

T 1: Trekking and Culture Bartang Intensive (flexible length; ideally 3 – 5 weeks)

Extraordinary and physically demanding travel experience off the beaten track – ideal also for small budgets

Possible route in short: Dushanbe – Jizew valley – Khorog – Yashilkul – Trekking via Chapdar Lake, Uchkul and Shtik Lozar to Bardara – Roshorv – Savnob – Trekking in Ruj Valley – Pasor – Trekking in Khafrazdara Valley – Barchidev - Dushanbe

The sequence of the parts can of course also be reversed. The length of the tour is totally flexible – see below.



Level of difficulty of Trekking part: (of 5)

Daily walking time during Trekking part: 7 to 8 hours

This tour is ideal for those who want a full dose of the Pamirs in their essence, both in terms of physical extremes during trekking, as well as of cultural impressions. It leads you to the heart of the Pamirs, Bartang Valley: This is surely the most remote, in terms of landscape most extreme and in terms of culture the most traditional and interesting valley of the Western Pamirs. You will have many opportunities to speak to the people and ask them about their way of life – we will translate all your questions. And you can sure you will miss none of the nicest side valleys in Upper Bartang for trekking!

This tour is also ideal in case you have a rather small budget, as only few parts of the itinerary need to be done by jeep. In many places you can also choose according to your demand (and purse) whether you want to order our company's jeep, go with local transport (which usually requires some time-flexibility and bravery) or walk as much as you can on foot.

The layout of the tour is completely flexible – you do not need to travel full five weeks, but you can also select just some parts (and with the remaining parts you can continue the next year ;-))

And for those of you for whom the itinerary below it is still not enough: Ask us for even more treks to Bartangi side valleys!

ITINERARY IN DETAIL

Getting started: Dushanbe and the Pamir Highway

- 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 – Rushan by car

(either with one of our cars, or by public transport. The latter is more economic, but it is then of course not possible to stop on demand)

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 construction 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

Part I: Acclimatisation tour in Jizew (lower Bartang) and Khorog

Duration: Ideally 4 days (or more), but can be also shortened to two

Remark: This part can be also put in the end of the tour, but we deem a short acclimatisation before the big tour quite useful

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: Hostel, Homestay, Middle Class or Upper Class Hotel.

Walking time: *Approx. 2 hrs*

Part II: Up the Ghunt Valley to Yashilkul and crossing the Rushan Range to Bartang

Duration: 7 days. Can also be easily extended, or there can be made a break in between.

8. Khorog – Bulunkul (by car)

In morning, last possibility to buy provision in the market in Khorog. Driving up the Ghunt valley, stopping at places you are interested in. Having a bath at the hot spring of Jelondy.

Night spent at scenic Bulunkul lake at the beginning of the Alichur plain with its typical Eastern Pamirian landscape.

Accommodation: Homestay

9. Yashilkul dam – Miyonail (by car and Trekking)

By car till to the natural dam of Yashilkul lake and getting dropped there. 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).

Accommodation: Tent

Altitude difference: *approx. 700 m*

Walking time: *approx. 8 hrs*

10. 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).

Accommodation: Tent

Altitude difference: *Approx. 500m*

Walking time: *7.5 hrs*

11. 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*

- 12. 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.
Accomodation: Tent
Altitude difference: *ca. 500 m*
Walking time: *approx. 6.5 hrs*
- 13. 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.
Accomodation: Tent
Altitude difference: *ca. + 350 m, going down 1000 m*
Walking time: *approx. 7.5 hrs*
- 14. 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. Seeing how the famous Pamiri socks are knit; option to buy some as souvenir. 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 ;-)
Accomodation: Homestay
Altitude difference: *ca. + 150m (as path goes over some moraine hills, going down 1000 m)*
Walking time: *ca. 5 hrs*
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Part 3: Between Upper Bartangi Villages 1

Duration: Ideally 5 days, but can be also shortened to 2, if elements are left out and parts are done by car.

- 15. Bardara – Yapshorv (Walking, or by car)**
Walking up the Bartang road through a vast uninhabited section of the valley. Admittedly, compared with the last days, this walk is rather monotonous (maybe good for meditating on our exciting experiences so far ☺). However it is the only way to reach Upper Bartang, and the Bartangi people also often walk this road if there is no car available (Until few years ago, there was no car at all in the valley, so the people from the highest villages in Bartang had to walk nearly 190 km to reach the provincial center in Rushan!)
Accomodation: Homestay
Altitude difference: *- 300, + 100*
Walking distance: *ca. 40 km*

Walking time: ca. 8 hours

*If you are not afraid, we can also hire a local car to bring us from Bardara to Yapshorv, or, if your budget allows, we can order one of our companies' cars to bring us to Yapshorv and maybe also to move us between the other villages in Upper Bartang during the subsequent days.
In this case, day 15 and 16 can be fused*

