



Run Dushanbe

Tajikistan

TOUR OVERVIEW

April 16 – 23, 2020
7 nights in Tajikistan

SUMMARY

Incredible, yet relatively unknown, Tajikistan is one of the most unique countries in the world. Sitting in Central Asia, it not only has fascinating history as a former Soviet bloc country, but the friendliest people you will ever meet and the most incredible breath taking scenery. 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' running in the 2020 Dushanbe International Half Marathon - an AIMS certified race.

Learn more about the marathon and Tajikistan at www.dushanbeinternationalhalfmarathon.com

This tour will be led by our one of our most experienced tour leaders, Rich Beal. Rich has led tours all over the world since 2004, and has personally designed and researched all our Tajikistan tours. Because of his close connection to the country, his fellow Tajik guides and friends like to joke the country is basically his third home (China and Mongolia being first and second)!

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. We visit Tajikistan regularly and know the best places to go to make your trip even more unique. We will make the most of your time in Tajikistan to guarantee the experience of a lifetime.

SAFETY

At Koryo Tours our priority is yours and the groups safety. Since 2014 we have worked with a local travel agency who ensure that the journey is safe in terms of vehicles we use and areas we visit. You are entering the country as a legal tourist, and therefore must obey the local laws and customs. One of our experienced Koryo Tours guides will accompany the trip.

The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations.

info@koryotours.com | +86 10 6416 7544 | www.koryotours.com
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WHY SHOULD I BOOK THIS TOUR?

As with many of our other country tours in true Koryo fashion we will fill the day from dawn to dusk. This trip obviously has long drives, but we will break these up with stops to absorb the landscape and meet the locals.

We spend two nights in the hotel at the end of the tour, everywhere in-between will be one night hotel stops along the travel route, on some days it will mean early departures and late arrivals to make the most of the day. We have to cover a lot of ground, but at the same time we will make sure there are stops to explore what we are driving through and not simply whizz past interesting spots.

In this area the roads themselves are of mixed quality, with much of the way being sealed (paved) roads but other areas consisting of dirt and rock roads. Some of the mountain passes are high sided with large cliffs either side of the road – we have the best drivers though; experienced on these roads and conditions, they will look after us all the way!

Accommodation offered is of a good, clean, basic standard. As we are mostly in remote locations some of the hotels will have limited hot water supply and rooms can be somewhat simple. On this tour patience, understanding and tolerance for the occasional difficulty are essential – But we know you'll be too busy having an amazing time to worry about the occasional lack of hot water or slightly bumpy road!

The tour is adventurous and a true travel experience which will leave you with many stories and an insight into this relatively unknown part of the world – if this tickles your fancy then join us now!

MAP & ITINERARY



| | |
|-------|---|
| Day 1 | Arrival in Dushanbe |
| Day 2 | Dushanbe |
| Day 3 | Dushanbe International Half Marathon |
| Day 4 | Drive to Takab Drive to Khoja Obi Garm |
| Day 5 | Drive to Panjikent |
| Day 6 | Drive to Iskanderkul |
| Day 7 | Return to Dushanbe |
| Day 8 | Departure Day |

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DAILY ITINERARY

APRIL 16 – THURSDAY (DAY 1)

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

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

Accommodation:

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 17 – FRIDAY (DAY 2)

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.

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!

Accommodation:

Hotel Vatan

APRIL 18 – SATURDAY (DAY 3)

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!

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!

Accommodation:

Hotel Vatan

APRIL 19 – SUNDAY (DAY 4)

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

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!

Accommodation:

Khoja Obi Garm

APRIL 20 – MONDAY (DAY 5)

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)

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.

Accommodation:

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.

APRIL 21 – TUESDAY (DAY 6)

This morning we bid farewell to Panjikent but not before a stop at 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.

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.

Accommodation:

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 22 – WEDNESDAY (DAY 7)

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.

Accommodation:

Hotel Vatan

APRIL 23 – THURSDAY (DAY 8)

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.

FOOD

All meals are included in this tour.

Plov is the national dish of Tajikistan - this rice based dish is normally served with meat and vegetables. We will certainly try a lot of this as we travel on our journey.

Other staples consist of shish-kebabs made from either lamb or beef. Normally every meal will come with the delicious locally cooked fresh bread.

Green and Black tea is the national drink and this can be expected with almost every meal. There will be the chance to purchase alcoholic beverages for an extra fee in most locations.

DIETRY REQUIREMENTS

Please note that vegetarian food choices can be limited although your needs can be catered for on the tour. If however you have any specialist dietary requirements please do let us know in advance.

In this region the availability of certain specialized products for restricted diets, e.g. gluten-free or dairy-free is minimal or non-existent so as such we would strongly recommend you bring these dietary items with you to supplement what you can eat of what is offered on the tour

TRANSPORT

All ground transport is included in this tour.

We use a combination of minibuses and 4x4's to get around in depending on the location and terrain. As previously mentioned, the roads will vary from sealed surfaces to those consisting of dirt and rock.

