



## RUN DUSHANBE

### MARATHON INFO

The **Dushanbe International Half Marathon** is the main event in celebrations for Dushanbe's '*Day of the City*' and happens on the third Saturday of every April – for 2018 the race will take place on **Saturday April 21**. There is only the one race distance – the half marathon – that can be entered, and the race course is fully certified by AIMS (Association of International Marathons and Distance Races).

2018 will be the ninth edition of the race, and only the third year foreign amateur runners will have participated. Koryo Tours are very excited to present their first ever Dushanbe International Half Marathon tour to not only get you to the event, but explore this fascinating, yet relatively unknown, country.

### MARATHON ROUTE

The race route is a one way circuit taking in many of the iconic buildings, monuments and sights of central Dushanbe. The course will be lined with locals cheering you on! The time limit for the race is 3 hours and is traffic-free during this period. There are even cash prizes on offer for the top 5 finishers!

The race route is a one way street circuit course starting at the city's race course in central Dushanbe and running out into the suburbs, before circling around and heading back into the central part of the city. A scenic course and a great way to experience Dushanbe!

Many of Dushanbe's iconic buildings & sights such as the National Museum, The Dushanbe Flagpole (the second tallest flagpole in the world), the circle of Karamov, Rudaki Park and the National Parliament building all feature along the route with the finish line located at the Monument of Isomoli Somoni, Emir of the Samanid Empire and considered father to the Tajik nation.

**The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations.**

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## TOUR

April 19 - 26  
7 nights in Tajikistan

## OVERVIEW

7-night adventure tour exploring known & unknown Tajikistan, whilst also running in the AIMS-certified Dushanbe Half Marathon. Marvel at the scenery, discover fascinating history, and meet the friendliest people we know!

Incredible, yet relatively unknown, Tajikistan is one of the most unique countries in the world. In the heart of Central Asia, it not only has fascinating ancient and recent history – formerly part of all manner of empires and states up to the Soviet Union, and independence in the 1990s, but population are known for their friendly nature – rightly so in our experience. Also the country is simply filled with breath-taking scenery and views. This tour will not only get you there to experience all of this, but to also join in the local Tajik celebrations for their 'Day of the City', including running in the 2018 Dushanbe International Half Marathon!

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Participate in the little-known Dushanbe International Half Marathon, as the streets are lined with locals cheering you on
- Explore the UNESCO-listed ruins of ancient Panjikent
- Journey across the beautiful snow-capped Fan Mountains
- Camp on the shores of stunning glacial Lake Alexander
- Get a massage at the surreal Soviet health spa of Khoja Obi Garm – a surreal place like something straight from a movie

*Please note that the itinerary may differ slightly to what is below but your tour leader will do their best to ensure that as much is covered as possible and will also add in extras when there is time such as a visit to a local bar or a funfair. We visit the DPRK regularly and know all the best places to go to make your trip even more unique. We will make the most of your time in the DPRK to guarantee the experience of a lifetime.*

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## DAILY ITINERARY

### APRIL 19 – THURSDAY (ARRIVAL IN DUSHANBE)

#### AM

- The tour group meets at 13.30 in the hotel reception for an orientation & introduction meeting.

#### PM

- Afternoon drive to **Hissar Fortress**. This large and impressive site is said to date back to the days of Cyrus the Great (around 600BC) and to have been captured 21 times by invading forces – making one question how effective a fortress it is!. Much of this area has been restored over the years and there is a lovely museum offering a nice introduction to the country and history- a great chance to learn about the country's history and catch up with local people who also visit the site.
- Upon our return to Dushanbe we will stop by a local school to photograph an interesting statue of **Lenin**, a soviet remnant, and learn a bit about the educational system too

#### Overnight:

**Hotel Vatan** – newly built and with an excellent location. This comfortable hotel has beautiful rooms located on a designated floor with free laundry facilities, kitchen area, and reading room. Breakfast provided buffet style in the main restaurant area.

