

Kyrgyzstan

Country name	Kyrgyzstan
State title	Kyrgyz Republic
Name of citizen	Kyrgyz
Official national languages	Kyrgyz (<i>kir</i>); Russian (<i>rus</i>) ¹
Country name in official languages	Кыргызстан (<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>) (<i>kir</i> and <i>rus</i>) ²
State title in official languages	Кыргыз Республикасы <i>Kyrgyz Respublikasy</i> (<i>kir</i>); Кыргызская Республика <i>Kyrgyzskaya Respublika</i> (<i>rus</i>)
Scripts	Kyrgyz Cyrillic; Russian Cyrillic
Romanization Systems	BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Kyrgyz BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Russian
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	KG/KGZ
Capital (English conventional)	Bishkek
Capital in official languages	Бишкек (<i>kir</i> and <i>rus</i>), both romanized <i>Bishkek</i>
Population/Area	Total area 199,951 km ² ; population 7.28 million ³

Introduction

Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous, landlocked country in Central Asia, neighbouring China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Part of the Soviet Union between 1918 and 1991, it became the Kyrgyz Republic on independence in 1991.

Geographical names policy

Kyrgyz (since 1991) and Russian (since 1997) are both official languages of Kyrgyzstan. In recognition of this joint official language situation, PCGN maintains a dual-language policy for Kyrgyzstan. In practice, this means that according to the product, PCGN might recommend that geographical names appear in either a romanization of their Kyrgyz-language form, or their Russian-language form⁴, or preferentially – if space allows - in both forms separated by a solidus (/), with the Kyrgyz-language form first (where the two differ). Both Kyrgyz and Russian are written in Cyrillic

¹ ISO 639-3 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² Киргизия (*Kirgiziya*) is also used as the country name in Russian.

³ <http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/>

⁴ This would be acceptable in terms of the policy, though very unlikely to be required.

script and geographical names should be romanized according to the relevant BGN/PCGN Romanization System (for [Kyrgyz](#) and [Russian](#) as appropriate, see below).

To illustrate, a few examples are:

Bishkek (*the same romanized spelling in both languages*)

Döng-Aryk/Dën-Aryk (*kir/rus*)

Ysyk-Köl /Issyk-Kul' (*kir/rus*)

As is true across the former Soviet Union, there have been place name changes in Kyrgyzstan since independence, though fewer than in many other former Soviet countries.

Up-to-date geographical names information for Kyrgyzstan is not plentiful, and there is no official geoportal or similar. The State Service of Cartography and Geodesy of the Kyrgyz Republic (Goskartografiya) is the preferred authority for Kyrgyz map and geospatial products, published in Kyrgyz, Russian, and English. In the absence of official names sources, the NGA [GEOnet Names Server](#) is a good source of names in Kyrgyzstan.

Languages

As noted above, both Kyrgyz and Russian have official status. In the 1989 law “On the State Language of the Kyrgyz SSR”, Kyrgyz was awarded the position of state language and Russian was recorded as the “language of interethnic communication”. The 1993 Constitution of, the by then independent, Kyrgyzstan reiterated that Kyrgyz was the state language of the republic, and that Russian could freely be used for interethnic communication; in 1997 the status of Russian was elevated to becoming a co-official language, this status change making little difference to the *de facto* situation though perhaps having a greater political significance. Kyrgyz is the mostly widely-spoken language, a status that has been bolstered since independence (now almost 4 million recording Kyrgyz as mother tongue, with fewer than 0.5 million so recording Russian). Both ‘Kyrgyz’ and ‘Kirghiz’ may frequently be seen as the language name; both these spellings are used in the ISO 639 Standard on the representation of names for languages.

Writing systems

Both Kyrgyz and Russian are written in Cyrillic script. Unlike other national Turkic languages there has been little action in Kyrgyzstan towards introducing a Roman-script alphabet for the Kyrgyz language. Roman script is usually considered more suitable for the Turkic languages since it more easily caters for the sizeable number of vowels encountered in those languages and all other national Turkic languages have taken action towards adopting the Roman script (Turkey has used the Roman script since the 1920s, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Turkmen since the 1990s, and Kazakhstan is preparing to implement a newly proposed Roman alphabet).

