



Tajikistan Persian New Year

Tajikistan Tour

Overview

Narouz (new day) festival, also known as Persian New Year has its origins partly rooted in the ancient Iranian religions such as Mithraism and Zoroastrianism. It is now seen as the celebration of the new spring and the year to come. In Tajikistan, the holiday is marked on the first day by a meal at home with family and friends after spring clean. During the remainder of the week, events such as dancing and wrestling take place in the build-up to the national sport of Buzkashi.

Some consider the fantastic sport of Buzkashi to be the most dangerous in the world. It is a spectacular event from its build-up through to its action. It could be described a mixture of polo meets rugby, played on horseback with up to 500 individual contestants competing for prizes by trying to wrestle over a goat's carcass. The winner of each round will be the one to break out of the melee and place the goat upon a central mound.

For the rest of the tour, we take in the understated capital Dushanbe with its polished centre and outlying Soviet monuments and architecture. We leave the city on our way over the stunning snow-capped Fan Mountains to Khujand we stop at the Khoja Obi Garm Spa health spa. In Khujand, we visit the history museum, market and the tallest statue of Lenin in central Asia. Retracing some of our steps we drive through the world's longest tunnel crossing the country to the historical city of Panjikent where we learn not only about Rudaki, the 5th-century Persian poet but we also visit the ancient city now a world heritage site close to the Uzbek border. Driving back over the Fan Mountains to Dushanbe we couldn't think of a better end to the tour than paying a visit to a semi-functional cognac factory for some free samples, shopping and photography.

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 extras 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.



Itinerary Overview

*Check out the brief overview of our **Persian New YearTour** – or scroll down to see the in-depth run through of each day of the trip.*

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| Day 3. | Varzob Valley |
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| Day 5. | Soviet Sanitorium |
| Day 6. | Iskanderkul and Khujand |
| Day 7. | Explore Northern Tajikistan |
| Day 8. | Panjikent |
| Day 9. | Return to Dushanbe |
| Day 10. | Departure Day |



Day 1

Arrival Day

AM

- This morning is a free morning for settling in, exploring, and acclimatizing while waiting for the rest of the tour group to arrive.

PM

- This afternoon after our pre-tour meeting, we drive to the Hissar Fortress. This large fort is said to date back to Cyrus the Great (600BC) and to have been captured 21 times by invading forces. Much of this area has been restored, but it has a lovely museum that offers an excellent introduction to this fascinating country - a great chance to learn about the country's history and catch up with local people.
- Upon our return to Dushanbe, we will stop by a local school to photograph an impressive statue of Lenin.

Accommodation: *Hotel Vatan*

Included Meals: *Lunch, Dinner*



Day 2

Explore Dushanbe

AM

We begin our day with a morning walking tour of Dushanbe; we will travel with a mix of driving and on foot visiting the following sites:

- **Victory Park:** Built-in 1975 commemorating the Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, this Soviet-built monument offers excellent views of Dushanbe.
- **Rudaki & Somoni Avenues:** the two main streets in Dushanbe formally known as Lenin Street and Petoskey Street. These grand avenues were renamed in the early 1990s after the poet Rudaki and the ancient king Ismail Somoni, lined with a mixture of past Soviet architecture and modern Tajik grand buildings.
- **Rudaki Parks:** A beautifully laid out park with a grand statue of the poet Rudaki, located opposite the brilliant national library building.
- **Ismaili Somoni Monument:** This fantastic statue of the ancient king stands on the former site of Lenin. It is said that Somoni's crown contains 10 kilograms of Tajik gold.
- **Mehrgon Market Building:** As with many of the cities, old market places are now closed in Dushanbe's drive for modernization. We visit one of the new areas where local people travel to buy fruit and vegetables and other necessities.

PM

- **National Museum of Antiquities:** this museum gives us a more in-depth look at the complicated history of Tajikistan and the surrounding countries.
- **Botanical Gardens:** Popular for wedding groups as well as housing a vast range of Central Asian flora.
- **National Tea House:** for end-of-day relaxation this was once the largest tea house in the world, but it has now been remodelled as an entertainment facility for local people. It has recently been renovated and holds a small cinema, bowling alleys and even various shops. We can still visit to view the amazingly intricate work carried out in its construction.

Accommodation: *Breakfast, Lunch*

Included Meals: *Hotel Vatan*



Day 3

Varzob Valley

AM

- After breakfast, we drive out of Dushanbe following the Varzob River north to the stunning Varzob Valley along the way we pass scenic lakes, spectacular geological formations and bizarre palatial residences of the Tajik elite. Our next destination is the small village of Anzob; where we join our friends for some traditional Tajik hospitality at their home. After lunch, for those who wish to, we can hike into the mountains for amazing views of the surrounding valley.
- Upon our return to Dushanbe, if there are any local events such as holiday wrestling, dancing or singing, we will stop making the most of our time.