### APRIL 20 – FRIDAY (EXPLORE DUSHANBE)

#### AM

- We begin with a half-day walking tour of the sleepy capital of Dushanbe, including **Victory Park, Rudaki Street, Central Park, Monument of Ismaili Somoni**. We will also follow the route of the Dushanbe Marathon. Along this route we will learn about the development of the city over the years. From its ancient origins, to the Soviet-era (when it was called *Frunze*), to modern day Dushanbe

#### PM

- This afternoon is free for further exploration or for training for tomorrow's big event, we have secured the use of Dushanbe's premier gym should you wish to work out and get ready for the adventure ahead!

**Overnight:** Hotel Vatan, Dushanbe

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## APRIL 21 – SATURDAY (DUSHANBE HALF MARATHON)

### AM

- Today is our main event! We make an early start for this unique opportunity; The **Dushanbe International Half Marathon!** Running with local athletes and amateurs, winding through the city, a life-changing experience – medals and prizes for finishers and winners!

### PM

- After the morning's exertions you deserve some rest! Therefore the afternoon will be free for relaxation or for further exploration with your tour leader visiting the nearby local market for some local flavours and experiences.
- We also expect celebrations in some local parks to mark the **City Day Holiday**. So we will find them and join in, the most welcoming people in the world will definitely show you a good time on this occasion – be ready for some socializing and great photo opportunities too!

**Overnight:** Hotel Vatan, Dushanbe

## APRIL 22 – SUNDAY (VARZOB VALLEY & SOVIET HEALTH SPA)

### AM

- The tour continues as we depart Dushanbe and follow the Varzob River into the mountains, driving up through the **Varzob Gorge** where we will stop on the way for photos of this scenic area. Our goal for this morning is the small village of Takob. Upon arrival we will hike for 30 minutes through this hamlet where we will be rewarded by a visit to a local family whose home has amazing views of the surrounding area

### PM

- We will have lunch given to us in the local Tajik way; sitting on the floor. You will lose count of the number of courses!
- We continue our drive through the mountains until we reach our destination; the **Khoja Obi Garm Spa**, a vast sanatorium built into the side of a mountain above natural hot springs – like a James Bond villain's lair meets the hotel from *The Shining!* A true relic of the USSR days.
- A full range of 'treatments' can be enjoyed here, from radon baths to massages, leeches to swimming, or simply explore and relax. This is one of those great Soviet-era buildings that are hard to find these days, you will love this experience!

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**Overnight:**

**Khoja Obi Garm Spa** - the rooms in this Soviet monster are a little more basic and older, although warm and comfortable. Use of many of the health facilities is included whilst also giving us to opportunity to explore this surreal complex late into the evening (if you're brave enough.)

**APRIL 23 – MONDAY (PANJIKENT)**

**AM**

- We begin with a long drive from the health resort over mountain roads out across the **Fan Mountains** working our way up through the '**Tunnel of Death**' – an Iranian-built long road tunnel burrowing under the mountains, the nickname overstates the danger but it can be nerve-wracking although it is very safe in reality. We stop along the way from breathtaking shots of this beautiful mountain range. Our destination is **Panjikent**. We will make a detour en route to visit the tomb and **Museum of Rudaki** – (Panjikent is the birthplace of Abu Abdullah Rudaki, considered by many to be the father of Persian poetry)

**PM**

- This afternoon we have a historical tour of ancient Panjikent, viewing ruins of the Sogdian town founded in the 5th century and finally abandoned in the 8th century by the Arabs after their conquest of the region. **Foundations of houses**, a **citadel city bazaar**, and **Zoroastrian fire temples** are all visible as we walk around this UNESCO listed site. Dinner tonight will be a traditional style in a beautiful local home.

**Overnight:**

**Sugd Hotel** - this locally owned and run hotel is a small guest house with comfortable rooms, beds and warm showers. The owner is always happy to engage guests in conversation, often sharing his travel stories of his visits to Europe.

