

Pamir Expedition 2024

2 September – 16 September 2024, starting and ending in Dushanbe

Price: 3,970 USD per person. Deposit: 500 USD. Payment can also be made in EUR or CHF.
Single supplement is available for 340 USD.



This ultimate itinerary for mountain lovers whisks you up above the clouds to the Roof of the World. Focused on the natural wonders of Tajikistan and the Pamir Mountains, from alpine lakes and glacier-fed rivers, to soaring peaks and high altitude desert, there's no better way to escape the chaos of everyday life and reconnect with the natural world.

In little-visited Tajikistan you can compare and contrast the modern capital of Dushanbe with ancient ruins and the stark environment of the High Pamir. Together we will drive along the [Pamir Highway](#) – renowned as one of the world's greatest road trips – reaching the dizzying height of 4,655 m when we cross the Ak Baital Pass on the Murghab Plateau.



Highlights

- Discover [Dushanbe](#), the lively and fast-changing capital of Tajikistan.
- Visit the ancient Yamchun Fortress in the dramatic Wakhan Corridor.
- Experience the hustle and bustle of oriental bazaars.
- Hike in the picturesque Jizev Valley.
- Drive the length of the Bartang Valley, from Karakul to the Panj River.
- Drive the [Pamir Highway](#), renowned as one of the world's best road trips.

Itinerary Overview

- 2 Sep: Arrival in Dushanbe and city tour (800m).
- 3 Sep: Dushanbe – Kulob - Kalai Khumb (370 km, c. 8h, 1300m).
- 4 Sep: Kalai Khum – Khorog (290 km, c. 6h, 2100m).
- 5 Sep: Khorog – Ishkashim (120 km, c. 4h, 2500m).
- 6 Sep: Ishkashim – Zong (150 km, c. 5h, 2800m).
- 7 Sep: Day hike from Zong.
- 8 Sep: Zong – Alichur (230km, c. 6h, 3900m).
- 9 Sep: Alichur – Madyan hike – Murghab (120 km, c. 5h, 3600m).
- 10 Sep: Murghab – Karakul (130 km, c. 2h, 3900m).
- 11 Sep: Karakul – Sawnob (170 km, c. 6h, 2700m).
- 12 Sep: Sawnob – Jizev (170 km, c. 6h, 2500m).
- 13 Sep: Jizev Valley (2500m).
- 14 Sep: Jizev – Kalai Khumb (200 km, c. 5-6h, 1300m)
- 15 Sep: Kalai Khumb – Kulob – Dushanbe (350 km, c. 9h, 800m)
- 16 Sep: Departure from Dushanbe



Itinerary

2 September: Arrival in Dushanbe and City Tour

Welcome to Tajikistan! You will arrive at Dushanbe Airport at 01:10 on the Turkish Airlines flight from Istanbul, or at 02:55 on the FlyDubai flight from Dubai. Transfer to the hotel for immediate check-in, have a rest after the long flight and breakfast.

As well as being the capital, [Dushanbe](#) is the largest city in Tajikistan. Before the 20th century it was a just small village with a market every Monday. The Persian word for Monday is *Dushanbe*, and that's how the settlement got its name. It was not until the Soviet period that Dushanbe grew into the political and industrial center of Tajikistan.

Our Dushanbe city tour will start at the Navruz Palace, which was conceived as the largest teahouse in the world, but became so impressive during its construction that it is now used as a palatial venue for official government meetings and conferences. It's over the top inside and out! Next, we visit the newly built Independence Monument, where we can enjoy a nice city view from the top. Then we will have a walk in Rudaki Park, dedicated to the great Persian poet Rudaki; and our final stop, the golden statue of Ismail Somoni, which commemorates the 1,100th anniversary of the foundation of the Samanid State, a golden age in Tajik history when science and the arts flourished. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Overnight at Hotel Atlas (4) or similar*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

3 September: Dushanbe – Kulob – Kalai Khumb

Gently gaining altitude, we will leave Dushanbe behind and begin our journey towards the Pamir Mountains. The roads are rough enough to shake your bones and it is going to be a long day, so do not forget your snacks, and charge up your batteries to make sure your chosen soundtrack lasts until evening. Of course, we will make plenty of stops to stretch our legs and take photos, the first of which is at the Nurek Reservoir.

