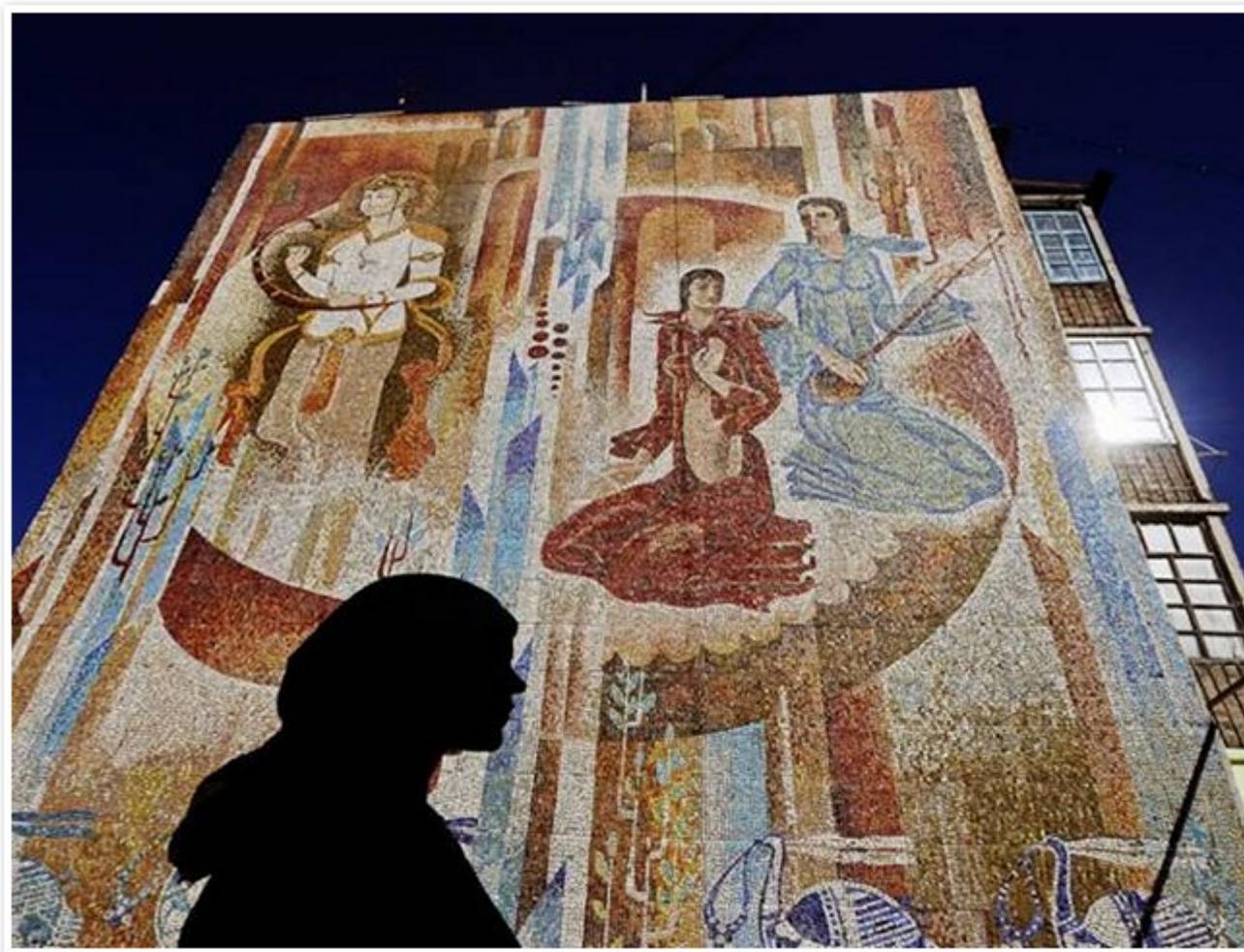


FIVE STANS ADVENTURE

The easiest way to explore Central Asia

TAJIKISTAN, HISTORICAL TREASURES AND FANN MOUNTAINS 6 DAYS



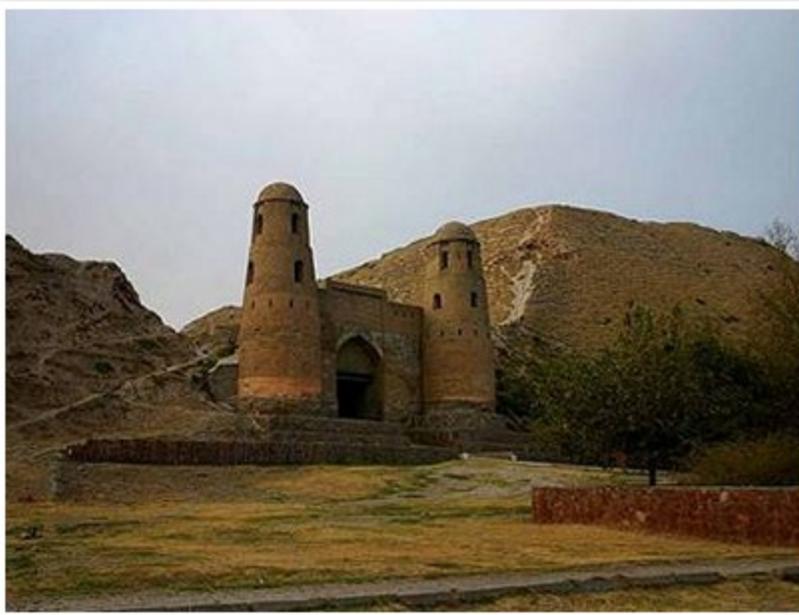
In Brief: Northern and southern Tajikistan is separated by the **Fann Mountains**, a huge spur that juts west from the high and remote Pamir Range. Accessible from either Samarkand or Dushanbe, the area offers an ideal opportunity for hiking or experiencing the culture and traditions of rural Tajik mountain dwellers. Learn about traditional Tajik cooking made with fresh local ingredients. Travelers will receive a warm welcome in neat, comfortable guesthouses. Our tour offers some of the most beautiful scenery in Tajikistan: the legendary **Iskandarkul Lake** area, named for Alexander the Great, and the passes and lake systems of the **Fann Mountains**. The tour begins and ends with the opportunity to visit some of Tajikistan's finest cultural and historical treasures in the cities of **Dushanbe, Penjikent, Istarafshan** and **Khujand**.

The itinerary can be altered or shortened to suit the needs of the traveler while offering a unique opportunity to visit a country once off limits until recently by a restrictive government visa system. The warm welcome visitors will receive is certain to be a highlight of their visit to the **Zerafshan Valley**



Day1 **DUSHANBE**

Welcome to Tajikistan! You will arrive at Dushanbe International Airport, where you will be met by our expert guide and assisted to your hotel. Just 15 km from Dushanbe, on a wide plain surrounded by mountains, lays the Hissar Historic Cultural Reserve, where we will explore the fascinating remains of an 18th and 19th century archaeological complex consisting of a fortress, madras, and an ethnographic museum. Upon our return to Dushanbe we will visit the Museum of National Antiquities with exhibits primarily from Tajikistan's pre-Islamic civilizations: the