

# CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURIST

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## About Karakol

Nestled on the eastern tip of Lake Issyk-Kul and surrounded by the majestic Tian Shan mountains, Karakol is a picturesque town in Kyrgyzstan that boasts a rich cultural heritage and stunning natural beauty. Founded in 1869 as a Russian military outpost, Karakol has grown into a vibrant town known for its ethnic diversity and as a gateway to outdoor adventures.



One of the most captivating aspects of Karakol is its multicultural community. The town is home to several ethnic minorities, each contributing to its unique cultural and social fabric. The Dungan community, descendants of Muslim Hui people who fled persecution in China during the 19th century, has preserved its distinct language, traditions, and cuisine. The Dungan Mosque, a striking Chinese-style structure built without nails, is a symbol of their heritage. Visitors can savor Dungan culinary delights such as laghman (hand-pulled noodles) and ashlan-fu (a cold noodle soup).

Another significant group in Karakol is the Uighurs, who also migrated from China and have maintained their rich cultural identity. The Uighur community is known for their vibrant markets, traditional music, dance, and mouthwatering foods like samsa (savory pastries) and kebabs. Additionally, the Russian community, reflecting Karakol's history as a Russian military outpost, adds to the town's diverse cultural landscape. The Russian influence is evident in the town's architecture, particularly the Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, and in the presence of Russian-language schools and cultural institutions. Smaller populations of Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Tatars further enrich Karakol's cultural mosaic.

Karakol is not only a cultural hub but also a paradise for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers. The town serves as a base for trekking, skiing, and exploring nearby natural wonders. The Jeti-Ögüz Valley, with its iconic red rock formations known as the "Seven Bulls," offers breathtaking scenery and excellent hiking opportunities. The Ala-Kul Lake, a stunning alpine lake, is a rewarding destination for those who undertake the challenging trek to its shores.

In town, the Karakol Historical Museum provides insights into the area's past, showcasing artifacts from its multicultural history. The bustling Sunday Animal Market is a vibrant local event where farmers and traders gather, offering a glimpse into the region's traditional lifestyle.



The local cuisine reflects Karakol's ethnic diversity, with influences from Kyrgyz, Russian, Dungan, and Uighur communities, offering visitors a delightful culinary experience. Whether it's savoring traditional Kyrgyz dishes or exploring the flavors of Dungan and Uighur cuisine, food enthusiasts will find much to enjoy.

Karakol's blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and adventure opportunities makes it a must-visit destination in Kyrgyzstan. Whether you're drawn by the promise of outdoor exploration, the allure of diverse cultural experiences, or simply the chance to immerse yourself in the town's unique atmosphere, Karakol has something to offer every traveler.



## Our challenges

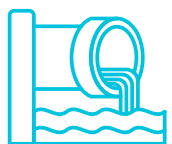
Karakol, while renowned for its stunning natural beauty and rich cultural tapestry, faces several significant environmental challenges that impact both the town and the surrounding Lake Issyk-Kul region. Addressing these issues is crucial for preserving the area's unique environment and ensuring sustainable tourism.



One of the primary environmental challenges in Karakol is its electricity supply. The town often experiences power shortages, making the use of coal for heating and energy almost unavoidable, especially during the harsh winter months. This reliance on coal contributes to air pollution and has adverse effects on the health of residents and the environment.



Additionally, Karakol is at the very early stages of developing a comprehensive waste management system. Improper disposal of waste is a common issue, leading to litter and pollution that can harm local wildlife and degrade the natural beauty of the area. Efforts are being made to introduce recycling programs and educate the public on proper waste disposal, but these initiatives are still in their infancy.



Another pressing concern is the town's sewage system, which is outdated and inadequate for the growing population and increasing number of tourists. This results in untreated sewage often being discharged into local water bodies, including Lake Issyk-Kul. The pollution of the lake poses a serious threat to its delicate ecosystem and the health of those who depend on it.