In the city of Kulob in Tajikistan's southern region of Khatlon, we will have lunch before driving north-east and slowly gaining slowly altitude. The road will take us up and over the Shuraba Pass at 2,267 m. The scenery becomes wilder and more dramatic as we climb; it's the backdrop for countless adventures. The roaring Panj River will be our constant companion. It forms the natural and political boundary between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, which is clearly visible on the opposite riverbank.

Tonight, our accommodation is in an immaculate, modern hotel in the small town of Kalai Khumb, the gateway to the Pamir.

Overnight at the comfortable, modern hotel "Continental"

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

4 September: Kalai Khumb – Khorog

Today's scenic journey continues along the glacial Panj River. Looking across the water you can spot Afghan villages clinging to the cliffs, and pathways which traverse and snake their way through the rocky mountains. We expect to reach Khorog, the biggest city and capital of the Pamir region, in the mid-afternoon. We will visit the bazaar, which often has visiting traders from Afghanistan, and also the botanical garden, which is high above the valley and thus offers panoramic views of Khorog and the surrounding peaks. You may notice the characteristic features which distinguish the Pamiri people: unlike other Tajiks, a high proportion of Pamiris have blonde hair, fair skin, and blue eyes.

Overnight in simple hotel "La"

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

5 September: Khorog – Ishkashim

Before we depart to Ishkashim we will visit the Botanical Garden from where you can have a nice view of the town. On the drive south from Khorog, our first stop is at Garm Chashma, a naturally occurring hot spring, for an (optional) dip in the mineral-rich waters. We will then reach the Wakhan Corridor, a remote region shared by Tajikistan and Afghanistan, which became famous in the 19th century when it functioned as a buffer zone between the Russian and British Empires during the Great Game.

The Wakhan's history is much older than this, however: it was a Silk Road pass through the mountains for millennia, and even Marco Polo is said to have walked this.

Overnight in a guesthouse with shared western bathroom (single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

6 September: Ishkashim - Zong

Our journey continues along the Wakhan Corridor, with several points of interest to see along the way. In the village of Namadgut we will find the Kah Kakha Fortress, which dates from the 3rd century, and we will scramble up to the dramatically situated Yamchun Fortress a little further along the valley. We will also visit the Bibi Fatima Hot Springs, which are named after the Prophet Mohammed's sister. Local women believe that taking the waters here will increase their fertility. Further we stop is at the Sufi Muborakqadam Museum, which has an interesting solar calendar.

In Zong we can stop for a short hike to a 4th-century Buddhist stupa which was once part of a much larger monastery. Locals will tell you that there is a stone on top of the stupa which is imprinted with the Buddha's footprint, and this made it an ancient place of pilgrimage. Zong is also our final destination for today. We will spend two nights here.

Overnight in a simple family homestay (shared bathroom; single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

7 September: Day hike from Zong

Today we hike up to see the collection of over 6000 petroglyphs. The ancient petroglyphs of Langar – the message left by Scythians, Arians, Zoroastrians and other inhabitants of these area, for next generation. The petroglyphs date back to Bronze and earlier eras and show the hunting scenes, ibex, different symbols and unknown marks. We continue our trek among the narrow gorge to the foot of Engels peak. The gorge very soon turns to green lushes with Small River, where we can meet the shepherds and stocks. We enjoy the view to Engels peak and surroundings and have picnic lunch here. And trek down to the guesthouse. 7-8 hours. Elevation gain +/- 1200m, 16km.

Please note: It's optionally possible to do a shorter trek or stay in the village if you prefer to skip the trek.

Overnight in a simple family homestay (shared bathroom; single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

8 September: Langar – Alichur (c. 6h)

Today we will leave the lush valley behind and climb steadily to the rockier, almost lunar environment which characterises the high altitude desert of the Great Pamir. We will cross the dramatic Kargushi Pass at an elevation of 4,300 m above sea level before dropping back down slightly. This reconnects us to the world-famous Pamir Highway: the stretch between Khorog and Osh was completed in 1931 and at points, it reaches almost 4,000 m above sea level.

As we veer off the main road, we will take a detour to visit the breathtaking Yashikul and Bulunkul mountain lakes. In the village of Bulunkul, we will enjoy a delicious lunch at a family homestay. This village is known for being the coldest place in Tajikistan and the sixth coldest settlement in the world. In the afternoon we continue driving a bit further to reach the small village of Alichur, where spend the night.