Kyrgyz had been written in Arabic script until 1928, at which point a Roman-script alphabet was introduced by the Soviet Union. This campaign of ‘latinization’ saw the introduction of the Roman script for some 50 languages, but this campaign dwindled throughout the 1930s and by 1940 Cyrillic was introduced for Kyrgyz. To cover all the sounds of the Kyrgyz language, the Kyrgyz Cyrillic alphabet has 36 characters, 3 more than Russian, the additional characters being ң (romanized ng), ө (ö), and ү (ü).

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁵):

The **BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Kyrgyz** contains the following letter-diacritic combinations and special characters in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script (shown with the appropriate Unicode encoding):

All apostrophes appearing in romanization are U+2019, though these occur only in the romanization of Ы and ы which are found only in Russian loanwords and Kyrgyz-language place names are unlikely to include these.

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ö	00D6	ö	00F6
Ü	00FC	ü	00DC

The **BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Russian** contains the following letter-diacritic combinations and special characters in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script (shown with the appropriate Unicode encoding):

All apostrophes appearing in romanization are U+2019.

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ё	00CB	ё	00EB

⁵ See www.unicode.org

Map of Kyrgyzstan



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Administrative structure

Kyrgyzstan is divided into 2 cities (*shaar* (kir)/*gorod* (rus)) and 7 regions (*oblus* (kir)/*oblast'* (rus)) at the first-order level. The generic terms are usually represented with a lower-case initial in the original languages when they appear after the specific term (e.g. Bishkek shaary), and PCGN retains this style in the romanization.

The first two columns in the table below give the names of the administrative divisions in their Kyrgyz and Russian romanized forms, each cell showing the long form name (with generic term) with the acceptable short form name shown below.

Administrative division (ADM1) – (Kyrgyz long form and short form)	Administrative division (ADM1) – (Russian long form and short form)	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre (Kyrgyz)	Administrative centre (Russian)	Location of centre
Batken oblusu Batken	Batenskaya oblast' Batken	KG-B	Batken	Batken	40° 03' 45" N, 070° 49' 10" E
Chüy oblusu Chüy	Chuyskaya oblast' Chuy	KG-C	Bishkek	Bishkek	42° 52' 23" N, 074° 36' 01" E
Bishkek shaary Bishkek	Gorod Bishkek Bishkek	KG-GB	Bishkek	Bishkek	42° 52' 23" N, 074° 36' 01" E
Osh shaary Osh	Gorod Osh Osh	KG-GO	Osh	Osh	40° 30' 54" N, 072° 48' 30" E
Jalal-Abad oblusu Jalal-Abad	Dzhalal-Abadskaya oblast' Dzhalal-Abad	KG-J	Jalal-Abad	Dzhalal-Abad	40° 56' 00" N, 073° 00' 00" E
Naryn oblusu Naryn	Narynskaya oblast' Naryn	KG-N	Naryn	Naryn	41° 25' 43" N, 075° 59' 28" E
Osh oblusu Osh	Oshskaya oblast' Osh	KG-O	Osh	Osh	40° 30' 54" N, 072° 48' 30" E
Talas oblusu Talas	Talasskaya oblast' Talas	KG-T	Talas	Talas	42° 31' 22" N, 072° 14' 34" E
Ysyk-Köl oblusu Ysyk-Köl	Issyk-Kul'skaya oblast' Issyk-Kul'	KG-Y	Karakol	Karakol	42° 29' 26" N, 078° 23' 37" E

Boundaries

There are four Uzbek enclaves within Kyrgyzstan - two of which are of a significant size: So'x (39° 56' 49"N 71° 08' 44"E) and Shohimardon (39° 59' 00"N 71° 48' 18"E).

Barak (40°40'N 72°46'E) was a Kyrgyz exclave located within Uzbekistan until 2024. It was included in a land swap with Uzbekistan and absorbed into Uzbekistan, with Kyrgyzstan receiving an equivalent parcel of land in exchange. Barak's residents were relocated to a new settlement called Jany-Barak ("New Barak") in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan.⁶

Tajikistan has two exclaves within Kyrgyzstan: Vorukh (39°51'12"N 70°34'37"E) and Lolazor (formerly known as Kayragach) (40° 04' 09"N 69° 32' 46"E).

