

# Grand Voyage Mathilde et Antoine

27/9/14, Newsletter 5

## IN A NUTSHELL :

Date: September 27<sup>th</sup> 2014 (153<sup>rd</sup> day)

Location: Irkutsk, Russia

Driven km up to date: 22 600.



PHOTOS



VIDEO

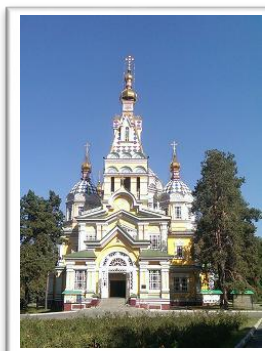


## NEWS

Unlike Turkmenistan (closed borders and economy only fed by oil and gas), the Kazakh economy is booming globally. Even though the regime of president Nazerbaev cannot but be qualified as authoritarian (ruling since USSR collapsed), the latter still adopts a very pragmatic approach. He provides the country with a long-term vision (cf. **Kazakhstan** 2050 plan) which should benefit to most of the population (good infrastructures, education). We have noticed a significant increase of the yogurt market (☺). Almaty is an effervescent town, of enjoyable size. The ethnical mixture in Kazakhstan is sticking. The displacements of populations during and after the soviet period has mixed ethnical groups, which today seem to live together in relative peace. In the rest of the country, we have rediscovered immensity (since Iran) and discovered the deserted steppes. The Kazakh people we met have been very nice to us.

After having passed an incredibly efficient border to **Russia** (we were fearing the Russia red tape, obviously we were wrong), our Siberian adventure started very intensively: terrible cold wave (snow), magnificent ballet, nice architecture, drinking night and after-drinking-night morning soup with a Siberian, grandma's afternoon snack in a dacha (the second houses in the countryside – a real institution in Russia!). Distances in Siberia are hard to conceive, as much as cold is (the river Ob, 3 times wider than the French Seine, freezes in winter!). Siberians are both robust and delicate and elegant at the same time. Oh Siberia and its extremes should continue to surprise us.

## FUNNY PICTURE



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## INTENSIVE MOMENTS :

- Hiking in the frozen valley in Ala Archa
- A week spent at Anne-Renaud-Raphaël-Sarah's. Oh yeah, the taste of home, family and daily life is so good!
- Abandoned sites of Kurchatov, former Russian nuclear test base (~500 over 1949-89)
- Stuck in the mod in Russia: 3h of work to get out!
- Discovery of the Siberian culture with Vassili in Novossibirsk (ballet, dacha and drinking evening)



**CURRENT MOOD :** Temperatures have fallen from 35° to under 0 (snow) in a week, it's freezing! We have a lot of driving ahead – we just drove 4500 km in the last 2 weeks and have the same ahead to reach Vladivostok. And our exit from Russia is not planned clearly: a nice boat to travel to Japan before our Russian visa expiry or...expulsed by the police if we missed by a few days the last ferry? Why? Local companies do not answer neither mails nor the phone, we'll see!

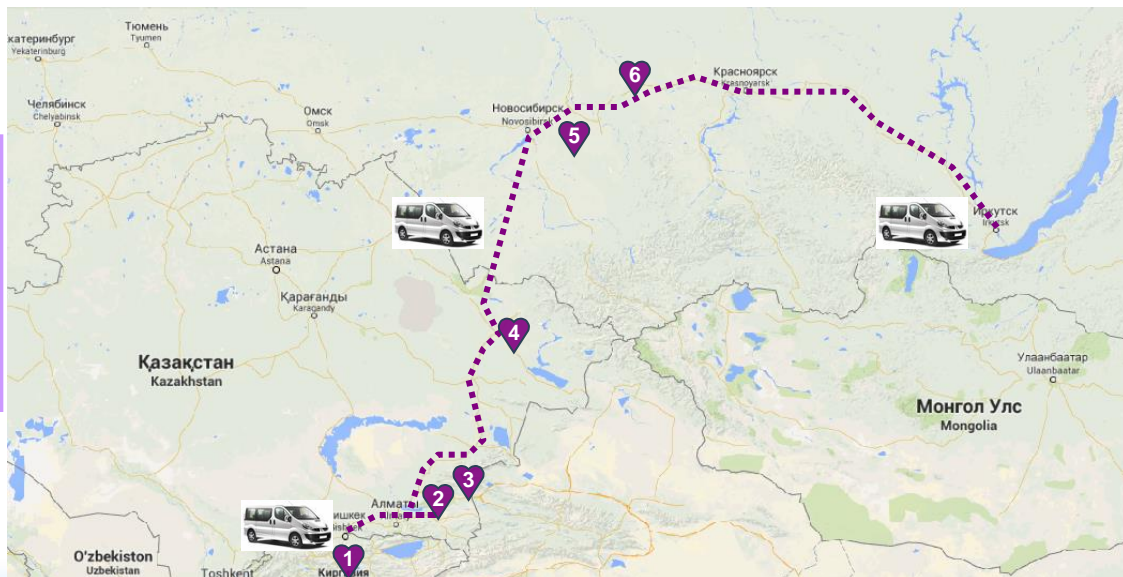


**COUNTRIES VISITED :** Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia.

**COMING :** Japan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania.



**MAP - ITINERARY :** *since the last newsletter*



1. Ala Archa parc (KIR)
2. Almaty (KA)
3. Charyn Canyon (KA)
4. Semey (KA)
5. Novossibirsk (RU)
6. Tomsk (RU)