Tadzikistan

Dushanbe

- nejvyssi stozar na vlajku ve svete (v Rudakhi/Lenin park)
  This freestanding flagpole is a staggering 165 metres (541 feet) high. And you have to have a big flag of course! The Tajik flag it flies is 30 m × 60 m (98 ft × 197 ft) and weighs a hefty 700 kilograms (1,540 pounds). It was constructed to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Construction began on November 24, 2010, Tajikistan's National Flag Day. It cost a total of $3.5 million to complete.
- posta (na JV Rudakhi parku)
- Somoni monument (hned u posty) – vysoky oblouk - The height of the monument is more then 25 meters. This monument was placed in 1999 in honor of 1100 anniversary of the state of the Samanids. The monument is richly decorated with gold and looks impressively
- Haji Jakoub mosque – asi 200 severne od Rudakhi parku u Rudakhi ave
- prezidentsky palace – na SV Rudakhi parku
- Abu Abdullah Rudaki (v Rudaki parku –nizky oblouk) – I had never heard of Abu Abdullah Rudaki until I came to Dushanbe, but that's part of the experience of traveling, finding out about people you wouldn't normally be exposed to. Abu Abdullah Rudaki was a well known poet and considered by some to be the founder of Tajik and Persian literature. He was born in Panjakent district in 858 and it is said that he was so intellectually brilliant that by the time he was eight he had memorized the whole of the Koran. He was also tutored in the lute by the then famous master Bakhtiar and was even rumoured to have excelled his teacher. Word of his talent eventually reached the court in Bukhara where he was invited by the ruler. He enjoyed several good years at court until he fell from favour and was exiled. According to history he died in diminished circumstances. Some historians claim Rudaki was blind from birth but many of his poems describe colours in such rich terms that this rather puts paid to this claim. Today a monument of Rudaki sits in a park on a street of the same name. The fabulous and opulent building behind the statue is the Palace of Nations and is said to have cost more than Tajikistan's annual health budget.

Jidlo:

- **Plov**- The national dish is made with rice, beef or mutton, and carrots. All fried together in vegetable oil or mutton fat in a special qazan (a wok-shaped cauldron) over an open flame. The meat is cubed, the carrots are chopped finely into long strips, and the rice is colored yellow or orange by the frying carrots and the oil. The dish is eaten communally from a single large plate placed at the center of the table
- A traditional dish that is still eaten with hands from a communal plate is qurutob, before serving the dish is topped with onions fried in oil until golden and other fried vegetables. No meat is added.
- **Qurotob** is considered the national dish.
- **Sambusa**- (baked pastries)
- **Shashlik** (shish-kebab)- Grilled-on-coal fish, liver, chicken, mutton and beef.
- **Tushbera soup-** (like ravioli, or pasta with meat in it)
- **Ugro sou**p- (handmade spaghetti soup served with cheese cream and basilic)
- **Jiz-biz**- (fired freshcut lamb or mutton on its own juice)
- **Dolma**- (steamed rolls with grape leafs and meat inside, served with sour cream and red pepper)
- **Mantu** -(steamed pasta with meat inside, served with sour cream and fried onions)
- **Shurbo**- (fresh vegetable soup with lamb or beef, served with green onion and basilic)
- Many types of bread like chappoti, kulcha, nan, fatir, qalama, etc.
- **Damlama**- (like English stew, steamed lamb or beef with vegetables in its own juice)
- **Khash**- (soup with sheeps' legs and arms, joints and tendons)
- **Melons** and **watermelons** are extremely popular among locals and are very cheap in local markets

Fanske hory

Výstup na Chimtargu
Výstup začíná u Mutnyi lake (3600), pokračuje 30 stupňovým stoupáním podél ledovce až do sedla Avlodon (4600m). Následně po hřebeni Mirali peaku až téměř na vrchol a traverzem do mělkého sedla mezi Mirali a Chimtargou (5000m). Další den sněholedovým hřebenem na vrchol Chimtargy (5490) a sestup pokud možno až k Mutnyi lake.

Nejvíce turistů je kolem Alaudinských jezer, za průsmykem Čimtarga (1B) už jsme žádného turistu nepotkali. Zamok je zřejmě nejlehčí pětitisícovka (2A). Výstup normálkou není obtížný, pokud ledovec není příliš přemrzlý. Uvedené celkové převýšení treku je bez výstupu na **Zamok** – jinak je třeba přičíst ještě 1500 metrů.V horách a okolních osadách žijí neskutečně pohostinní lidé.

