



Tajik National Park trekking, Bulunkul to Sarez lake

TRIP OVERVIEW

Style: Trekking / Camping

Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult

Location: GBAO, Pamir

Driving distance: 1700 km / 1056mi

Hiking distance: 125.5 km / 78mi

Tour length: 18 days

PRICES:

1 person – 3724\$ per person

2 people – 2204\$ per person

3 people – 1860\$ per person

4 people – 1860\$ per person

5 people – 1635\$ per person

6 people – 1532\$ per person

Price includes: All meals | Transportation from and to Dushanbe, including transfer from from and to the airport | An English speaking guide | Conservancy rangers services | Camping equipment – tents, utensils, stove etc. | Camera Traps | All accommodation

HIGHLIGHTS:

Trekking in remote Pamir mountains, Authentic Pamiri hospitality, High altitude mountain lakes, Wildlife watching – primarily Asiatic Ibex, Bird watching, Exploring ancient fortresses in Wakhan valley, Taking a bath in natural hot-spring

DESCRIPTION:

The biggest Natural Park in Tajikistan, Tajik National Park encompasses almost the entire Pamir mountains and is the third highest mountain ecosystem in the world after the Himalaya and Karakorum Mountains. As an only UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site the Park stands out as a very large protected area, with a stark treeless landscape of exceptional natural beauty. Rich flora species of both the south-western and central Asian floristic regions grow in the Park which shelters nationally rare and internationally threatened birds and mammals such as Marco Polo – Argali sheep, Snow Leopards, Siberian Ibex and more. The tour starts in Dushanbe and travels along the Pamir Highway to Khorog. From Khorog before commencing the trek you will make a detour to Wakhan valley and make an acclimatization hike to Engels meadow. Then you will drive to Bulunkul village where you overtake a 7-day trek to the famous Sarez Lake. This high-altitude trek has everything that Pamir mountains can offer. Barren high-altitude landscapes, Alpine lakes, Snow-capped mountains, and amazing wildlife. Along the trail you will cross many rivers and camp by spectacular mountain lakes. Spending intimate nights under the stars and in traditional homestays will make this trip a memorable one.

CONSERVATION

Association of Nature Conservation Organizations of Tajikistan (ANCOT) supports the conservation of wildlife in areas managed by people from the local communities. These organizations – being it local NGOs or small family businesses – are rooted in the local communities and aim at providing benefits to the whole populations of the areas where they are active. Through the revenues generated from tourism, we motivate these local communities to protect their natural resources and wildlife. Thus participating in this tour you are contributing to the conservation of endangered wildlife species and their habitats in Tajikistan. Day 1: Arrive in Dushanbe

Driving distance: Around Dushanbe

Hiking distance: Short walking The most convenient flights to Dushanbe from the Americas and Europe are via Istanbul and Dubai, both arriving early in the morning. Upon your arrival, we will pick you up from the airport and we will take you directly to your guesthouse/hotel in Dushanbe for rest after your flight. Our guide and the driver will be there to help. Later you will embark on a city sightseeing tour. You will visit the local market, various parks and museums Dushanbe offers. This day will also allow you to exchange money for your personal expenses if you needed. You will have the opportunity to eat out at the best traditional restaurants in Dushanbe before hitting the road the next day to your big adventure. Day 2: Dushanbe – Anjirob

Elevation range: 900-2000-900m/2952-6561-2952feet

Driving distance: 240km/149mi

Hiking distance: 4km / 2.5mi

On the second day, after having breakfast we will hit the road towards the southeast part of Tajikistan. We will be traveling roughly 4-5 hours with a toilet and coffee break in between. Around noon we will reach Shurabod and will have lunch in one of our Markhor conservancy families. In the afternoon, we will have a short hike to the top of the hills and as the sun sets behind the mountains we will observe Markhor moving down the slopes in front of us. In the evening we will return to our homestay family to have dinner and relax.