16. Yapshorv – Roshorv (trekking)

Seeing very old Pamiri houses in Yapshorv. Walk on a nice panoramic way to Roshorv. 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). Possibility to do a 1 1/3 hours walk to “Roshorv grand canyon”. 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

17. Roshorv – Bor Khazij Oston (Hike) - Roshorv

In morning getting up early, seeing Labnazar mountain (5990 m) directly behind the village in morning light. Starting our little pilgrimage in dusk (as it is custom) to Bor Khazij, a holy place behind a pass (4300 m) high above the village. The holy place itself, despite its sacredness, may look rather unspectacular to non-locals, but there are interesting myths surrounding it and the view from the pass to Roshorv, the valley and on distant high peaks is truly unbelievable. On the way downwards enjoying “gravel skiing”.

Accommodation: Homestay.

18. Roshorv – Savnobl (Trekking)

Walking on to the next village, Savnobl, passing many points with nice view. Seeing many places of interest in Savnobl, such as old castle, solar calendar, refuge caves, holy spring, petroglyphs and many other little miracles. Possibility for bath in a small lake with mild water temperature. Learning to bake bread the Pamirian way in *tandur* oven.

Accommodation: Homestay

Altitude Difference: ca. – 600, +300

Walking time: 4 hours

19. Savnobl

Doing a small “shepherd’s internship”, going with shepherd’s to pasture and in evening learning to milk the goats. Find out that “counting sheep” is in reality nothing that may make you fall asleep!

Accommodation: Homestay

Part IV: Ruj Trekking

Duration: Ideally 3 or more days, but very fast trekkers can maybe also do it in two.

- 20.-22. Savnob – Ruj Valley – Rukhch village (or back to Savnob) (Trekking)**
Trekking up the side valley behind Savnob where the local people have their pasture for bulls. The valley is scenic, with views on glaciers and peaks in different colours. We are flexible regarding how far to go and where to stay. The suggestion is to go on the first day to the most far-away pasture, on the second day climb a viewpoint with outlook on famous Pik Revolution / Independence Peak (6940m) and then walk a bit backwards to a pasture closer to the village, and on third day return.
Accommodation: Homestay or private household
Altitude difference: *On whole tour ca. 1300 m (with possibility to climb higher)*
Walking time: *ca. 5-6 hours, on third day a bit less*
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Part V: Khafradzara-Trekking

Duration: Best is 6 days or even more (in case you want to climb some higher viewpoints), but it can also be shortened if you do not insist to get till the end of the valley.

- 23. Rukhch – Pasor (Trekking)**
Walking further up the valley with interesting geological formations visible en route. Passing impressive remainders of a former avalanche, a source of malachite stones and climbing up a natural dam, which may have once been caused by an earthquake (like Sarez dam), but has already collapsed again (having destroyed many villages ca. 200 years ago). Stop in Bopasor. Visiting the holiest shrine of Upper Bartang in Pasor and a traditional blacksmith, if he is there.
Accommodation: Private household or tent
Altitude difference: *+ 400 m*
Walking time: *ca. 5 hours*

If the budget allows, one can also do this part in car.

- 24. – 29. Trekking in Khafradzara Valley**
...surely one of the most scenic side valleys of whole Pamirs, with steep and snowcovered mountains, remote shepherd camps, pristine alpine lakes and view points on impressive glaciers.
Accommodation: Tent, last night in private household
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Part VI: Between Upper Bartang Villages II

Duration: Ideally 2 days, but can be also be shortened to one day, if one does not stay a day in Barchidev. Or extended to three days, with an overnight stop in Rukhch

- 30. Walking Pasor – Rukhch - Barchidev**
Till Rukhch, the way is the same as the one we came.
After a break in Rukhch, we cross the river on an adventurous suspension bridge and climb a pass with nice views on the valley (this time from the

other side) and on the sweet village of Barchidev.

Accomodation: Homestay

Difference in altitude: - 900 m , + 500 m

31. **Barchidev**
Relaxing day in this especially scenic beautiful village.
Possibility for fishing and swimming in the river that his here turquoise blue.
Accomodation: Homestay
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Back to Dushanbe

32. **Barchidev – Khorog** with our privately ordered or alternatively with a public car (the latter,however, leaves only irregularly, so the second solution requires higher time flexibility)
Driving down the Bartang valley, passing an especially holy shrine in Basid, a thrilling suspension bridge and the most famous petroglyphs of Bartang in Sponj village.
Accomodation: Homestay, Hostel, Middle Class or Upper Class hotel

33. **Khorog – Dushanbe**
by private or public car.

Seeing off or prolonging tour in Dushanbe and surrounding area.