2. den přílet do Dušanbe, nákupy potravin, přesun do hor (základní tábor VERTICAL na Alaudinských jezerech),
3. den jednodenní výlet do doliny Imat pod severní stěnu hory Velká Ganza,
4. den odjezd na západní stranu hor, prohlídka mauzolea A.Rudaki, Mazare Šarifu a vykopávek v Pendžikentu, výstup na jezero Velké Allo,
5. den aklimatizační výstup do sedla Dvojnoj nalehko, pod stěnami štítů Zindon a Moskva, bivak na jezeře Velké Allo,
6. den výstup po ledovci na sedlo Mirali, zde bivak, odpoledne lehký výstup na vrchol Mirali jižním hřebenem (5106m),
7. den výstup na vrchol Čimtarga (5489m), nejvyšší vrchol Fanských hor, severním hřebenem, pak sestup do doliny Pravý Zindon, bivak
8. den přechod sedla Čimtarga do doliny Čapdara (Mutná jezera) a návrat do tábora,
9. den celodenní odpočinek v táboře,
10. den přechod sedla Kaznok pod ledovec Malá Ganza,
11. den výstup do sedla Ganza s výstupem na vrchol Malá Ganza 4956m,
12. den výstup na vrchol Velká Ganza (5306m), sestup pod sedlo Kaznok,
13. den sestup na jezero Iskanderkul, odpočinek, přesun do tábora Vertical,
14. den , rezervní den, - trek Hissárským pohořím, nebo výlet na Tigrovou balku a mauzoleum Hodža Mashad do jižního TJK

Slavomir Horak

Peníze: Výměna je možná v mnohých "obměnných punktech" v každém větším městě Tádžikistánu. Vzhledem k liberální politice při výměně peněz neexistuje černý trh. Obecně platí, že lepší kursy jsou ve větších městech - před odjezdem do zapadlejších oblastí je vhodné mít dostatek peněz. V krajním případě lze některé služby (zejména taxíky v noci po příletu) platit i v dolarech, ale není to obvykle výhodné. Na východě Badachšánu je možné dohodnout se i na platbě v kyrgyzských somech, v Pendžikentu a v severním Tádžikistánu zase přijímají v uzbeckých sumech v kursu podle uzbeckého černého trhu.
V Dušanbe i v Chodžentu se objevuje stále více bankomatů, které přijímají většinu platebních karet.

