

## Yeani Shin, Postgraduate study visit to Almaty, Kazakhstan

Yeani Shin, MSc in Contemporary Russian and Eastern European Studies, 2011-2012, shares her reflections on a visit to Almaty, Kazakhstan, as part of her Masters programme with CREES.

**I decided to study with CREES at Birmingham**, as I had been working for an automotive company and my responsibility is supporting distributors and subsidiaries to expand car sales in markets of Russia and CIS countries. However, I realised that there was a limitation of learning through only working. To help my career, I wanted to broaden academically and practically my knowledge of Russian and CIS countries.

**Through studying with CREES**, my goal is to develop my interest and passion for the region in an academic and practical way, based on my past career. **CREES is the most** ideal place not only to learn academically but also to gain practical experience which has a good balance within multiple categories of this region.

**All of us who took part in the trip to Kazakhstan** have a strong interest in learning the Kazakh language and have been learning it since September 2011. This trip has been a valuable opportunity to improve our language skills as the country has two official languages, Russian and Kazakh.

**As part of the trip we could attend any lecture related to our interest** at the Kazakh-British Technical University (KBTU). We were also able to discuss any issue with the Kazakh students, in Russian. Also, as we stayed in a student dormitory, the students there invited us to outdoor activities (day trip, paying a paint ball, and so on) on every weekend. In other words, all local people showed us great hospitality during our journey.

**There were many benefits to taking part in this trip.** We mainly focus on the area study of former Soviet region in CREES. One of the best methods for studying the area is by staying in a region for a while to observe a real situation. I was able to build up a knowledge base to understand Kazakhstan in terms of the economic situation, general culture, and so on.

**It was also possible to speak to the younger generation in Kazakhstan** about the current and future Kazakhstan and to look at coexistence of multiple cultures, such as their own tradition and culture, the former Soviet culture, and modern (Western) culture all together. Specifically, I was impressed with the fact that they do not have serious ethnic conflict although diverse ethnics groups are living together. **The trip has been of great benefit to my research.**

**Of course, it is possible to learn a lot from lectures, reading, and from the media in the UK as well and I like studying in this way too.** By visiting Kazakhstan though, this trip has provided me with an in-depth look into the particular area that I am interested in and provided me with ideas for future study and research methods for my dissertation.

**The most enjoyable aspects of the trip** were: mixing with the native groups; speaking in Russian; learning Kazakh from the local people each day; gaining genuine information about people and their country and seeing the incredible natural landscape (the steppe region and the canyons).

**In my opinion, studying in the CREES is the ultimate choice** to gain well-balanced knowledge about the Russian, Eastern European and CIS regions.

### Course information

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