

THE MAUSOLEUM OF THE AHMED YASSAVI IN TURKESTAN ATTRACTS TRAVELERS



The Mausoleum of the Ahmed Yassavi in the city of Turkestan in Kazakhstan brings hundreds of thousands of tourists and pilgrims every single year, proving a popular tourism and history destination.

Capturing the hearts and attention of visitors, the unique structure of the Mausoleum was built in the late 14th century. It was built above the iconic tomb, becoming a sacred site in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Built by the Great Timurlane, the one-of-a-kind structure was centred around the Mausoleum of Khoja Akhmed Yassau. It quickly became a place of faith and religion, with many Muslims seeing it as a 'second mecca', visiting from afar to make a pilgrimage. It has since gone from being designed as a memorial to Yassawi, to becoming one of Central Asia's most commonly visited locations for worship.

Its unique architecture and design has captivated the attention of those from around the world, boasting beautiful decor, patterned designs on ceilings and unique and eye-catching tiling throughout.

Undergoing numerous renovations in its time, the building is structurally sound and continues to look attractive, despite facing challenges in its history. Some of the Mausoleum of the Ahmed Yassavi's biggest restoration works took place between 1370 and 1405, however there has been a continued effort to preserve its structure and keep it a place for worship. This preservation means it will continue to be a location which future generations are able to visit.

Having become an iconic structure, the Mausoleum of the Ahmed Yassavi is visible from 10 kilometers away from the city, with its size making the silhouette visible from afar. It has also been listed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

Made of beautiful temples and palaces, there are more than 30 rooms throughout the Mausoleum of the Ahmed Yassavi. With its impressive structural design as well as continuous work and upkeep, the interior still looks beautiful, boasting colourful mosaics, arches in the ceilings and gorgeous decorations and patterns.

The interior is like no other structure in the world; showcasing what was the largest domed roof in the territory of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Covered in green painted tiles, this dome is 39.9m above ground level at its highest point; a truly spectacular sight. Decorated with ornamental stalactites, these designs can all be traced back to specific periods of history. The preserved panel of the central hall's original mosaics is one of the most visited areas of the Mausoleum of the Ahmed Yassavi, being seen on the north side of the cauldron hall's vault.

Having so many unique aspects, those around the world have been fascinated by the structure. This has seen scholars, travellers, archaeologists and architects visit, looking to learn more, see it in person and explore.

Many notable sources have spoken about the Mausoleum. Shortly after Kazakhstan was incorporated into the Russian Empire, State Counsellor Mir Salig Bekchurin, translator of the Governor-General of Oranburg, N.A. Krizhanovskii, said: "this amazing creation of the hands of mankind, showing the skills of the masters of that time, would, without doubt, serve as a model even now with respect to artistic works of its land." The Kazakh epos Alpamis Batir also has a line which mentions the impressive structure: "It is one of the most remarkable constructions in the world of architecture and amazing creation of the children of mankind."

While the structure itself is magnificent, it is not only the building itself which attracts visitors. The unique art and craftsmanship make this tourism and pilgrimage destination completely unique. An enormous bronze cauldron is a recognisable feature, with bronze lamps, a banner with a bronze ornamental pommel and beautifully engraved doors being just some of the sights to see inside.

During its restoration works, there have been countless findings of historical pieces, for example, carved unpainted bricks which were believed to have been from the grave of Khoja Akhmed Yassawi, found in 1923 during the restoration of the roofing. In 1994, approximately 60 fragments of engraved terracotta were collected from the roof, with engraving and unique angles telling a lot about its building, design and history. Upon analysis by archaeologists, E.A. Smaghulov, said: "The first mausoleum of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi, in terms of its decorative characteristics, equaled the most elite and modern monuments of its time. As a whole, the decor of the first mausoleum of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi displays a mastery of vegetal-geometric compositions exceeding that of all of the distinctive monuments of the epoch of the Qarakhanids."

There truly is no place like the Mausoleum of the Ahmed Yassavi, as it continues to be one of the world's greatest structures, whether visiting for pilgrimage, or as a traveller.

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