

## **JT 3: Extensive Trekking in the Tajik National Park plus Wakhan Cultural (20 days +/- X)**

*Condensed cultural program, combined with one of the most beautiful treks in the Pamirs*

**Route in short:** Dushanbe – Jizew- Khorog – Wakhan – Bulunkul – Yashilkul - Trekking via Chapdar Lake, Uchkul and Shtik Lozar to Bardara (Bartang valley) – Dushanbe  
*At some places, tour can be shortened or prolonged.*



**Level of difficulty of Trekking part:** (of 5)

**Daily walking time during Trekking part:** 7 to 8 hours

This is an ideal tour for trekking enthusiasts who nevertheless do not want to neglect the historical and cultural must-sees of the region. After a small test-trekking for acclimatisation in the sweet remote Jizew Valley (side valley of lower Bartang), we will first head south to the Wakhan Corridor, where you will come across historical traces on every footstep. From the Alichur plain we will start our trekking through the center of the Tajik National Park, first surrounding Yashilkul lake, then crossing the Rushan Range over two passes and a vast glacier to the unique village Bardara in the middle Bartang Valley. The highest point of the tour is 4840 m high and the trekkers need a good stamina, though no special alpinistic skills.

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### **Itinerary in detail**

- 1. 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. Dushanbe – Kala-i Khumb**  
En route, opportunity to see Norak lake (with the highest artificial dam of the world), Khulbuk (archaeological site with a beautifully reconstructed Samanid-era fortress) and the mausoleum of the medieval scholar and saint Khoja Mir Sayid Hamadani in Kulob.  
After passing Shurabod pass, the road becomes the Pamir Highway along Panj (Amu Darya) river and the Afghan border. From the car we can observe village life on the other side, as Afghanistan is only a literal stone's throw away. We will see the Afghans moving with their donkeys on footpaths spectacularly clinging to the rock, and admire the constructions workers who are building a

new car-road along dizzying precipices. After this experience we will see the “Iron curtain” in a completely new light.

**Accommodation:** Homestay

**3. Kala-i Khumb – Rushan by car**

Continuing the Pamir highway along Panj river, which now at times winds through narrow gorges, but in Rushan widens to a huge lake. In case it is a Saturday, we can visit the Afghan market in Vanj en route.

The afternoon we will spend recovering from the long trip on the Manja (Central Asian platform for eating and sleeping outside) under the shade of trees in the garden of our hosts in Rushan, tasting fresh apricots and mulberries (if season).

Those who still have energy may climb up to a huge irrigation channel dug in a dramatic location into a steep rock: This was one of the first presents the early Soviets made to the people of this region. From up there one has spectacular views over the valley.

**Accommodation:** Homestay

*Alternatives: The road Dushanbe-Rushan can be also travelled in one day, thereby shortening the itinerary for 1 day. It is also possible to go to Jizew directly from Kala-i Khumb, again shortening for one day.*

**4. Rushan – Jizew (car and trekking).**

By car into the lower Bartang valley till to the junction with Jizew side valley. Then trekking up the untouched beautiful side valley with its wild cherry groves and some of the last intact forests of the region (as the missing road prevented loggers to cut them).

In early noontime arriving at Jizew village (ca. 2600 m above sealevel), a true jewel: Nowhere else the style of Pamiri housing is still as authentically preserved as here. Furthermore, the landscape in which it is embedded, with several milky turquoise lakes between the different parts of the village, is more than idyllic.

**Accommodation:** Homestay with nice manjas (outdoor beds)

**Altitude difference on foot: ca. 600 m**

**Walking time: Ca. 3 hrs**

**5.-6. Trekking to Jizew high pasture and back**

Nice acclimatisation tour further up the valley, passing more lakes, till the shepherds place. How high we will get depends on the request and shape of the clients and/or where we will encounter the shepherds (which depends on the season, as they change the location of their camp time by time). If we reach the shepherd camp, we can taste fresh milk products.

On second day, trekking back to Jizew village.

**Accommodation:** First night tent, second night homestay.

**Altitude difference and walking time depends on our decision.**

**7. Jizew – Khorog (trekking and car)**

In morning, trekking back to junction with Bartang valley; getting picked up there by car and being brought to the lively provincial capital Khorog. In case it is a Saturday, visit on Afghan bazaar. In Khorog, visiting the botanical garden (ca. 2300 m), one of the highest in the world.

Furthermore, possibility to see the historical and ethnographical museum and the market, and possibility to buy some handicrafts from local artisans.

**Accommodation:** Hoste, Homestay, Middle Class or Upper Class Hotel.

**Walking time:** *Approx. 2 hrs*

**8. Khorog – Bibi Fatima (Yamchun) by car**

Leaving again along the Panj river, towards Wakhan Corridor. En route, opportunity for a small detour to have a bath at the hot springs of Garm Chashma, which are renowned in all of Tajikistan for their sinter terraces and their positive effects on skin illnesses.

If it is a Saturday and it is taking place, visiting the Afghan market in Ishkashim.

Once having reached Wakhan corridor, we will proceed very slowly, as there are historical traces (caves, castles, holy places, petroglyphs, museums and a stupa) on virtually every footsteps. From some places we have spectacular views on the Hindukush peaks.

