

## **Carole, one daughter (2020-continuing)**

My name is Caroline, but people call me Carole. I currently live in Kazakhstan and moved here in August 2020 with my son who was 8 years old at the time, during the thick of the Covid-19 pandemic. I am a secondary teacher, specialising in Economics and Business Studies. Before this, I taught in the UK for 10 years.

Living in Kazakhstan has been a blast! It was a country I didn't know much about and have felt so welcomed and at home within the Kazah community. The students I teach are academically hungry and always strive to achieve their best. I can specialise in my area, with little behaviour issues in the classroom, which is grand!

In terms of the country, Kazakhstan has much to offer, with a continental climate. The winters offer great ski resorts, and ice volcanos (from bursting frozen hot springs), while spring and summer welcome beautiful mountain hikes and great open canyons. Daily commuting is easy with Yandex, which is the equivalent of Uber and food grocery shopping can be delivered within hours via InstaShop, along with a wide range of other items. If you love shopping, then you can visit the malls available such as Mega Centre or Dostyk Plaza. For younger families, there is a wide range of parks to visit such as Gorky Park or indoor play spaces at Atakent Mall or Forum.

In terms of daily life, English is not as widely spoken, so learning some Russian or Kazakh phrases would be useful. In the city, you can always rely on Google Translate, but when you start to wander further afield, you may find that you do not have internet availability. The Kazakh culture is very warm and friendly and there are lots of local groups to join for social activities. I am part of a hiking group that regularly meets throughout the year and have also taken a wide range of trips with local tour groups such as Joinme.Asia to places such as Turkestan, the Kazakhstan 'Venice'. This is a cost-effective way to see the county outside of the city while experiencing the local culture.

Almaty is a great city, however, there are not many international schools to choose from, which I think could be seen as a downside to the international landscape for teachers. Due to Covid and recent events, the international community has also become smaller, which can feel a bit restrictive, especially if you want to branch out of your school community (with other international folks that are). Housing has become very expensive, so in terms of packages, you will need to ensure that what you are being offered does indeed cover the housing costs. In terms of the standard and quality of apartments, this can vary widely, so be sure to have a look around. Another consideration is that winters can be hard, especially in terms of weather. I am in Almaty where it does not get as cold as Nursultan the Capital, but snow gear is definitely required. There is great fun to be had in the snow, with sledging and winter hikes, but if cold is not your thing, this may be a drawback! To live in Kazakhstan comfortably as a single person, I think you will need to earn at least \$35,000 per year, but that is with one income and good savings potential. You could live on less, but it does depend on what you are looking for.

In terms of medical, experiences can vary immensely. To get X-Rays or MRIs is super cheap, but I am not sure I would personally want to have an operation in Kazakhstan for a wide range of reasons. You therefore might want to make sure you have an inclusive policy. You can easily get a GP practice for daily medical needs, but if you want English and International standards, I would highly recommend the International Medical Centre here in Almaty. I have also had some great dental work, but again it depends where you go. I would recommend Kids Smile, although a little more expensive, they work alongside international dentistry standards.

Overall, I am happy I decided to take the leap and move to Almaty. As a Mixed Heritage Black British female, there were lots of considerations about where to live, along with being a solo parent. I can honestly say that the Kazah community have been one of the warmest in terms of embracing myself and my son, I have had the pleasure of living within! Although I will be heading out for another adventure soon, I have really enjoyed teaching the students, which I will miss the most and experience a culture unlike my own! If you are considering a move overseas, don't wait too long, I wish I had taken the leap years ago.

Carole will have a website which will launch soon, should you wish to find out more:

[www.heymsyearwood.com](http://www.heymsyearwood.com)