Day 3: Drive to Khorog

Elevation gain: 1200m/3937feet

Driving distance: 330km/205mi

Today we will have breakfast and hit the road towards a town called Khorog set on the bank of the Panj River, which is the administrative capital of Gorno-Badakhshan province of Tajikistan. We will have 8 hours of solid driving. The road winds through the valley and is a major attraction in itself. You just keep gazing out of the window in admiration. We will break the whole drive into three sections, and will be making stops for bathrooms, coffee, and a lunch. We will also stop for you to have a look at the small Afghan villages across the

river. In Khorog, we will stay in a traditional hotel, decorated in traditional Pamiri style.

Day 4: Khorog – Yamg

Elevation gain: 630m/2050feet

Driving distance: 160km/100mi On the fourth day, after having breakfast, we will drive up to the Botanical Gardens of Khorog. We will have a tour of the botanical garden, usually full of flowers, fruits, and a breathtaking view of the town of Khorog and as well as Gunt river, which goes through the heart of Khorog. After having the tour and taking our pictures, we will head down to the Ishkashim Valley. We will have 4-5 hours of driving mostly on a dirt road partly paved and arrive early in the afternoon. Our destination is the village of Yamg, and we will stay with a homestay family tonight. After lunch in Ishkashim we continue driving west along the Panj river, here we enter a grand Wakhan valley. Along the road we will stop to visit Yamchun fortress and bath at Bibi-Fatima hot spring. Day 5: Yamg – Engels Meadow

Elevation gain: 1110m/3641feet

Driving distance: 50km/mi

Hiking distance: 8km / 5mi Today after having breakfast, we will continue driving along the Wakhan valley. En route we will stop at several historical places such as Buddhist Stupa and the Shrine in Langar village. At Langar we will start our hike to Engels peak meadow, a green place where local Pamiris pasture their livestock. An incredible view of the Engels Peak 6510m will open up once we get to the meadow. The hike through is pretty steep and requires a 1100m of ascending. The trail goes through the famous Langar petroglyphs, a collection of more than 5000 stone carvings some dating back 2000 years. This hike will help you acclimate and is truly a good beginning before a longer hike in Tajik National Park. Tonight we will sleep in tents. Day 6: Engels Meadow – Bulunkul

Elevation range: 3950-2800-3750m/12960-9186-12303feet

Driving distance: 130km/mi

Hiking distance: 12km / 7.4mi After breakfast we make our way down to Zong village. The route to Zong village is a little longer than the trail we ascended from Langar village, but it offers superb views of Hindukush mountains in Afghanistan and includes a visit of an ancient fortress. On our way down after the fortress we dip into a hot-spring and then drive to Bulunkul village over Khargush pass (4344 m). Bulunkul is a remote village on the high Pamir plateau and is considered to be the coldest place in Tajikistan. In summertime the temperature in Bulunkul is perfect for hiking, around 15-25 during the day and colder at nights. Tonight we will stay at a local homestay. Day 7: Bulunkul – Marjanai river

Elevation gain: 330m/1083feet

Driving distance: 10km/mi

Hiking distance: 12km / 7.4mi Today we start our 8-days trek to Sarez lake. In the morning after doing some bird watching near Bulunkul we drive to the east end of Yashilkul lake where we continue the trip on foot. We then hike to the Marjanai river for about 12 km on a dirt trail. The trek is easy and with a small ascent. Day 8: Marjanai river – Yashilkul dam

Elevation gain: 170m/558feet

Hiking distance: 12.5km/7.8mi We hike along the Yashilkul lake all day today. There will be two difficult river crossings and a small ascent with the views Shugnan range. Yashilkul means green lake in the Kyrgyz language, this name doesn't match the reality though. The lake is always bright blue. The lake is also a source of the Ghund river that runs along the Shakh dara valley and falls into the Panj River. We will camp at the west end of the lake at a very nice campground tonight. Day 9: Yashilkul dam – Langar valley

Elevation gain: 550m/1805feet

Hiking distance: 14km/8.7mi Today we trek over the land drift and descend to Langar river, from there we hike upstream along the river until reaching the campsite. After a few hundred meters as we start the hike today we climb a steep mountain from where an excellent view of Yashilkul lake will open. We then continue on the reasonably flat land and descend to Langar pasture and river. From there we walk upwards along the stream. Day 10: Langar valley – Chapdarkul pasture