Greek, Bactrian, Buddhist, Hindu, and Zoroastrian periods. Here you will see a statue of Alexander the Great, and wall paintings from ancient Penjikent. The most notable piece in the museum is the enormous, fifteen-hundred-year-old reclining Buddha, which is the largest in existence. Considering that Tajikistan has been so disadvantaged by poverty and politics, the museum is a testament to the people's desire to maintain its cultural treasures. The rest of the day you are free to explore Dushanbe before returning to your hotel.



Day 2
DUSHANBE - ISKANDAR KUL (ALEXANDER LAKE)

Today we will drive 125 km to Iskandarkul Lake. Along the way, we will pass along the Varzob Gorge, and over the Anzob Pass (3,373 m). Iskandarkul Lake is named after Alexander the Great and is one of the most beautiful mountain lakes in Central Asia. It is surrounded by the peaks of Chimtarga, Hazormeck, Sarima, and Gazni. Alexander's armies passed this way on their route to conquest. There will be time for a short walk to see a 30m-high waterfall. Your accommodations will be in a clean, comfortable cottage.



Day 3

ISKANDER KUL - PANJAKENT

Depart from Iskandarkul Lake to Panjakent (120 km). Panjakent was re-discovered in the mid-twentieth century and is still an active archaeological site. Visit the excavation site of the ancient Sogdian city from the 5th to 7th centuries. Sogdians were important traders during the heyday of the Silk Road trade routes and are thought to have been Iranian in origin. Panjakent is often referred to as the "Pompeii of Central Asia." Visit the Panjakent Museum. Then continue to the ancient settlement of Sarazm, which is said to have existed 3400- 2000 B.C. Numerous homes, religious buildings, and palaces have been excavated in Sarazm. Many articles made of copper, bronze, lead, silver, and gold, as well as weaponry and ornaments of the 4th to 2nd millennium B.C., have been found at the site. You will be accommodated at a modern and comfortable hotel.



