



## RUN DUSHANBE

### Dushanbe International Half Marathon Tour

#### TOUR OVERVIEW

April 15 – April 22, 2021

#### 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 breathtaking 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 2021 Dushanbe International Half Marathon - an AIMS certified race.

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 add in extra activities 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.*

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- Participate in the little known Dushanbe 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, which looks like something straight from a movie

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

## DAILY ITINERARY

### APRIL 15<sup>th</sup> – THURSDAY (DAY 1)

#### 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 16<sup>th</sup> – FRIDAY (DAY 2)

#### 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

**APRIL 17<sup>th</sup> – SATURDAY (DAY 3)**

**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 18<sup>th</sup> – SUNDAY (DAY 4)**

**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!

**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.

**APRIL 19<sup>th</sup> – MONDAY (DAY 5)**

**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.

**APRIL 20<sup>th</sup> – TUESDAY (DAY 6)**

**AM**

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 where 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 21<sup>st</sup> – WEDNESDAY (DAY 7)

#### AM

After a relaxing morning for photos, further hiking or sleeping, we return over the mountain pass to Dushanbe.

#### PM

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 continue our journey along the Panj River bordering Afghanistan, following the route of the old Silk Road and tracing in the footsteps of explorers such as Marco Polo.

### APRIL 22<sup>nd</sup> – 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.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consists of several parallel diagonal lines in various colors: red, green, blue, yellow, and red.

## FOOD

All meals are included in this tour.

The national dish of Tajikistan is Plov – 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 is choice and this can be expected with almost every meal. You will be able 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 to 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. 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.



## CURRENCY

### TAJIKISTAN

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.



## TERMS & CONDITIONS

**CANCELLATION** If you cannot arrange the visa, or if the tour is cancelled by our local partners we will fully refund the tour price. Please note that this tour is charged in US\$. If we receive any other currency this will be converted to US\$ using that day's exchange rate, as 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.