

Kazan - the city of the BRICS summit

From October 22 to 24, the Russian city of Kazan will host the participants of the BRICS Summit 2024. What kind of city will be at the center of the world's attention in just a few days?

René Zittlau

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Introduction

There is no doubt that the summit in Kazan will be the political highlight for the BRICS countries in 2024. Hosts of such major political events think very carefully about where to hold them. After all, choosing the right venue can send unspoken messages beyond the event itself. The choice of Kazan was also carefully considered from this point of view.

History and culture of a multi-ethnic city

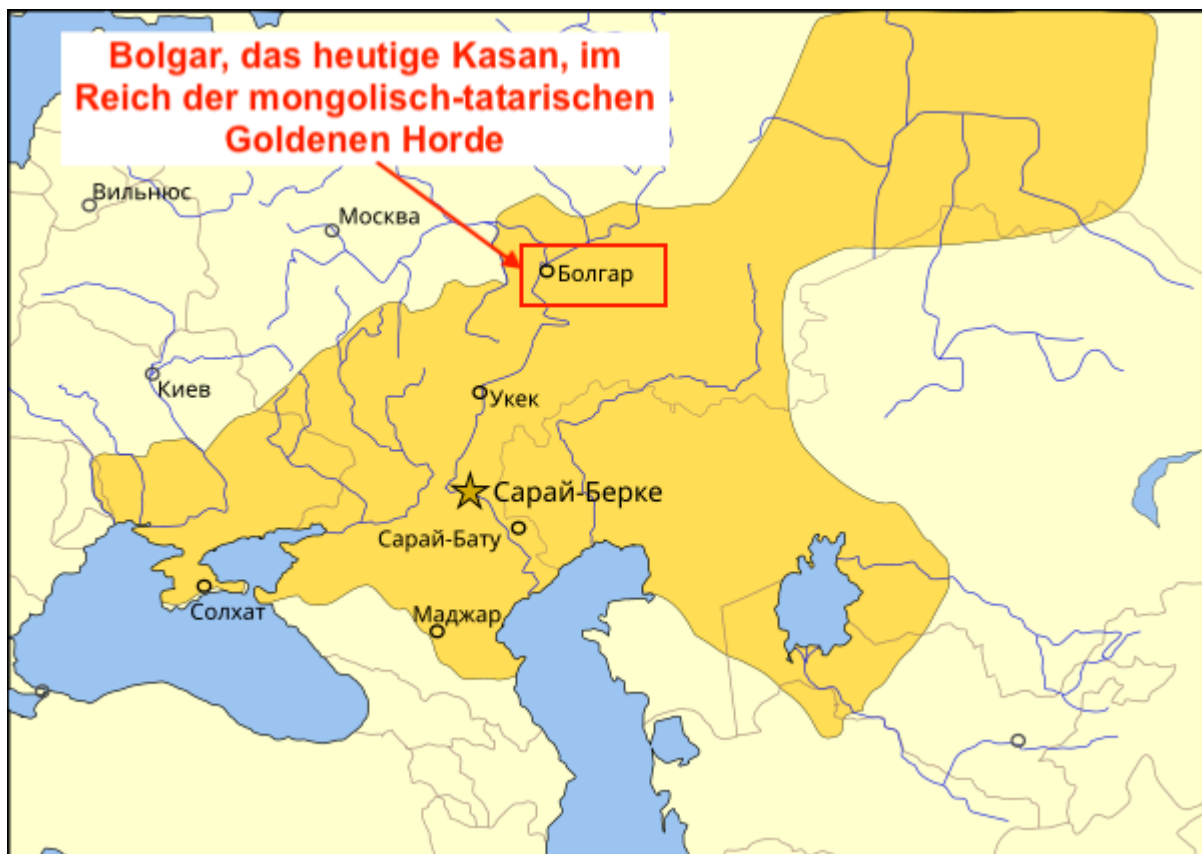
Kazan is one of Russia's oldest cities. Founded in 1005, it is almost 150 years older than Moscow. Today, over 1.3 million people live in the largest city in the Volga River basin. It is not only the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, but since 2009 it can officially call itself the third capital of Russia.

Tatarstan - Tatars - Golden Horde: this association is justified.

Until the arrival of the Mongolian Tatars, Kazan was the capital of the Volga-Bulgars, a Turkic-speaking tribe that came from the Urals and settled in the lowlands of the Don and Volga rivers.

The Golden Horde of the Tatars also ruled the region of modern-day Tatarstan from the 13th to the 15th centuries. At that time, the Mongol Tatars adopted the Muslim faith, and in 1320 Islam became the state religion.

