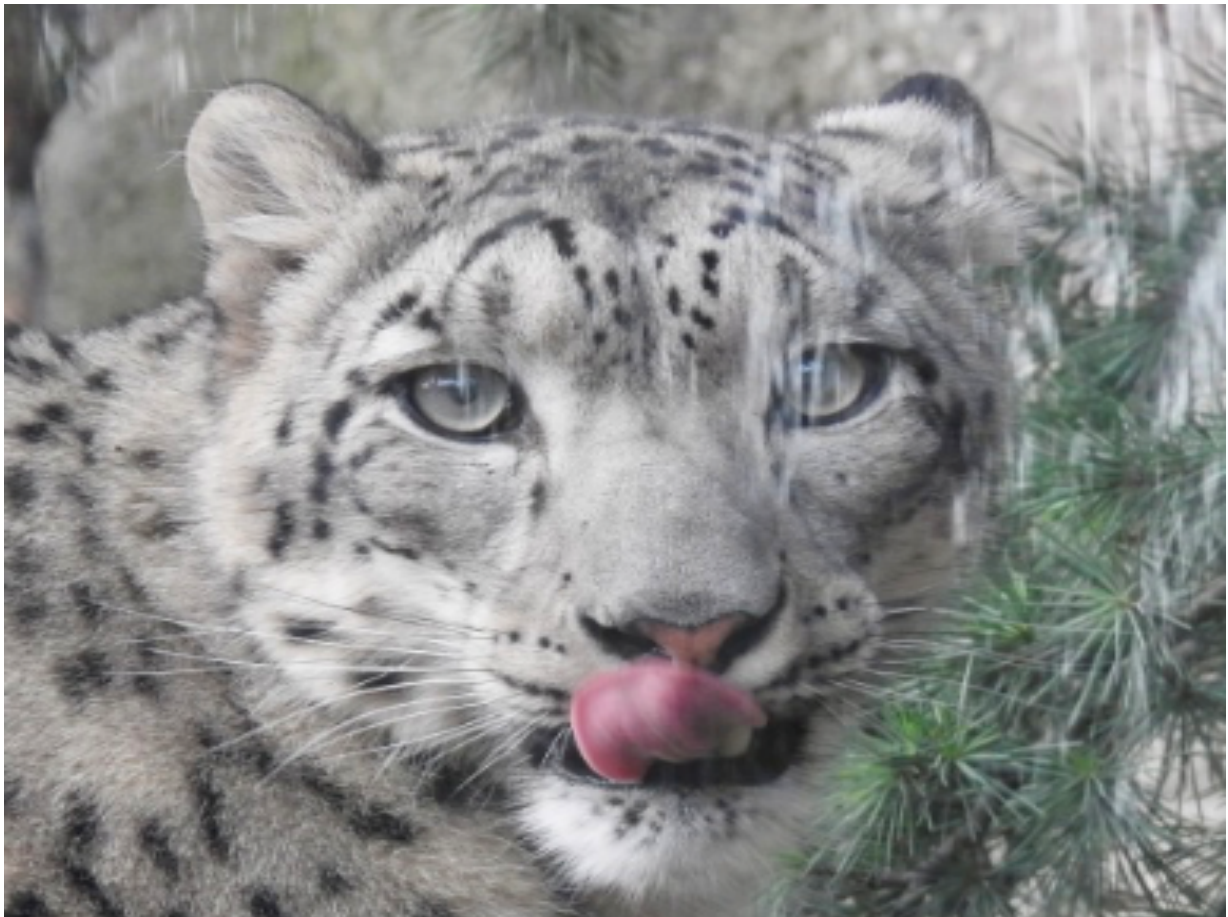




## snow leopard

The Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is a large feline from Central Asia and South Asia. It is also called the Ounce. It has thick whitish-grey fur with black spots on its head and neck, and larger rosette shapes on its back, sides, and tail. It has a whitish underbelly. Its tail is bushy, long, and flexible. It has a strong, stocky body, with short legs and broad paws. Its eyes are pale-green or grey. Its ears are small and rounded. It measures about 56 centimetres (22 inches) tall and 75-150 centimetres (30-59 inches) long. Its tail is 80-105 centimetres (31-41 inches) long.

The Snow Leopard lives in Afghanistan, Mongolia, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and the Himalayas (Nepal, India, Bhutan, and Tibet). It is territorial, solitary, shy and elusive. The Snow Leopard is pregnant for 90-100 days, before giving birth to 1-5 cubs. Its average lifespan is 15-18 years.









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I am an author and humanitarian aid consultant with over 30 years' experience in the management, implementation, and evaluation of international aid development projects, particularly in post-conflict environments and countries with transitional governments, such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Darfur, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Iraq, Liberia, Georgia, Kosovo, and Sri Lanka, and also Mauritius, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia – and others. I provide technical advice on areas such as peace-building and conflict mitigation, education, poverty reduction, human rights, child labour, human trafficking, monitoring and evaluation, and data quality.

But mostly I am a wanderer. Wherever I am and wherever I go, I take photographs and I write. My books include:

Similar but Different in the Animal Kingdom (2017)  
A Mongolian Lament (2015)  
The Komodo Verses (2012)

Liberia's Deadeast Ends (2012)  
Bardot's Comet (2011)  
Kashmir on a Knife-Edge (2010)  
The Sudan Curse (2009)

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