Doprava:
Oš-Batken. Denně autobus z autobusového nádraží v 7.00 a 10.00 (120 kyrgyzských somů, 8 h), mnohem rychlejší jsou však maršrutky Oš-Batken, Oš-Isfana), rozhodně doporučuji vyjet dříve (například v 7.00) kvůli možným problémům při průjezdu/objezdu uzbeckou enklávou Soch.
Alternativou je například let z Biškeku do Batkenu (linka Air Kyrgyzstan, létá se AN-24), která létá 3x týdně (Út, Čt, Ne v roce 2011) za 2050 KRS (cca 52 USD, cena z léta 2006) a za 1,5 h jste na malém letišti v zapadlé oblasti Kyrgyzstánu. Dvakrát týdně (Po, Čt v zimě 2011) se lze dostat i Isfany v nejzzazším jihozápadním cípu Kyrgyzstánu (letecká společnost Avia Traffic Company)
Soch. Na cestě do Batkenu cesta projíždí uzbeckou enklávu Soch. Teoreticky ji lze projet bez víza, prakticky tato skutečnost závisí na vyjednávacích schopnostech vašich i řidiče autobusu. Autora této stránky v roce 2002 uzbečtí pohraničníci a KGB zadržela do odjezdu dalšího autobusu, ale bez úplatků, zkušenosti dalších cestovatelů jsou rozporuplné. V roce 2006 Uzbekové vyžadovali po cizincích víza (nicméně bylo možné se s pohraničíky "dohodnout" na ceně okolo 5-10 USD za jeden průjezd). Jinak lze použít i objízdnou trasu, která je však asi o hodinu delší jezdí zde relativně málo veřejné dopravy.
Batken. Malinké oblastní město, nejzapadlejší oblast Kyrgyzstánu, ve městě je jeden hotel (350 KRS za dvojlůžko), lze sehnat i ubytování v soukromí. Cesta ze Sochu do Batkenu je atraktivní pro své výhledy na masív Turkestánského hřbetu, byť nejvyšší vrcholy obvykle není vidět.
Batken-Isfara. denně několik autobusů nebo maršrutek - poslední asi v 17.00 (cca 1 hod. + čekání na hranicích). Zkušenosti z hraničního přechodu se značně liší od bezproblémového přejezdu po 4hodinové zadržení a žádost o úplatek (na tádžické straně tvrdě vyžadujte razítko do pasu). Alternativně lze jet taxíkem z Isfary na hranice a odtud dalším taxíkem do Batkenu, taxikářů na obou stranách hranice je však poskrovnu. Pokud přilétáte letem z Biškeku (v dopoledních hodinách), obvykle hned na letišti čeká několik taxikářů do Isfary, kteří většinou naplní auto s pasažéry.
Isfara-Chodžent. několikrát denně autobus nebo maršrutka (cca 3 TJS, 2006), odpoledne však již nejezdí nic, pouze auta (cca 20 TJS, 2006)
Chodžent-Dušanbe. Auta z centrálního autobusového nádraží daleko za městem, nejlepší doprava po ránu taxíkem do 5 TJS. Cena za 10 h přejezd se pohybuje v rozmezí 120-150 TJS v roce 2009 (může kolísat podle cen benzínu a plynu). Autobusy z Isfary přijíždějí na východní nádraží, doprava mezi oběma částmi je možná taxíkem (v roce 2006 ne více jak 8 TJS).
Batken – Isfana – Chodžent. Pokud chcete strávit delší dobu na kyrgyzském území, lze jet i vyprahlou oblastí do nejzápadnějšího cípu Kyrgyzstánu (město Isfana). Cestou projíždíte tádžickou enklávu Voruch, jejíž průjezd je pro cizince také značně nejistý a opět záleží na diplomatickém umění, úplatcích, řidiči, který vás veze apod. Maršrutky odjíždějí přinejmenším několikrát denně

na trase Batken – Isfana, odtud už spíše budete potřebovat auto na hranice, přejít hranice pěšky (je to most přes řeku) a odtud je třeba vzít další taxi do Chodžentu (je to kousek, v roce 2006 byla cena 7 TJS).

Doprava v zemi:

Auta: Vzhledem k téměř absolutnímu nedostatku autobusového spojení je nutné jezdit nejčastěji auty, což však nevychází příliš lacině. Jejich shromaždiště je většinou okolo autobusových nádraží (v menších městech) nebo na speciálních místech (v Dušanbe jsou asi 4 místa). Doporučuji cenu předem upřesnit.

Orientační ceny (závisí na klimatických podmínkách a cenách benzínu): Dušanbe-Pendžikent 100 TJS (5-6 h, 2010), Dušanbe-Chodžent 120-150 TJS (10 h, 2009, pro srovnání v roce 2006 vyšla cesta na 70-90 TJS), Dušanbe-Sarvoda (nástup na Fanské hory) cca 30 TJS (3-4 h, 2003), Dušanbe-Hissor 5 TJS (1/2 h, 2006), Dušanbe-Chorog 180-250 TJS (cca 12-30 h, 2010), Dušanbe – Dangara 15 TJS (cca 2 h, 2008), Chodžent-Isfara 10 TJS (2 hod, 2006, lidé se neseberou často). Obvykle platí, že pokud chcete jet někam na delší vzdálenosti, největší šance jsou brzy ráno.

Maršrutky a autobusy: Uplatní se nejvíce při cestě na jih země (Kuljób, Šaartuz, Dangara), v Dušanbe se odjíždí z hlavního autobusového nádraží (např. Dušanbinská maršrutka č. 19, maršrutka od CUMu, směr Sachovat).

Letecky: Z Dušanbe jsou nejobvyklejší trasy, např. do Chodžentu (v roce 2010 stála letenka 65 USD, několikrát denně, v některých obdobích jsou letenky vyprodány, zejména v zimě, v každém případě lze doporučit nákup několik dní předem, na tentýž nebo následující den obvykle letenky nebývají), Chorogu (80 EUR, 1-2x denně). Problémem jsou občasné spekulace s letenkami. Lety do Chorogu se obvykle prodávají den předem nebo v den odletu, letí se pouze za dobrého počasí. Pokud budou lety vyprodány oficiálně, potom lze zkusit koupit letenky na letišti pod rukou (spekulanti tam nadále číhají). Ovšem i v tomto se Tádžikistán za posledních několik let hodně "zcivilizoval".