PM

- Late afternoon is left free for your own explorations and adventures in Dushanbe - holiday decoration will be up by now and a lively atmosphere on the weekend can be expected

Accommodation: *Hotel Vatan*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch*



Day 4

Buzkashi

AM

- Today we go to see the most remarkable sporting event imaginable – Buzkashi! This is a flamboyantly violent and aggressive game played by hundreds of men on horseback, wrestling over a goat carcass to try to score 'goals' with it. It simply has to be seen to be believed, the photos you will get will blow the mind of anyone you show them to! We may have a long drive as the location of this spectacular event changes from year to year. The aim is to arrive when the event is in the throes of setting up watching the competitors arrive. We will stay until the end to make the best use of our time for photography and enjoyment.

PM

- The day will be spent at the sports fields, in addition to Buzkashi, there may be wrestling and dancing giving us the opportunity for mingling and people-watching considered to be the friendliest people in all of Central Asia. Snacks and drinks are often available for sale as well as an incredible day is assured!

Accommodation: *Hotel Vatan*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch*



Day 5

Soviet Sanatorium

AM

- Today we go to see the most remarkable sporting event imaginable – Buzkashi! This is a flamboyantly violent and aggressive game played by hundreds of men on horseback, wrestling over a goat carcass to try to score 'goals' with it. It simply has to be seen to be believed, the photos you will get will blow the mind of anyone you show them to! We may have a long drive as the location of this spectacular event changes from year to year. The aim is to arrive when the event is in the throes of setting up watching the competitors arrive. We will stay until the end to make the best use of our time for photography and enjoyment.

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Accommodation: *Khoja Obi Garm Health Spa*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 6

Iskanderkul & Khujand

AM

- This morning we bid farewell to our villain's lair and drive onwards to the northern city of Khujand, passing over, and through the Hissar Mountains, the route itself is part of the adventure including a drive into the 5km long Iranian-built Anzob Tunnel. On the way, we will stop at Iskander Kul – Alexander Lake –where Alexander the Great himself stopped for lunch during his advance through Central Asia.

PM

- We continue and cross into the Fergana Valley – the ancient crossroads of cross-continental trade and home to some of the Silk Road's great cities, Arriving in Khujand (previously known as Leninabad) we'll stop at a giant Lenin statue at a hydro-electric dam. Communism personified!

Accommodation: *Bahoristan Hotel*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 7

Explore Northern Tajikistan

AM

- Today, a day of exploration as we first stop by the traditional Panjshanbe Market one of the largest in Central Asia. We immerse ourselves in local life whilst trying to pick up a bargain or buying everything from local snacks to Soviet memorabilia. Opposite the market sits the beautiful Sheikh Muslihiddin Mausoleum and Mosque. This complex was erected on the Tomb of Muslihiddin Khudjandi the sixteenth-century building allows us to learn a little more about Islam in central Asia whilst also marvelling at the ancient carpentry from inside the main prayer hall. Before lunch, we have one more stop to visit the Khujand Fortress, this Silk Road fortification has been in situ for over 2500 years in its many forms. Its current build includes a fascinating museum looking at the history of the area and the whole region.

PM

- After a local lunch, we continue the tour of the city by visiting the giant statue of Lenin (the biggest in central Asia,) and on to the bizarre building Arbob Cultural Palace originally housing the former headquarters of a Soviet collective farm. It was designed as a recreation of the St. Petersburg Winter Palace built during the Soviet 1950s, a fantastic local curiosity!

Accommodation: *Bahoristan Hotel*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 8

Panjikent

AM

- As we bid Farwell to Khujand, we retrace some of our route back over the Fan Mountains before following a stunning river valley on to the Ancient city of Panjikent. The drive is a real treat as apricot blossoms dot the countryside our only other distraction as we're dwarfed by the enormous geological features evident in this part of the world. Our destination is Panjikent. We will make a detour en route to visit A giant statue of Lenin standing watch over a local reservoir, perhaps the largest statue of its type in the world.

PM

- This afternoon we have a historic 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.

Accommodation: *Sugd Hotel*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 9

Return to Dushanbe

AM

- This morning we bid farewell to Panjikent but not before a stop at its exciting and colourful local market. Driving out back to the Fan Mountains, we will visit an old Soviet Cognac factory, where we have the opportunity to sample its produce and photograph this large partially abandoned site.

PM

- By mid-afternoon, we arrive back into Dushanbe where you can make the most 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.

Accommodation: *Hotel Vatan*

Included Meals: *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 10

Departure Day

AM

- End of tour. All group members will be taken to the airport for their 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.

Included Meals: *Breakfast*