

JT 2: Bartang Valley and Eastern Pamirs Cultural (13/14, 20 or 27 days)

Cultural Jeetour with trekking elements of optional difficulty

Remark: This tour is very flexible and can easily be further shortened by leaving out stops in some villages or shortening trekkings, or extended.

Route in short: Dushanbe – Jizew side valley – Bardara side valley – Upper Bartang – (Khafradzara Side Valley) - (Karakul – Murghab – Madian – Shaimak - Yashilkul – Ghunt Valley – Khorog) - Dushanbe

Level of difficulty of Trekking part with Khafraz-Trek



(of 5)

without Khafraz:



Daily walking time during Trekking part: 3 to 4 or 6 to 7 hours

This Jeetour with trekking elements leads us to the heart of the Pamirs, the Bartang Valley. It is surely the most remote, in terms of landscape most extreme and in terms of culture most traditional and interesting valley of the Western Pamirs. If you select the middle-long version, a 5-day trekking in a side valley will also be included, and in the long version of the itinerary, you will be able to see the plateau of the Eastern Pamirs as well, the nature and culture of which differs from that of the Western Pamirs a great deal.

Core of this itinerary is intensive contact with the local Pamiri and Kyrgyz population. Therefore we will spend at every place a little more time than in other itineraries. You will visit many cultural and historical sites such as castles, old and new Pamiri houses, yurts, pastures and holy places, and you will be able to observe traditional agricultural and handicraft techniques – and even try some of them yourself, if you want. The people will perform for you their distinct musical culture and way of dancing, and if during your journey some holiday will take place, you can participate in the festivities. You will have many opportunities to speak to the people and ask them about their way of life – we will translate all your questions.

As the point of departure during the trekkings will be also their end point, there is the possibility to leave out trekking elements, or split the group in case of diverging interests (some doing trekking, some doing an alternative program in the village).

ITINERARY IN DETAIL

- 1. Day:** **Sightseeing in the Tajik capital Dushanbe**
Sightseeing Tour in the friendly Tajik Capital, visiting the National Museum, Green Bazar and strolling around in the vast parks and wide alleys with neoclassicist buildings and traditional teahouses.
Wonder about Tajikistan's nation building efforts, reflected in several statues, the vast presidential palace and the highest flagpole of the world!

Accommodation: Homestay, Hostel, Middle or Upper Class hotel

Remark: This day can be also left out, instead starting immediately towards the Pamirs and thereby shortening the itinerary for one day.

- 2. Day** **Dushanbe – Kala-i Khumb by Jeep**
with short stop at Khulbuk fortress and the mausoleum of 14. century poet Khoja Mir Said Hamadani in Kulob.
In afternoon, the route follows the Panj river and offers insightful views to “the other side” of the former Iron Curtain, to Afghan Badakhshan with its traditional villages and footpaths carved into the cliffs.
Accommodation: Hostel or Homestay.
- 3. Day** **Kala-i Khumb – Jizew by Jeep and on foot**
Continuing our road along Panj river, short rest in Rushan.
With car into the Bartang valley till the crossroad with the Jizew footpath.
Two or three hours walk up to the pristine Pamiri village of Jizev, which has no road connection and is therefore still very traditional. It is situated in a valley with many small forests and marvellous milky-turquoise lakes.
Accommodation in homestay with nice manja (outdoor-bed)
- 4.-5. Day** **Strolling around in Jizew valley**
Walking up Jizew valley to the upper lakes and the pastures of the village, going as far as you wish.
Accommodation: First night in tent, second in tent or homestay
- 6. Day** **Jizew – Bardara on foot and in jeep.**
Back down the way to Jizew bridge on foot.
By car up the scenic and at times adventurous road in the Bartang valley.
En route stop at a holy shrine in Basid and at a thrilling suspension bridge.
In evening arriving in Bardara in another side valley.
Accommodation: Homestay
- 7. Day** **Bardara**
Sightseeing in the village, seeing amazing holy trees, the Ismail prayer house and the mysterious “village fridge”.
Seeing how the famous Pamiri socks are knit; option to buy some as souvenir.
Tentatively light trekking to upper village.
The Bardara people have the reputation of being especially industrious and hardworking, but also sly and overly curious. Furthermore they are renowned for speaking an incomprehensible and funny accent, and are therefore subject of a local genre of jokes – check out whether the clichés are justified ;-)
Accommodation: Homestay
- 8. Day** **In car and on foot Bardara – Roshorv**
Car trip to Yapshorv. Seeing very old Pamiri houses there. Continue with car to Roshorv, or, for the ones without acrophobia, walk on a nice panoramic way to Roshorv (luggage will be brought by car).
Walking around in the amazing village and enjoying view on Pik Lapnazar (5990m) in evening light. In evening possibly musical performance; learning to dance the Pamirian way (*if it cannot take place in Roshorv due to the absence*

of musicians, we will try to arrange it at another place)