## Traveler Code of Conduct for Visiting Karakol

To address these challenges and protect Karakol's environment, we ask tourists to follow a code of conduct aimed at minimizing their ecological footprint and respecting local traditions. Here are some guidelines for responsible tourism in Karakol:

### How to prepare for the trip:

- **Read Local Regulations:** Before your trip, familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations specific to Kyrgyzstan, and any national parks or cultural/historical sites you plan to visit.
- **Research Kyrgyzstan:** Learn about Kyrgyz culture, traditions, and the specific climate conditions for the season of your visit.
- **Pack Responsibly:** To reduce plastic waste, bring a refillable water bottle, reusable dishes, own lunchbox, and your own shopping bag.
- **Know Prohibited Items:** Be aware of items that are prohibited from being imported or exported, particularly concerning flora and fauna.
- **Insurance:** Ensure you have adequate travel insurance covering health, accidents, and travel-related incidents.
- **Personal Medical Kit:** Carry your own first aid kit and any necessary medications.
- **Emergency Contacts:** Keep a list of local emergency contacts, including the nearest embassy, local hospitals, and emergency services.
- **Local Currency:** Familiarize yourself with the local currency and exchange rates. Have some local currency on hand for small purchases. Bear in mind that in some places you can only pay with Visa (not Mastercard or Maestro).
- **Make a responsible choice:** Choose tours and activities that promote sustainable and responsible tourism practices. Check which providers and accommodations are sustainability-certified (with certifications like Travelife or Good Travel Seal).



## Minimize your impact on the environment

- **No Campfires:** Avoid making campfires to protect the environment.
- **Avoid Polluting Water:** Do not wash with soap or bathe in rivers and lakes.
- **Protect Flora:** Do not break branches or damage trees.
- **Respect Wildlife:** Do not pick flowers, disturb plants, or scare animals. Avoid feeding wildlife and keep noise levels low.
- **Pre-trip Food Preparation:** Plan your food supplies in advance and repack them to reduce waste.
- **Local Transportation:** Use public transportation, bicycles, or walk when possible to reduce your carbon footprint.
- **Waste Management:** Do not litter. Sort your waste and dispose of it in designated areas.
- **Water Conservation:** Conserve water when using showers and toilets.
- **Energy Conservation:** Turn off lights and electrical appliances when not in use.
- **Reusable Utensils:** Use reusable dishes and utensils.
- **Reusable Bags:** Use your own shopping bag when visiting markets to avoid single-use plastics.





## Respect locals and their culture

- **Language Efforts:** Make an effort to learn a few key phrases in the local language beyond greetings, such as "please," "thank you," and "excuse me."
- **Community Engagement:** Participate in local activities or events to better understand and appreciate the culture.
- **Respectful Interactions:** Be polite and respectful when interacting with local residents. Be polite to staff and owners. Do not be rude or condescending.
- **Appropriate Clothing:** Dress modestly, especially in rural and conservative areas and religious sites. Women should avoid skimpy clothing and bikinis, and men should avoid very short shorts. Ensure clothing covers the knees.
- **Respect Customs:** Be prepared to remove your shoes indoors.
- **Photography Etiquette:** Do not photograph people, especially children, without permission.
- **Public Decorum:** Avoid whistling, hugging women, laughing loudly, or talking loudly.
- **Local Products:** Support the local economy by buying locally-made products, souvenirs and using local services.
- **Small Gifts:** Consider bringing small gifts as a sign of respect when visiting local communities.







## Hotel Etiquette and Safety Guidelines

- **Safety Awareness:** Familiarize yourself with fire safety rules and evacuation routes.
- **Personal Belongings:** Keep an eye on your personal belongings. Use the hotel's safe deposit services. Lock windows and doors when leaving your room.
- **Communication:** Inform the administration of any changes to your arrival or departure times. Check accepted payment methods in advance.
- **Dietary Needs:** Inform the staff of any dietary restrictions or health needs.
- **Care for Property:** Handle hotel property with care and report any damages promptly.
- **Respect Quiet Hours:** Maintain silence and avoid playing loud music in your room.
- **Shared Facilities:** Use shared facilities like pools and gyms considerately, allowing others their turn.
- **Service Hours:** Respect the operating hours of hotel restaurants, cafes, and other services.





## Behave responsible in cultural and historical sites:

- **Follow Instructions:** Adhere to all guidelines for visiting cultural sites.
- **Respect Sacred Sites:** Be aware of and respect any religious or sacred sites. Follow specific dress codes or behavior guidelines in these areas.
- **Food and Drink:** Do not bring food or drinks to cultural or historical sites.
- **Pets:** Do not bring pets unless explicitly allowed.
- **Respect Exhibits:** Do not touch exhibits and avoid using flash photography with older artifacts.
- **Quiet Respect:** Keep noise to a minimum and avoid loud conversations.
- **Cleanliness:** Do not leave litter or graffiti. Always check if photography or videography of the site is permitted before taking pictures.