Elevation: Up 710m/2330feet, Down 100m/328feet

Hiking distance: 15km/9.3mi We continue ascent along the Langar valley this morning. After a couple of kilometers we will turn west to Chapdarkul lake and climb about 3,5km along the Chapdar river to the lake. We shall enjoy a relaxing rest with amazing views once we get to the lake. After the rest we descend to the Chapdar pasture where we set up our tents. Day 11: Chapdarkul pasture – Ushkul lake

Elevation loss: 300m/984feet

Hiking distance: 12km/7.4mi A relaxing day today will take you to Uchkul lakes. We will start the hike today with descending on a steep slope to a broad river and continue north on the left bank of the river. Soon after we will reach the first lake of Uchkul lakes. Uchkul lakes are a series of three beautiful turquoise lakes surrounded by pastures grazed by yaks and sheep. You will camp near the furthest lake on a perfect campground tonight. Day 12: Uchkul lake – Langar valley north

Elevation loss: 410m/1345feet

Hiking distance: 10km/6.2mi From Uchkul you hike about 1,3 km around the lake to the north side from where you descend to a bridge and continue west to the famous Zaurbeks pasture. After spending some time with shepherds and trying the locally made yogurt we turn north again and follow the Langar river. After another 6km we set up our camp and spend the night. Day 13: Langar valley north – Sarez Lake (Irkht station)

Elevation loss: 600m/1969feet

Hiking distance: 12km/7.6mi We continue to descend from our campground down to Sarez lake today. Lake Sarez was formed in 1911 during an earthquake, when a colossal landslide, now called the Usoi dam blocked the Murgab River. The trail today will take us over a succession of alluviums and a couple of river crossings. Closer to Sarez lake we evade the marshland and go into a forest where a meteoroidal station is also located. We spend the night at the meteoroidal station. Day 14: Meteorological station to Barchidev village

Elevation loss: 1090m/3576feet

Hiking distance: 20km/12.4mi We finish trekking today and descend to Bartang valley. In the morning we take a boat across the Sarez lake to Usoi dam. A 1,5 hours boat ride will give us amazing views of the lake and its surrounding mountains. After we arrive at Usoi dam we climb a steep dam to the top of the saddle, from where the trail goes up and down and then descends steeply to the village of Barchidev. We will be met by our host at the village who will prepare a hearty meal and bath for us tonight. Day 15: Barchidev village – Rushan

Elevation loss: 600m/1968feet

Hiking distance: 150km/93.2mi Our trekking has finished in Barchidev and now we drive back toward Dushanbe. Today we will explore Bartang valley. Bartang is the least visited valley in the Pamirs, although it offers spectacular mountain landscape views. The river which flows along the valley is also called Bartang. The alluvial plains along the river are usually green and cultivated. Bartang valley is famous for its untouched nature and exceptionally hospitable people who love music and dancing. We will visit many villages along the valley, including roshorv, basid, Siponj, and Ravmed village to see Asiatic Ibex. Asiatic Ibex is the most common wildlife of Pamir mountains and is morphologically rather different from those in other countries, and also between the different areas of Tajikistan considerable variation in horns and coloration can be found. Tonight we will stay at a guesthouse in Vamar town. Day 16: Rushan – Darvaz

Elevation loss: 900m/2953feet

Hiking distance: 260km/161.5mi On the 16th day, we will have breakfast in Khorog and travel to the Darvoz region. We will be mostly traveling along the Panj River again. It will be a 7-hour drive, and we will take our time. During the drive, we will stop by for lunch and coffee tea along the Pamir highway with beautiful scenery of Afghan villages. Later in the afternoon we will arrive in Darvoz and settle down in one of Markhor conservancies camp. Day 17: Darvaz – Dushanbe

Driving distance: 285km/177mi Today we drive back to Dushanbe. Having our last breakfast at the camp we hit the road again back to Kulob and on to Dushanbe. You will arrive in Dushanbe at noon and have lunch before checking in to your hotel. After lunch and some rest at the hotel

you will have a short tour of Dushanbe bazaar, where you will be able to do some shopping. In the evening you will have a farewell dinner with ANCOT staff where you share your experience and possibly discuss your future trip to Tajikistan again. Day 18: Departure Early morning you will be transferred to the airport where our staff will help you with the registration to your flight and leave Tajikistan.

