

KAZAKHSTAN THANKS BORAT FOR POPULARITY



The Kazakhs were outraged by the 2006 British comic Sacha Baron Cohen's movie Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan. In this mockumentary, Kazakhstan is depicted as backward quasi-mediaeval racist country. The real Kazakhstan has little in common with the one presented in Borat. The makers of the movie claim they had no intention to portrait the real Kazakhstan. An example for all, the scenes from Borat's Kazakhstan home were actually shot in a Gypsy village in

Romania. Nevertheless, the anger of Kazakhs has a bit faded away as they realized that the movie has drawn positive attention to their country.

Kenzhebay Satzhanov, deputy chairman of Kazakhstan's tourism and sports ministry, said that people now want to come to Kazakhstan to learn whether the movie was telling the truth or not. Actually the movie was more successful in gaining attention of the world than governmental activities. The deputy sees the movie as a free of charge advertising. As a result, after the movie there was a 13 per cent increase in inbound tourism.

Kazakhstan was never really an interesting destination for leisure tourists, even though its popularity grows partly because of the movie. Nevertheless, the tourism industry is mainly dependent on business tourists. The country is rich in oil and gas which attracts foreign investors. Thanks to those travelers tourism industry represented 5% of the GDP in 2005. To accommodate needs of the business travelers there have been significant improvements in the accommodation and transportation infrastructure.

The country, however, may offer also certain value to leisure tourists. Kazakhstan is a country with beautiful landscapes as well as rich wildlife. It is an ideal destination for hiking, mountaineering, fishing, bird watching or hunting. Adventurous tourists may stay in Kazakh traditional tent homes, yurts, if they are bored with comfort hotel accommodation. The Kazakh tourism industry is still developing and the offer of tourism services is ever widening.

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