Overnight in a simple family homestay (pit latrine; single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

9 September: Alichur – Madyan hike – Murghab

Our journey from Alichur to Murghab will begin with a half-day hike in the mesmerizing Median Valley, accompanied. The hike will offer an opportunity to explore the region's striking landscapes and cultural heritage while observing the diverse flora and fauna, and meeting the Kyrgyz nomads. The hike will culminate in breathtaking mountain views, followed by a night's stay at a local hotel in Murghab. Here, you can relish a delicious meal and relax in preparation for the adventures planned for the next day.

Overnight at the hotel "Pamir" (simple rooms with private bathrooms)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

10 September: Murghab - Karakul

It is a relatively short drive from Murghab on to Karakul. In the morning we will have a short tour of the town of Murghab. We visit the local market, the small Mosque and the white Lenin statue.

Then we will drive to Karakul over the highest pass in the former Soviet Union, the Ak Baital Pass (4,655 m). From the pass we will descend to Karakul, which lies at a more comfortable 3,800 m. The name Karakul translates as "Black Lake", as it appears dark when it is not in direct sun. It's one of the highest navigable lakes in the world, and hosts the Roof of the World Regatta.

We will spend the night in the village of Karakul (which is close to the lake shore) in a simple family homestay. There is no shower but there is a western-style toilet in the house.

Overnight in a simple family homestay (shared bathroom, single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

11 September: Karakul - Sawnob

Today we will start our journey through one of the least-explored areas (and along one of the least-used mountain roads) in the Pamir. The road connects the Eastern Pamir with the Bartang Valley over Kok Jar Pass (4,000 m). We will drive along the Tanimas River to reach Upper Bartang. The river comes from the Tanimas Glacier and flows into the Bartang River. We will sleep in the village of Sawnob in a simple family-run homestay.

Overnight in a simple family homestay (pit latrine, no shower – they can provide hot water for you to wash yourself; single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

12 September: Sawnob - Jizev

After breakfast we will drive through the Bartang Valley. It is one of the wildest valleys in the Pamir, a place where you can see the most authentic Pamiri villages and traditional ways of life. In the morning we will visit Rowshorv (3,300 m), a village situated at the bottom of Lab Nazar Peak (5,990 m). In the afternoon, we will reach the bridge near to the Jisev Valley, stop the car, and start a gentle uphill hike for about two hours, entering the Jisev Valley on foot. We will then spend the following two nights in a very simple family homestay amidst an idyllic landscape at an altitude of about 2,500 m.

Overnight in a very simple family homestay (pit toilet outside, shower tent with solar-heated water and a calm river with clean water nearby; single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

13 September: Jizev Valley

Today we will spend a full day in the Jizev Valley, enjoying the scenery and getting acquainted with the villagers and their daily routines. If you wish, it's also possible to hike a bit further up the valley to a picturesque mountain lake.

Overnight in a very simple family homestay (pit toilet outside, shower tent with solar-heated water and a calm river with clean water nearby; single room not guaranteed)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

14 September: Jizev – Kalai Khumb

After breakfast, we will hike back down to the bridge, where our driver will meet us. After less than an hour of driving along the Bartang River, we will reach the main Pamir Highway again. This is at the point where the Bartang River flows into the Panj River. The ride from Rushan to Kalai Khumb (170 km, c. 4 hours) is part of the same Kalai Khumb – Khorog road which we took at the beginning of our Pamir trip. Upon arrival in Kalai Khumb we will spend the night again in the comfortable Karon Hotel.

Overnight at the comfortable, modern Karon Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

15 September: Kalai Khumb - Dushanbe

On the penultimate day of the trip we will drive back through the mountains to Dushanbe. This time we will take the northern road via Tavildara. We depart in the early morning from Kalai Khumb, so we will arrive in Dushanbe in the late afternoon. Check-in at the hotel and farewell dinner.

Overnight at Hotel Atlas (4)*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

16 September: Departure from Dushanbe

Very early in the morning, you will transfer to the airport (a 10-minute ride) to catch your Turkish Airlines flight to Istanbul (departing 03:10), or the FlyDubai flight to Dubai (departing 04:30).

Price includes

- All transfers, including airport collection and drop-off
- Accommodation based on two people sharing a double room
- Full board (breakfast, lunches, dinners)
- One English speaking guide accompanying you for the whole trip
- All entry fees and activities as per the itinerary
- GBAO permit

Price does not include

- International air fares to and from Central Asia
- Hotel charges for additional services
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses (e.g. souvenirs etc)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tips for guide and driver (optional)