In evening we will arrive at the maybe most famous hot spring of Tajikistan, the emerald-green Bibi Fatima, which is at the same time a holy place and said to increase female fertility.

**Accommodation:** Homestay

**9. Bibi Fatima (Yamchun) – Langar by car**

Proceeding our sightseeing in Wakhan, till the last village, Langar.

En route we will pass another, smaller hot spring in Shirgin.

Climbing up to the most renowned petroglyphs of Wakhan in Langar (can be also done in next morning).

**Accommodation:** Homestay

**10. Langar – Bulunkul by car**

Crossing the Khargush pass with spectacular view points, and entering the Alichur plain, a typical Eastern-Pamirian landscape. Spending the night at Bulunkul lake.

**Accommodation:** Homestay

**11. Bulunkul – Kuchukchabar (Driving and trekking)**

Drive to the eastern end of Yashikul, the “Green Lake”, till Sumantash. Getting dropped there and starting our trekking, walking along the northern shore of the lake, till Kuchukchabar. The distance is relatively long, but the route is largely flat. In case the place cannot be reached in time, there are opportunities to set up the camp a bit earlier.

**Accommodation:** Tent

**Altitude difference:** *200m*

**Walking time:** *approx. 8 hrs*

**12. Kuchukchabar – Miyonail (Trekking)**

Passing Yashilkul dam and Burghomol Pass, with splendid views over the lake. Climbing a bit down to upper Ghunt valley and then turning upwards again in a side valley, till we reach the pasture Miyonail. Maybe we might meet some shepherds there (shepherds change their pasture place according to season).

Again, in case the place cannot be reached in time, there are opportunities to set up the camp a bit earlier.

**Accommodation:** Tent

*Altitude difference: approx. 700 m*  
*Walking time: approx. 8 hrs*

**13. Miyonail – Chapdar Lake (Trekking)**

Walking further up the side valley till we reach majestic Chapdar lake, highest point on the first section of the tour (4529 m). In case the trek takes place earlier than end of July, we should walk a bit further on to a lower place, as before end of July the region around Chapdar lake is still icy and unpleasant to camp.

**Accommodation:** Tent

*Altitude difference: Approx. 500m*

*Walking time: 7.5 hrs*

**14. Chapdar Lake – Ukhinj pasture (Trekking)**

Climbing down again, passing the lakes of Uchkul (“three lakes”) and reaching the very idyllic pasture of Ukhinj (ca. 4000 m), where we might also meet some shepherds providing us with milk products and, if we are lucky, even meat.

**Accommodation:** Tent

*Altitude difference: Going down about 500 m*

*Walking time: 6 hrs*

**15. Resting in Ukhinj Pasture**

For one day relaxing at this beautiful pasture. Possibility to assist the shepherd tending the flock and making butter and local cheese (takhp), if he is there, and/or strolling around in the surrounding territory for gathering wild herbs and plants according to season (such as mountain mint, wild onion and rhubarb) and/or fishing with net in the shallow river.

Maybe we will observe some yaks, ibexes, wolves, eagles or even a bear or snowleopard?

**Accommodation:** Tent

*This resting day can of course also be left out.*

**16. Ukhinj Pasture – Place under Shtik Lozar Glacier (Trekking)**

Climbing up to a place under Shtik Lozar Glacier, passing several icy lakes and viewpoints with views on surrounding summits and glaciers. Going to bed early, in order to be fit for next morning.

**Accommodation:** Tent

*Altitude difference: ca. 500 m*

*Walking time: approx. 6.5 hrs*

**17. Place under Shtik Lozar Glacier – Pasture in Upper Bardara Valley (Trekking)**

In early morning, crossing Shtik Lozar Pass (with 4840 m the highest point of the tour) and glacier as long as the snow is still frozen and comfortable to walk on. Crampons and ropes are not required.

On the other side, climbing down to upper Bardara valley with views on other glaciers clinging terrifyingly on mountain flanks.

**Accommodation:** Tent

*Altitude difference: ca. + 350 m, going down 1000 m*

*Walking time: approx. 7.5 hrs*

- 18. Pasture in Upper Bardara Valley – Bardara Village (Trekking)**  
Walking down the cosy valley, passing several pasture grounds. In late afternoon, arriving in Bardara village. Those who are not tired may go on a sightseeing tour to check some old houses, amazing holy places with huge trees, an affectionately adorned prayer house and the mysterious village fridge.  
**Accomodation:** Homestay  
**Altitude difference:** *ca. + 150m (as path goes over some moraine hills, going down 1000 m)*  
**Walking time:** *ca. 5 hrs*
- 19. Bardara-Rushan by car**  
In morning, some more time for sightseeing in Bardara, then driving down the scenic Bartang valley to Rushan, stopping at holy shrines and a thrilling suspension bridge.  
**Accomodation:** Homestay  
*Remark: It is also possible to extend the tour by spending some more days in Upper Bartang, where there are some more possibilities for shorter treks.*
- 20. Rushan - Dushanbe**  
Back to Dushanbe on Pamir Highway.  
  
*Seeing off or prolonging the tour in Dushanbe and Surroundings*