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## APRIL 24 – TUESDAY (FAN MOUNTAINS & ALEXANDER LAKE)

### AM

- This morning we bid farewell to Panjikent but not before a stop as its interesting and colourful **local market**. Driving out back to the Fan Mountains we will stop at an old Soviet **Cognac factory** we have the opportunity to sample its produce and photograph this large partially abandoned site.

### PM

- We drive along small mountain roads past local villages, abandoned factories, and scenic and stunning views. Eventually arriving at the remote and secluded **Iskanderkul** (Alexander Lake – named for Alexander the Great). We have the option of hiking or relaxing by its beautiful shores. The lake sits at an altitude of 2195 metres; a stunning alpine body of water.

### Overnight:

**Alexander Lake Chalets** - we stay in small holiday cabins on the shores of this amazing lake, for those whom wish to you may watch sunset and sunrise (recommended!)

## APRIL 25 – WEDNESDAY (RETURN TO DUSHANBE)

- After a relaxing morning for photos, further hiking or sleeping, we return over the mountain pass to **Dushanbe**. We should arrive into the capital mid afternoon. You can make the use of your free afternoon for some last minute sightseeing into one of the history museums, local shopping or browsing one of the unique Soviet-era **antique shops**.

**Overnight: Hotel Vatan, Dushanbe**

## APRIL 26 – THURSDAY (DEPARTURE DAY)

End of tour. All group members will be taken to the airport for their individual flights as we bid each other a fond goodbye after this eventful epic journey!

Extensions are possible – please speak to your Tour Manager to discuss options.

## TOUR PACKING LIST

### ESSENTIALS:

- Day pack: for carrying essentials when exploring destinations like water, camera, snacks, jacket, etc.
- Lightweight clothing: A mixture of covering lightweight clothing and some warm layers are recommended. It is best to check the weather and seasonal information before travelling. Please also bring clothing that covers arms and pants/skirts that go past the knee for entry into local religious sites. In such sites women are asked to wear a head-scarf or something to cover hair. Tajikistan is not a militantly Islamic country so only in sites of religious worship is this customary.
- Temperatures can get very low overnight in some parts of Tajikistan – be prepared for changes in temperature throughout the day
- Comfortable shoes for full day walking/trekking: Closed-in shoes will help to protect your feet from cuts and scratches when walking through cities as well as bush/grasslands, and will also act as a barrier protection in rare cases against bites or stings
- Wind and waterproof jacket
- Sun protection: hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, and lip balm
- For running the Marathon you will of course need running kit.
- In some areas it will still be cold so something warm, such as a fleece, should be brought along.

## TOUR PACKAGE

### INCLUDED

- Airports pick up and drop off to and from Vatan, Dushanbe.
- Hotel accommodation.
- Marathon Entrance fee's
- A Koryo Tours tour leader, Tajiki tour guides and a driver
- Warm up in Dushanbe's no 1 Gym pre-marathon
- All transportation in the country
- All entry fees for attractions and sights
- For all runners there will be a finisher's medal.

### NOT INCLUDED

- Flights to and from Tajikistan
- Single room supplement (unless otherwise specified, US \$50 per night)
- Spending money for drinks and souvenirs
- Tajikistan visa (visa fees vary at different embassies)
- Tip for the guides (approx. US \$10 - 15 per day)
- We occasionally have the opportunity to visit a performance - this is to be paid on the spot

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Please note that when on tour your day-to-day itinerary may differ to what is advertised above. Your tour leader will ensure, however, that everything available at the time is covered, and replacement options are provided where needed. We will also add in extras when there is time.
- After the tour, we will send out a list of all participants' emails so you can keep in touch, swap photos etc. If you do not wish to be on this list then please let us know.
- The visa regulations for Tajikistan can change, within the last year the new online application process is now available. <https://www.visa.gov.tj/index.html>

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