The Volga Bulgars were incorporated into the Tatar Empire and gradually began to call themselves Tatars. They also adopted the religion.



The empire of the Golden Horde 1224 - 1459

After the Golden Horde split into two khanates - the Crimean Khanate and the Kazan Khanate - the northern one gradually came under Russian influence. It was later the first kingdom to be fully incorporated into Russia, becoming a Russian city with its oriental style and Islamic religion.

Today there are two official languages in Tatarstan - Russian and Tatar. Every schoolchild learns Tatar as well as Russian as a compulsory language, but for understandable reasons the use of Russian in everyday life predominates.

Today Kazan is a multinational city. People of more than 100 nationalities live here, more than in any other place in the vast empire. Russians and Tatars make up the largest populations in roughly equal numbers (about 48 percent).

Kazan lives this multinationality in its own special way. Symbols and places of worship of different religions can be found here in close and peaceful proximity.

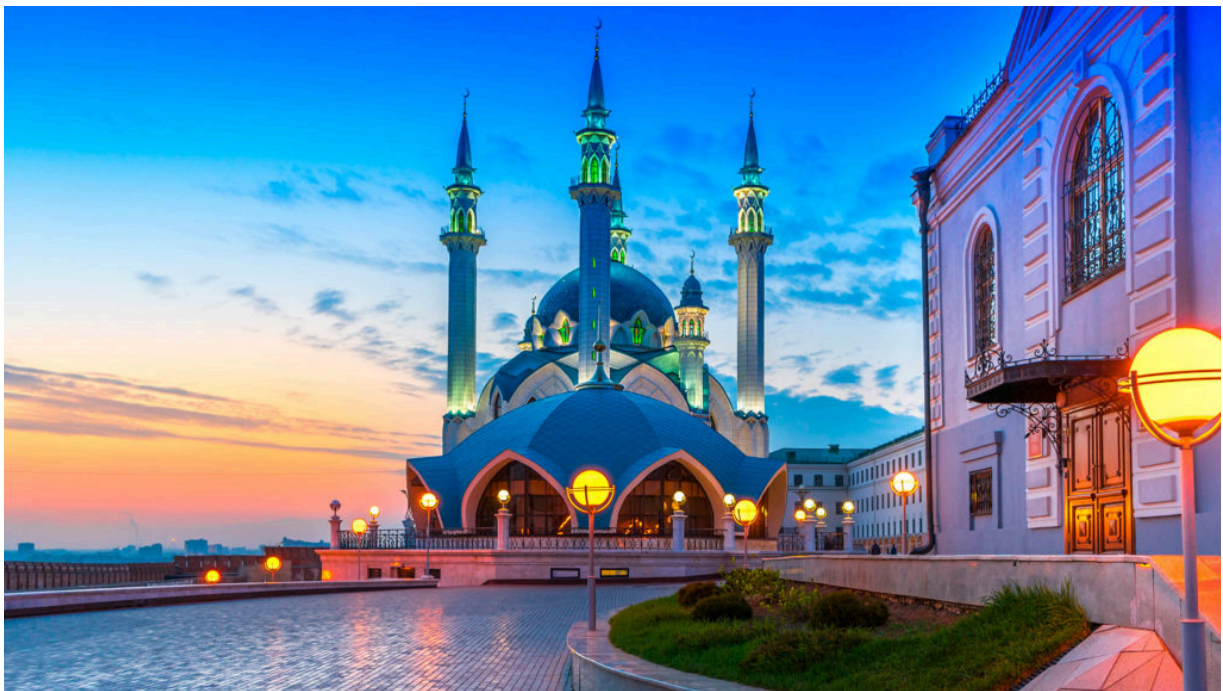
The crowned dragon Zilant is the official symbol of Kazan and has been part of the city's coat of arms since 2004. According to legend, a winged dragon-serpent lived on the very spot where Kazan was founded.