Accommodation: Homestay

- 9. Day** **Roshorv**
Going around in the amazing village.
Participation in agricultural activities according to season (for example irrigation, harvesting grains, ploughing, threshing, winnowing, slaughtering, milking animals...). Seeing house construction site (if available at that time).
Alternatively, climbing on a pass (4300 m) with great view on the valley.
On the way downwards enjoying “gravel skiing”.
Accommodation: Homestay.
- 10. Day** **Roshorv – Barchidev with car**
Trip by car with some splendid views en route on 5000ers and 6000ers.
Stop in Nisur for seeing the tree that flourishes twice a year and a small village museum.
In Barchidev, seeing a holy footprint on a stone and going for fishing (tentatively also swimming in the turquoise Murghab river coming from Sarez lake).
Accommodation: Homestay.
- 11. Day** **Barchidev – Savnob with car**
Trip by car with short stop on “Plashatka”, a seismological and meteorological station above Savnob.
Seeing many places of interest in Savnob, such as old castle, solar calendar, refuge caves, holy spring, petroglyphs and many other little miracles.
Possibility for bath in small lake with mild water temperature.
Learning to bake bread the Pamirian way in *tandur* oven.
Accommodation: Homestay
- 12. Day** **Savnob – Pasor by car**
Those who want can accompany the shepherd with his flock to the day pasture and return around midday (*also possible to add an additional day in order to stay with the shepherd till to evening*)
Then by car to Pasor, with stop en route at several places of cultural and geological interest, such as the place where Ghudara- and Murghab river mix with their different colours, subsequently forming the Bartang.
Visiting the holiest shrine of upper Bartang in Pasor and a traditional blacksmith.
Accommodation: Private household

Option A: Back right now

- 13. Day** **Pasor – Rushan**
Trip by car back to Khorog through the Bartang Valley.
Accommodation: Homestay, Hostel, Middle or Upper Class Hotel
- 14. Day** **Rushan – Dushanbe**
Trip back to Dushanbe by car; tentatively on alternative route over Saghirdasht pass and through lower Gharm valley.

Seeing off or extending trip for some days in Dushanbe and Surroundings

Option B: Khafrasdara Trekking

13. - 17. Day Trekking Pasor- Khafrasdara - Pasor

Walking up the very scenic Khafrasdara Valley with lakes, glaciers, great rock formations, shepherds and fantastic viewpoints.

Accommodation: Tent; on last day private household in Pasor

Option B 1: Now back to Dushanbe

18. Day Pasor – Rushan

Trip by car back to Rushan through the Bartang Valley.

Accommodation: Homestay

19. Day Rushan – Dushanbe

Trip back to Dushanbe by car; tentatively on alternative route over Saghirdasht pass and through lower Gharm valley.

Accommodation: Homestay, Hostel, Midclass- or Upper Class Hotel

20. Day Dushanbe

Visit new national museum, day trip to Hisar fortress or to Varzob valley (with nice swimming opportunities), or day for free use.

Seeing off or extending trip for some days in Dushanbe and Surroundings

Option B 2: Continue to Eastern Pamirs and back through Ghunt valley

18. Day Pasor – Kok Jar

Car ride to the high pastures of the Upper Bartang Villages.

Seeing (and assisting) the Pamiri shepherds with their work, tasting dairy products.

Accommodation: Tent

19. Day Kok Jar – Kara Kul

Car ride. En route visiting mysterious petroglyphs and meteorite craters.

Tentative detour to the Kurgan lakes.

Seeing Kara Kul lake, the “black lake”, the largest lake of Tajikistan, in front of Pik Lenin Panorama.

Accommodation: Homestay

20. Day Kara Kul – Murghab

Driving along the Pamir Highway through the Eastern Pamirian moon land-

scape, nearly not realizing that at the highest point we are already on 4655 m (Akbaital Pass).

Possibility for detour to Rang Kul Lake, the “Lake of the Colours”.

Accommodation: Homestay

21. Day

Murghab – Madian and back (Jeep and walking)

Day trip by car to the nice green valley of Madian with the hot spring Elli Su. Doing a small hike, as far as you wish. If we are lucky we may come across some Kyrgyz shepherds with yurts.

Here, by the way, we are at the headwaters of Bartang, here called Murghab river.

Accommodation: Homestay or, if preferred, in tent in Madian.

22. Day

Murghab – Shaikmak by car

In morning, strolling a bit around in the kind of surreal town Murghab, with its Pamirian and Kyrgyz ethnical mix. Possibility for buying Kyrgyz style souvenirs.

Going further East towards the Chinese border, then turning south to Shaimak, the Southeasternmost edge of Tajikistan which is close to China, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Consequently, we are again at the now very headwaters of Bartang, here called in Kyrgyz “Aksu” (White water). In Shaimak, there are an interesting miniature mosque, hot springs and Saka Kurgans (graves).

Accommodation: Homestay

23. Day

Shaimak – Jarty Gumbez by car

Driving offroad through this region which is really off the beaten track, We will meet many Kyrgyz shepherds with yurts and huge herds of flock, often yaks and sometimes even Bactrian Camels (the *original* with the two humps). Possibility to try yak milk products. In evening arriving at Jarty Gumbez Hunting Camp with Hot springs.

Accommodation: Hunting camp, possibly in own tent

24. Day

Jarty Gumbez – Bulunkul by car

Driving back on the Pamir highway in Khorog direction. Stop at the holy lake “White Fish” and dining in the fish restaurant. From Alichur on driving offroad, stopping at a geyser and at splendid viewpoints on Yashilkul and Bulunkul lake.

Accommodation: Homestay

25. Day

Bulunkul – Khorog by car

Possibility for a detour to Yashikul natural dam.

Driving to Khorog through Ghunt valley, with a stop at the hot springs of Jelondy. In case of early arrival in Khorog, visiting museum, botanical garden and bazaar.

Possibility to buy souvenirs.

Accommodation: Homestay, Hostel, Middle- or Upper Class Hotel

26. Day

Khorog – Dushanbe

Trip back to Dushanbe by car; tentatively on alternative route over Saghirdasht pass and through lower Gharm valley.

Accommodation: Homestay, Hostel, Middle- or Upper Class Hotel

27. Day

Dushanbe

Visit of Ethnographical Museum and Gurminj Museum for Musical Instruments (with possibility to try them out), day trip to Hisar fortress and/or to Varzob valley (with nice swimming opportunities), or day for free use.

Seeing off or further extending trip in Dushanbe and surroundings