Vorukh is recognised as part of Tajikistan. However, the two countries disagree on whether it is entirely surrounded by Kyrgyz territory (as Kyrgyzstan claims), or whether it is connected to Tajikistan by a narrow strip of land about 20km long and 200 metres wide (as Tajikistan claims). The area is strategically important: for Kyrgyzstan, the disputed corridor provides a route between the western part of Batken province and the rest of the country; for Tajikistan, it is the only practical way to access Vorukh, due to the mountainous terrain to the south. In March 2025, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed a border agreement under which approximately 25km² of land was exchanged. Some land within the Tajik exclaves was transferred to Kyrgyzstan, and other areas were designated as neutral zones for shared use, including roads and infrastructure.⁷

⁶ <https://timesca.com/kyrgyzstan-opens-new-village-for-people-resettled-from-barak-exclave/>

⁷ <https://timesca.com/kyrgyz-tajik-villages-to-be-relocated-as-part-of-border-resolution/>
<https://timesca.com/kyrgyzstan-and-tajikistan-finalize-historic-border-agreement-ending-decades-long-dispute/>

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Approved Name	Name in romanized Kyrgyz/Russian	Conventional Name	Location	Feature Type
Chüy valley (or local names as appropriate)	Chüy öröönü (<i>kir</i>) Chuyskaya dolina (<i>rus</i>)	Chüy Valley	42° 49' 59" N 75° 16' 59" E	Valley (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan)
Fergana Valley (or local labels as appropriate: Vodii Farghona (Tajikistan) Farg'ona Vodiysi (Uzbekistan) Fergana Öröönü (<i>kir</i>) Ferganskaya dolina (<i>rus</i>)	Fergana öröönü (<i>kir</i>) Ferganskaya dolina (<i>rus</i>)	Fergana Valley	40° 46' 00" N 71° 30' 00" E	Valley (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan)
Khan Tengri (or local names as appropriate)	Khan-Tengiri (<i>kir</i>) Pik Khan-Tengri (<i>rus</i>)	Khan Tengri	42° 12' 48" N 80° 10' 34" E	Mountain (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, China)
Naryn (<i>kir/rus</i>) Norin in Uzbekistan	Naryn (<i>kir/rus</i>)	Naryn River	40° 54' 27" N 71° 45' 36" E	River
Pamir Mountains	Pamir Tooloru (<i>kir</i>) Gory Pamir (<i>rus</i>)	Pamir Mountains (or The Pamirs)	38° 00' 00" N 73° 00' 00" E	Mountain range
Pik Lenina (<i>rus</i>) Lenin Atyndagy Choku (<i>kir</i>) Qullai Abualí Ibni Sino (<i>Tajik</i>)	Pik Lenina (<i>rus</i>) Lenin chokusu (<i>kir</i>)	-	39° 20' 46" N 72° 52' 39" E	Mountain (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan)
Pik Pobedy (<i>rus</i>) Tomür Feng (<i>Uighur</i>) Jengish chokusu (<i>kir</i>) Tuomu'er Feng (<i>Chinese</i>) (labelled as appropriate)	Jengish chokusu (<i>kir</i>) Pik Pobedy (<i>rus</i>)	-	42° 02' 14" N 80° 06' 59" E	Mountain (Kyrgyzstan, China)

PCGN Approved Name	Name in romanized Kyrgyz/Russian	Conventional Name	Location	Feature Type
Tien Shan (or local names labelled as appropriate)	Tengir too (<i>kir</i>) Tyan'-Shan' (<i>rus</i>)	Tien Shan (sometimes seen Tian Shan)	42°00'00"N 80°00'00"E	Mountains (China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan)
Ysyk-Köl/Ozero Issyk-Kul' (<i>kir/rus</i>)	Ysyk-köl (<i>kir</i>) Ozero Issyk-kul' (<i>rus</i>)	-	42°25'00"N 77°15'00"E	Lake

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16186907>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kyrgyzstan/>
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#search>
- Languages: <https://www.ethnologue.com/>, www.omniglot.com
- National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic: <http://www.stat.kg/>
- Unicode Consortium: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: <https://geonames.nga.mil/namesgaz/>

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