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4 of Kazan’s Must-See Sights

Got time between matches and fancy exploring the city? Don’t miss these sightseeing hotspots!

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Pixabay

The Kazan Kremlin

The Kremlin with a twist.

Kazan’s number-one sightseeing spot is, of course, the Kremlin. Archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest fortifications here date back to the 12th century, when Volga Bulgars lived in the area. In the 15th century it became the center of the Kazan Khanate, and in 1552 it fell to Ivan the Terrible’s troops. After that, the wooden fortress was replaced by one built of white stone.

That’s also when construction of Orthodox churches began, with the Annunciation Cathedral being the first. It’s still a functioning church and entrance is free. Next to it is the “leaning”

57-meter-tall Suyumbike Tower, named after the khan's widow who supposedly threw herself off its peak rather than marry Ivan the Terrible. But that's nothing more than a legend. One of the architects of the new Kremlin was Postnik Yakovlev, who is best known for designing St. Basil's Cathedral on Moscow's Red Square.

The best viewing spot is from behind the Annunciation Cathedral. Check out the newly built Dvorets Zemledeltsev (Palace of Farmers) just beyond the Kremlin walls, which houses the Agriculture Ministry and has an enormous lit-up tree at the front. Another prominent sight is the huge cauldron-shaped Kazan Family Center (wedding registry office) on the other side of the river Kazanka.

"*Kazan's number one sightseeing spot is its beautiful kremlin.*"

The recently built Kul Sharif Mosque dominates the Kremlin. It's open to everyone, but if you're not here to pray, you can only see the main hall from the balcony. The basement is occupied by the Islamic Museum, which tells the story of Islam in the Volga region and exhibits several interesting artifacts. There's a viewing platform right behind the mosque; make sure to check out the unique circus building, which looks like a UFO landing site.

At the very top of the Kremlin hill there's a long building, occupied simultaneously by the local branch of the Hermitage (which occasionally organizes good temporary exhibitions), part of the State Museum of Fine Arts of Tatarstan, and the local Natural History Museum.

OPEN *daily*

TICKETS 200 rubles

Kazan Kremlin

kazan-kremlin.ru

Ulitsa Baumana

Hip pedestrian thoroughfare.

Kazan's main pedestrian thoroughfare, Ulitsa Baumana, is full of tourists, souvenir shops and street musicians. If you are not into that kind of thing, climb the tall bell tower of the Epiphany Cathedral (Ulitsa Baumana, 78, Bldg. 2) for great views of the city. The inside of the cathedral is mostly unadorned and you can admire the perfect geometry of its architecture. Right next to the Epiphany Cathedral is the statue of famous singer Fyodor Chaliapin, a native of Kazan who once sang in the choir there.

Stop by Dom Chaya (Ulitsa Baumana, 64) for some Tatar pastries and tea. Closer to the other end of the street you can see the ornate domes of the baroque Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral

(Ulitsa Musy Dzhalilya, 21), which was at one time or another visited by all the Russian emperors.

National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan

Tatarstan through history.

This museum, located right outside the Kremlin walls (Ulitsa Kremlyovskaya, 2), is part of the huge 18th century Gostiny Dvor shopping complex. It has a great archaeology section devoted to the Volga Bulgaria and Kazan Khanate, as well as somewhat less interesting sections on 18th-20th century history. If you are a taxidermy fan (and who isn't?) check out the nature part of the museum and make sure you don't miss the 960-kilogram beluga whale.

OPEN *Tues., Wed., Fri., Sat., Sun., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thurs., 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.*

TICKETS 75 rubles

Kremlyovskaya Ulitsa, 2 tatmuseum.ru

Staro-Tatarskaya Sloboda

The old Tatar quarter.

When Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan in 1552, he expelled all ethnic Tatars beyond the city walls. That's how the Old Tatar Quarter (Staro-Tatarskaya Sloboda) was established on the shores of Lake Kaban.

Full of stone mosques, this neighborhood feels like the most authentic one in Kazan. Check out the Al-Mardjani mosque, which follows local architectural customs — its minaret rises from the middle of the main building rather than standing next to it. Make sure to remove your shoes after you enter.

The Al-Mardjani mosque is located on the eponymous street — arguably the most impressive in the Old Tatar Quarter.

OPEN *daily*

TICKETS 400 rubles

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