

Kazakhstan: Cycling the Beyneu to Aktau Road

Distances and Services

April 2016

This information is subject to rapid change. Correct at time of writing.

General

I cycled from Beyneu to Aktau, arriving on 11th April 2016. I took the northern route from Shetpe to Aktau, which is where most cycle tourists go (although usually in the other direction). However, the main road now goes to the south from Shetpe, and then west to Aktau. I was advised by locals to stick with the northern route, as there are more services there. The distances are pretty much identical.

All information here is correct according to my GPS at the date above.

This is no longer 'the worst road in the world', as I've seen it described. By a long way. The road 'rehabilitation' is now almost complete.

Given good winds, you can now make the run between Beyneu and Aktau in three days. However, the winds are strong both in the desert and on the coast, and will affect your travel time hugely.

You can now assume good (recent, smooth and non-potholed) tarmac / asphalt road surface everywhere except where noted in the table below (there is currently only about 6 kms of unsurfaced road remaining; I'm guessing that the whole route will be surfaced within six months or so).

The new road is a little shorter than previous measurements I've seen (from 2012/13). It will be around 470 to 475 km, depending on exactly where you start and finish at each end. From the port of Aktau, it will be a little further. Also, the shape of the road appears to have changed, meaning that previous measurements are out by a few kilometres in places.

Distances below are all from Beyneu (Hotel Arai – on Google Maps). Measurements are to the Renaissance hotel in central Aktau. And no, that's not where I stayed!

Also note that the 'road' further out, from Beyneu to the Uzbek border, is still a total nightmare. There is no surface for the last 60kms to the border; it's just dirt, compacted by trucks. This section will be unrideable due to mud if there has been any rain at all recently. In summer and winter, it will be baked or frozen into ruts, and washboarded by heavy trucks. I'd strongly suggest getting a lift to the border, unless riding every kilometre is really important to you. Tarmac / asphalt begins immediately on the Uzbek side, although it's poor in places.

A chaikhana is a roadside cafe / restaurant. Most will let you stay overnight (either for free, or for a small fee) if you need shelter in winter / spring / autumn.

Beyneu to Aktau Road - Details

Kilometres from Beyneu	What?	Comment
34	Rough Section	New bridge over railway nearly complete. Currently 2kms on rough road (bridge may be rideable; I saw a car cross while I was there).
43	Chaikhana	At milepost 374
87	Chaikhana	At junction
111	Chaikhana	New (not on previous summaries)
135	Chaikhana	
159	Chaikhana	Appeared closed – do not rely on it
184	Say Otes (town)	Several Chaikhanas on main road; no need to enter town. Large, blue place has hotel rooms for 1000T – approx \$3 – no shower, outside toilet). 2G internet coverage (Beeline)
221-225	Steep hill, rough, temporary surface; the 'Dangerous Section'	Chaikhana at top of hill is undermined by new road cutting. Currently inaccessible from road, may be closed. Do not rely on it. Good tarmac resumes at bottom of steep section.
244	Village and Chaikhana	
286	Village; 3 roadside chaikhanas	
304	New road surface stops	Switch to old tarmac surface. Not bad to ride, though frequent potholes through Shetpe and along road to Tauchik.
311	Town (Shetpe)	3G internet coverage (Beeline), supermarket, rough looking hotel. Main road heads south, 'standard' cycling route heads west.
332	Village, shops	
335	Chaikhana with 'motel'	Marked as 'Motel' in correct location on maps.me – no English or Russian spoken; clean twin room with warm shower etc 5000T – approx \$15. Chaikhana doesn't open until 9am.
352-354	Town (Zhyngyldy)	Three roadside shops, spread through town, plus large chaikhana which may have accommodation. And a go-kart track...
377	Chaikhana	
379	3 Chaikhanas. Old road surface stops; new surface from here to Aktau.	Tauchik Junction.
380	Chaikhana	
426	Chaikhana	Junction onto coast road
Approx 436	Suburbs / outlying settlements begin	Plenty of shops, cafes etc from here
473	AKTAU, Renaissance Hotel	City centre. Port is a few kilometres further south.