End of tour! What's Included

- All meals
- Professional and knowledgeable guides will lead the tour.
- Transportation from and to Dushanbe, including transfers from and to the airport
- Conservancy rangers services
- Camping equipment – tents, utensils, stove, etc.
- Other equipment such as camera traps, watching scopes, etc. if outlined in the itinerary
- All accommodation – Hotels, Guesthouses, and homestays

Meals: What To Expect

During the hikes: Most of our hikes include a variety of meals to nourish our bodies with enough carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. We usually have pasta, rice, sausages, cheese, oatmeal, canned lentils and beans, sugar, and bread. We also carry fresh vegetables and can easily accommodate vegetarians.

Additionally, we have snacks such as dried fruits, fresh fruits, chocolate bars, and each break will include hot coffee and tea. We can accommodate people with special dietary needs.

In guesthouses, home-stays, and restaurants (Tajik cuisine):

Tajik cuisine offers a large variety of fruit, meat, and soup dishes. The most popular among them are dishes such as Oshi palov, Kurutob, Shurbo, Laghmon and snacks like Sambusa and Mantu. The national drink is green tea, respectively. Traditional Tajik meal begins with small dishes of dried fruits, jams, and halva, followed by soup and meat, and finished with plov. Tea accompanies every meal and is often served between meals. Besides traditional dishes, most restaurants serve Russian borsh and popular Shashlyks.

Shurbo: boiled meat on the bone with chickpeas, red and green peppers, potatoes, carrots, and onions.

Laghmon: the same with homemade noodles

Oshi Palov: a rice dish made with shredded yellow turnip or carrot and pieces of meat, all fried together in vegetable oil or mutton fat.

Shashlyks: chunks or minced meat on a skewer cooked over an open fire. Vegetarian versions are often available.

What's Not Included?

- Clothes, raingear, and footwear
- Any other expenses of a personal nature
- Tips (Always optional)

What Gear To Bring

- Personal soap/shampoo
- Personal medicines (especially against diarrhea, altitude sickness, and car sickness), most of the passes on the road are above 3500m
- High protection Sun-screen
- Sunglasses
- Sun hat
- Flashlight
- Strong hiking shoes
- Plastic bottle for water and water purification tablets, if you intend to hike in remote areas
- Camera (Including spare batteries. You won't believe how many pictures you will be taking and if you don't have a proper camera you'd wish you had one)
- Trekking poles, if there is trekking involved
- Gifts (People in most of the villages in Tajikistan are among the poorest in the world, however, they will share their last crust with you to offer hospitality. Therefore it will be nice of you to bring gifts like toys and books for the children, winter clothes or cosmetics and chocolates for women and man)

What Clothes To Bring

We will email you what kind of gear to bring depending on the season. Summers are usually warm in central Tajikistan; however, if you are going up to higher altitudes (above 2500m/8200ft) you will need warmer clothing, including a sweater and windproof jacket

Driving

Due to its mountainous nature, geographical remoteness, and deteriorated roads, traveling in most parts of Tajikistan involves a lot of driving, especially to the Pamir region. We use services of experienced drivers, who have been driving at least 5 years on such road conditions. In most cases, we use 4wheel drive SUV like the Nissan Patrol and Toyota Land Cruisers. For bigger groups, we may use 4WD Vans. We've found that how you get there significantly influences the tone of your journey, and therefore we always make sure that your ride is comfortable with reliable transportation.

Safety Considerations:

Your safety is our top priority. Only trained guides and experienced rangers will accompany you during your hike. All of our rangers and guides are local from the nearby villages, of the respective conservancy. All guides are trained to offer first aid and always carry the necessary first aid kit.

FAQ

Click on this [link](#) to read answers to frequently asked questions