Day 4

PANJAKENT - MARGUZOR LAKE

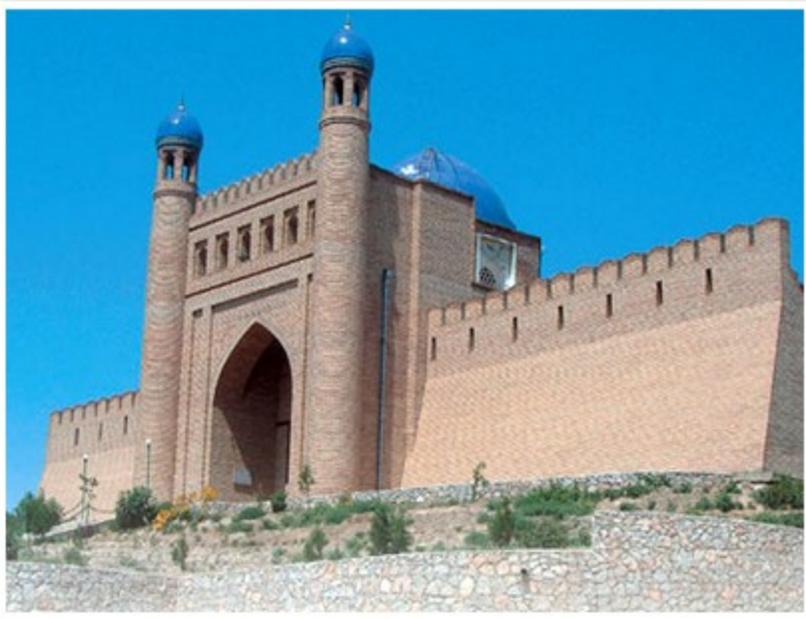
Not far from Panjakent (65 km) are the Marguzor Lakes or the "Seven Beauties" (Nezhigon, Soya, Gushor, Nofin, Khurdak, Marguzor and Hazorchashma). They are situated in the Fann Mountains in the southwest branches of the Zarafshon Range. The difference between the upper and lower lakes is 692m. Some of the lakes' waters are a green-grey and translucent color, and the setting is quite dramatic. All the lakes except for Hazorchashma were formed by the creation of dams. Free time for trekking. Drive to Artouch to the clean and comfortable cottages for your overnight stay.



Day 5

MARGUZOR LAKE – KHUJAND

In the morning, we will depart from Artouch for Aini (180km), which is located in northwestern part of the country. We will continue to the museum city of Istarafshan across the Shahrison Pass (3370 m). Istarafshan is one of the most ancient trading centers of Central Asia with some of the oldest intact Islamic buildings in Tajikistan. There are many mosques, traditional streets, and several significant madrassa complexes. Visit the blue domed Kok-Gumbaz Mosque; the mausoleum of Bobo Tago, a local aristocrat; the Chor-Gumbaz, and; the complexes of Sari Mazor and Hazrati Shoh. Drive north to Khujand for accommodation for overnight.



Day 6

KHUJAND – OYBEK or – DUSHANBE

Usually the Tajikistan itineraries are combined with Uzbekistan, so there is an option on this day for you to cross the border to Uzbekistan and continue your tour, or you can return to Dushanbe to continue your tour or depart for another destination from Dushanbe International Airport.

Khujand, located in the north, is Tajikistan's second largest city and one of its most ancient, founded about 2300 years ago. During the time of Alexander the Great (approx. 329 B.C.), Khujand became known as the furthest settlement of his conquest. Commanding the entrance to the Fergana Valley, Khujand became very prosperous and its riches spawned palaces, great mosques, and a citadel, which survived until the Mongol invasion in the early 13th century. According to Greek historians, Alexander founded a fortress on the River Tanais or Yaksart (present day Syr Darya River) which formed a natural border of his empire. Visit the fortress by the Syr Darya River and the Khujand ethnographic museum. In the afternoon visit the Panjshanbe Bazaar and Sheikh Musliddin Madrassa dedicated to our 12th century poet. Depart from Khujand for the Uzbek border, or to Dushanbe to end the tour.



Included services:

- All transportation
- All meals, 2l bottled water per person;
- All accommodation: twin rooms in hotels; guesthouses and home stays (shared rooms).
- All entrance and sightseeing fees.
- English speaking Guide;
- VAT Tax;

Excluded services:

- International flights
- Personal insurance (compulsory)
- Visas
- Tips to local guides
- Other beverages