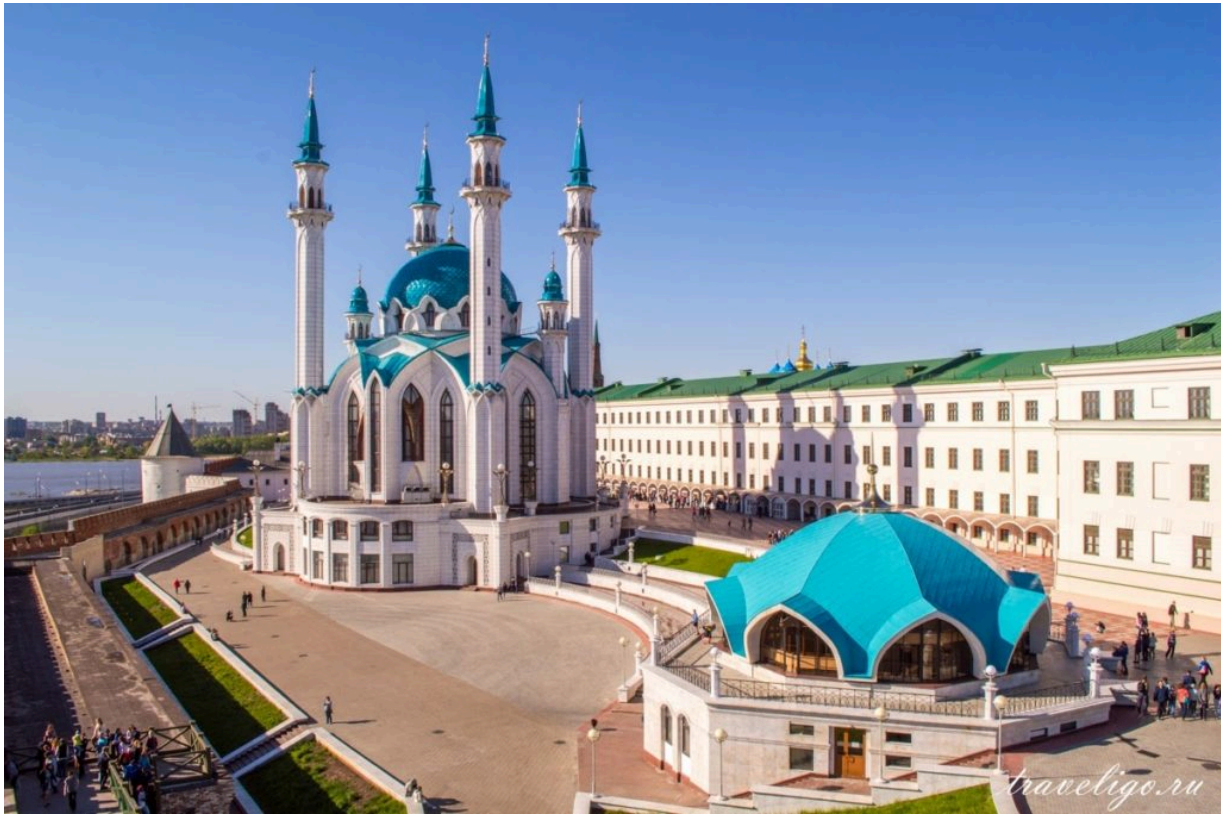
The crowned heraldic animal, usually part of Asian cultures, stands in front of the Kremlin wall and seems to protect the Kremlin and the city. One of the largest mosques in Europe, the Kul-Sharif, was built within the historic walls of the Kazan Kremlin. Surprisingly for Europeans, a Christian, Russian Orthodox church is located very close to the mosque, as the following photo shows.



