

Nukus: Raushan's Nika Guest House

In the midst of the quiet landscapes of western Uzbekistan, Nukus, the capital city of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, stands out as an oasis, embraced by three different deserts. Mostly renowned for hosting the impressive Savitsky museum, Nukus is often visited by those who want to explore the shores of the vanishing Aral Sea, see Muynak and its cemetery of ships or wander through the boundless Ustyurt plateau.

Several vestiges of the early Zoroastrian culture and ancient fortresses have been discovered around Nukus. Archaeologists have identified the remains of settlements and defence structures from the ancient kingdom of Khorezm, bearing witness to a history still shrouded in mystery. Although less popular with international tourists than emblematic cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara, the surroundings of Nukus can be labeled as an open-air museum, carrying a unique atmosphere.



As a newcomer to the tourism sector, Raushan Tazhenovna Izimbetova was quick to acquire essential business management skills.



Nika guest house is ideally located to explore Nukus and the Republic of Karakalpakstan.



In 2018, Raushan Tazhenovna Izimbetova decided to embark on an entrepreneurial adventure by opening her family guesthouse. She is a shining example of how a pensioner can launch a new business in a completely new domain: a lawyer by education, Raushan Tazhenovna enthusiastically threw herself into the field of tourism and quickly mastered the art of hospitality. Her establishment has now the capacity to accommodate up to 10 guests and to offer all essential services.

Taking part in the training courses organised within the framework of Acted's Set to Switch project funded by the European Union's SWITCH-Asia programme has enabled her to satisfy her desire to learn. "At seminars and trainings I received all the skills and knowledge on running this business, starting from requirements for opening a guest house, to analyzing the interests of guests and providing services for business development", she recalls. Raushan was also eager to enhance the sustainability of her guesthouse and explore ways of making it greener: "By participating in a pilot project to accredit guesthouses, I learnt about the shortcomings that need to be corrected to improve my business".



To ensure sustainable, year-round electricity, "Nika House" was equipped with a hybrid photovoltaic system.



PROSPERITY AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The name Raushan chose for her family guest house, "NIKA HOUSE", carries a double meaning. Nika is the nickname of her youngest daughter, Nesibeli, which stands for "prosperity" in the local Karakalpak language. In parallel in Greek mythology, Nike is the goddess of victory, reflecting the owners' aspiration for the future of their guest house and family. Participation in the Set to Switch project came as a fruitful contribution to this journey of sustainable growth. Recognizing the good structural and insulating properties of the 2-storey brick building, a hybrid photovoltaic system was installed on the roof, which will provide continuous supply of electricity to the family guest house. A solar water heater and a filtration system were also installed.

A FAMILY SUCCESS

Satisfied with the steady progress made over the past years, Raushan is confident about the future of her guest house, which will continue to actively involve her family. "Our children and grandchildren have taken charge of promoting the business. They registered the family guest house on booking sites. As a result, we started getting guests not only from Uzbekistan, but also from abroad. We were delighted!" shares Raushan. Beyond the business dimension, the well-being of guests is at the heart of her project. "Guests enjoy staying in our house, and we receive good feedback. Guests bring positive emotions to our house! This is very important to us", she concludes.



A solar water heater was installed in the guest house's backyard, securing a stable provision of hot water.