VISAS

You will require the following visa which is a relatively straightforward process but Please contact us should you need any advice or supporting documents for your visa application:

TAJIKISTAN VISA

All visitors to Tajikistan require a visa. You will need to obtain your visa & Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) permit online at the following link:

<https://www.evisa.tj/>

PACKING

Generally speaking, we recommend you pack as lightly as possible and make sure that you are able to carry and lift your own luggage and walk with it for short distances.

Most travelers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags or backpacks with wheels are convenient. A lockable bag or small padlock is useful as your luggage may get stowed separately and unattended while you travel.

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

- In some areas it will still be cold so something warm, such as a fleece, should be brought along.

RECOMMENDED

- Personal medical kit - we recommend you carry items such as mild pain killers, electrolytes, Band-Aids and insect repellent.
- Water bottle - we recommend a 1.5 liter capacity for which we can provide potable water. Bottled water is also available but we prefer to use safe drinking water rather than contribute to polluting the environment.
- Spare batteries - our trips have access to power to recharge batteries for phones and cameras most days, but we recommend you take spare batteries for your camera.
- Electrical travel adapter plug
- Inner sleep sheet/bag for added comfort during overnight stays.
- Money belt
- Torch or flash light
- Hand sanitizer
- Neck pillow for those long, bumpy drives

OPTIONAL

- Ear plugs to guard against street noise and snorers.
- A good book, a journal and music player for longer drives.
- Images from home - during our trip there will be many opportunities for you to meet and talk with locals. One way to start any conversation is with pictures. We recommend that you bring some photos / postcards of your family, home, city or country where you live, animals peculiar to your country etc.

VALUABLES

Please try to avoid bringing unnecessary valuables, and use your hotel safe. We strongly recommend that you photocopy all important documents e.g. air tickets, passport, vaccination certificate, etc. and keep the copies separate from the originals. While not valid, a photocopy makes it very much easier to obtain replacements if necessary.

BACKGROUND READING

- *The Great Game*, Peter Hopkirk. Looks dull but one of the most fascinating books you can read on the 19th century posturing, wars, alliances and intrigues caused by the imperial rivalry of Britain and Russia.
- *Setting the East Ablaze*, Peter Hopkirk. Specifically relates to the Bolshevik's annexation of Central Asia,
- *Eastern Approaches*, Fitzroy MacLean. Maclean recounts his adventures in Central Asia during the Soviet era in the 1930s and 40s.
- *The Lost Heart of Asia*, Colin Thurbron. Recounting his travels through Central Asia in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union.

CURRENCY

The official currency of Tajikistan is the Tajik Somani (TJS). Tajikistan is mainly a cash-only economy. Only change money at officially authorized currency exchanges. These are often found at bazaars, airline offices and hotels. Very few establishments will accept credit cards. There is a small, but increasing number of ATMs in Dushanbe and other larger towns, but none in rural areas and they may not accept foreign cards or have enough cash to dispense. US dollars are the most widely accepted foreign currency; other currencies, apart from Euros or Russian rubles, may be difficult to exchange.

TRAVELLING ON A GROUP TRIP

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. Your fellow travelers will probably come from all corners of the world and likely cover a range of age groups too.

We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travelers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, please ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting.

We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Due to privacy reasons we are unable to provide you with contact details and any personal information about your fellow travelers booked on your trip prior to departure.

IMPORTANT TRAVEL NOTES

- As a responsible tour operator, your safety is our priority. Tajikistan is a safe countries to visit, but your Tour Leader and local guides will advise you further about travel in these locations.
- This tour is not suited for children under the age of 15 (please check with Tour Manager), as well as those who are less able as some hiking is involved (albeit, relaxed).
- The route is the second highest altitude international highway in the world (4,655 metres). We will take time to adjust to the heights and make the journey as comfortable as possible.
- If you have a medical condition which may affect your health or safety during your trip you must inform us before visa application.
- 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.



TERMS & CONDITIONS

CANCELLATION If Koryo Tours cannot arrange visas or the tour is cancelled by our local partners a full refund will be made. Please note this tour is charged in US\$, If we receive any other currency this will be converted to US\$ on that day's exchange rate fixed by the Bank of China. Any refund will be made according to the US\$ amount we received and not the original currency sent. With all refunds Koryo Tours will not be held liable for any bank charges.

STANDARD DISCLAIMER: Koryo Tours reserves the right to withdraw service and cancel a tour at any time. In this eventuality a full refund of any monies paid by the customer will be made.

Koryo Tours cannot be held responsible for any mishap to yourself or your property and in particular any consequence or effects of flight/train cancellation/delay, robbery, sickness, Government intervention or other such happenings.

INSURANCE Koryo Tours insist that all of our travellers have full medical insurance. You are advised to insure yourself against any possible risk that may occur and in particular to ensure that sufficient insurance has been obtained in respect of any dependant relatives. It is your responsibility to be covered by insurance which must include medical expenses and the cost of repatriation should you become too ill to continue.

The prices on this website are correct at the time of website publication, however, Koryo Tours reserves the right to raise or lower its prices at any time. We also reserve the right to correct errors in both advertised and confirmed prices (both before and after your confirmation has been issued). Please note, changes and errors sometimes occur. Flight/train price increases are out of our control and any increase in fee may be passed on to the tourist.