Kazan - different religions living peacefully side by side

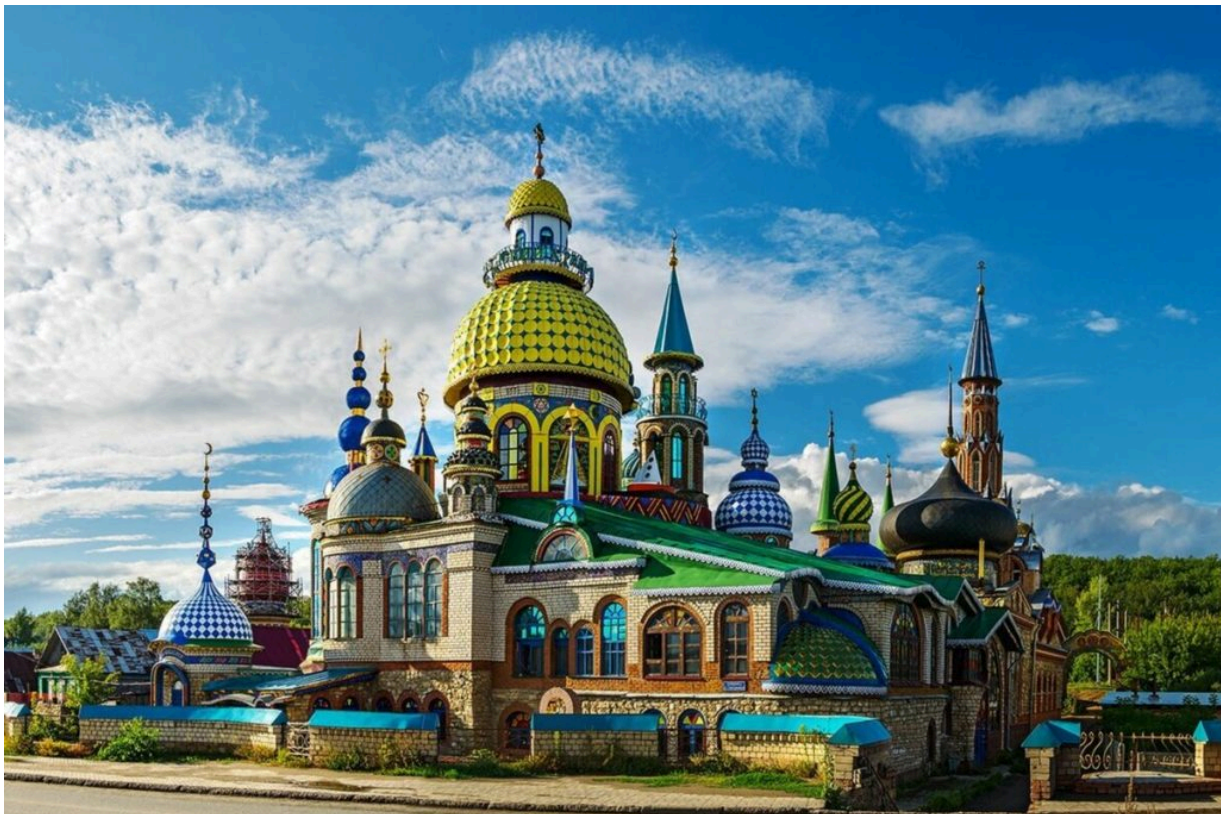


"Kul-Sharif" - the most important mosque in the Republic of Tatarstan



"Kul-Sharif" mosque inside the Kazan Kremlin.

The "Temple of All Religions", a unique building in the world, symbolizes the fact that this proximity is not only symbolic, but a consciously lived coexistence of the most diverse cultures.



Temples of all religions

Interestingly, no services or other religious rituals are held in the complex. The temple serves as an architectural symbol for all religions and as their museum. The ensemble includes an Orthodox church, a Muslim mosque, a Jewish synagogue, a Buddhist pagoda, and other objects of various denominations and religions. Due to a fire in 2017, the project has not yet been completed.

Some economic facts about Kazan

The city is home to more than 1,700 manufacturing companies, Russia's third largest financial center after Moscow and St. Petersburg, and a large number of service companies. The most important sectors are the oil and chemical industries, mechanical and plant engineering, metal and wood processing, and the food and pharmaceutical industries.

With this density of companies, the Kazan region is one of the most important industrial centers in Russia. According to official data, the value of products and services produced in 2023 was 701.5 billion rubles, or about 7 billion euros. Industrial production amounted to 627.7 billion rubles (6.2 billion euros). This figure is 9.7% higher than in the previous year.

In 2023, the average monthly salary in large and medium-sized enterprises will be 77,560 rubles, or about 780 euros. Here, too, the growth rate is high, not least because of the conflict in Ukraine.

Another important indicator of the economic situation is the unemployment rate, which stood at 0.27% on January 1. As in other regions of Russia, the search for qualified personnel is quite problematic.

Conclusion

Dragons, a mosque, a Russian Orthodox Church, a temple of all religions, an economy that makes the Kazan region the richest in Russia after Moscow. The secular power of the Republic of Tatarstan in the Kazan Kremlin is naturally and traditionally in Muslim hands. This is because Tatarstan has always been considered Muslim.

The governmental power of one of the most important regions of Russia in the hands of Muslims is not a social or political problem in liberal Russia. In Russia, this is normal and in accordance with social customs. Muslims, Jews, Christians, atheists, Buddhists, people of different nationalities and beliefs have been living

together here in Kazan, in Tatarstan, peacefully and for the benefit of all for centuries. Such a constellation would be unthinkable in Germany. Liberalism is not talked about, it is lived.

The Russian government's decision to hold the BRICS summit in this city is therefore deeply symbolic. After all, the representatives of a global alliance of states representing the most diverse world views and major religions were invited to a city that has been known for centuries for the peaceful coexistence of different faiths and nationalities. An unmistakable sign for diplomats.

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