Dušanbe

Dušanbe je příjemné město se centrální hlavní třídou Rúdakí. Postrádá však historické památky, vzhledem k tomu, že bylo vybudováno až ve 30. letech jako umělé hlavní město Tádžické SSR. Všechny důležité budovy a instituce se nacházejí podél této třídy, počínaje presidentským palácem (vedle prezidentského paláce, směrem na sever je dobré orientační místo - luxusní čajchána Róhat, výrazně "orientální" dům) a bazarem na severu. Dále na jih třída pokračuje k náměstí Ázádí s budovou parlamentu a velkolepým památníkem nezávislosti Tádžikistánu se sochou Ismoíla Sómóního (zlé jazyky v Dušanbe říkají, že se nápadně podobá prezidentovi Rahmónovi) s mapou Sámánovského panství za památníkem. (Zde je také hlavní pošta a telefonní úřad). Za památníkem je nový Národní palác, otevřený v roce 2008, který slouží hlavně prezidentovi. Nově otevřený park Rúdakího v jeho jubilejním roce 2008 je bohužel pouze torzem příjemného městského parku se vzrostlými stromy a různými dětskými atrakcemi (v minulosti to bylo poměrně živé místo, dnes je zde v létě vedro a pusto).

UPOZORNĚNÍ: Okolo památníku Sómóního se obvykle shromažďují policisté, kteří se slušnějším nebo méně slušným způsobem domáhají úplatku na oběd či večeři (tak okolo 5 TJS). Není nutné jim dávat vůbec nic, i kdyby hrozili vyšetřování na policejních úřadech OVD (Oblastní administrace ministerstva vnitra, tedy oddělení milice). Případně cizincům rádi alespoň kontrolují doklady.

Dále třída Rúdakí pokračuje stromořadím, kde je po pravé straně (směrem od památníku) Akademie věd (o několik domů dopředu je obchůdek s antikvárními knihami), téměř naproti je budova národní knihovny Firdausího. Pokud se dáte ulicí doprava, přijdete k zajímavému muzeu historie a archeologie. Dále přijdete na náměstí s dominantou budovy Divadla Sadriddína Ajního (na ulici, která vybíhá po pravé straně divadla, je řada kanceláří prodávajících letenky, včetně Tajik Airu). V okolí je několik solidních restaurací (bohužel "Český pivní komplex", známá oáza pro české turisty, v roce 2005 zkrachoval, respektive byl vytunelován místním šéfem).

Celá dlouhá třída je zakončena náměstím Sadriddína Ajního, kterému vévodí jeho velká socha a budova Historického muzea s expozicí o historii Tádžikistánu a kultem presidenta Rahmónóva. Dále dolů pokračuje třída směrem k vlakovému nádraží, směrem doleva směřuje třída směrem na letiště

V okolí Dušanbe rozhodně stojí za vidění bývalá pevnost Hissor.

Doprava:

The public transport network in Dushanbe comprises some 74 routes, namely 34 bus routes, 13 trolleybus routes and 27 mini bus routes. There is a trolleybus station in Dushanbe where you can find some 100 trolleybuses at a time. Every day 152 buses, 75 trolleybuses, 160 mini buses are operating from Dushanbe to a wide range of destinations within Tajikistan. Moreover every day more than 870 private taxi cabs operate in the city. The cost of bus and trolleybus is 60 dirams (15 cents) and for mini bus 1 somoni (25 cents) within the city.

Khujand (and the rest of Sugd) - the terminal is at the end of Rudaki Street towards Varzob Valley. Take a 3 taxi and ask the driver to drop you to the 'Vaghzale Khujand' close to Vodonasos or Cemzavod. It is the end of the Trolleybus line. The price (summer 2015) should be 100 TJS per person. The trip takes about 5 hours from Dushanbe.

Ceny autem závisí na ročním období, momentálních přepravních proudech (pátek z Dušanbe, neděle do Dušanbe, počátky/konce prázdnin, jarní migrace do Dušanbe apod.) a hlavně ceny benzínu.

Na sever (Pendžikent, Chodžent). auta směr Pendžikent se shromažďují na severu města (trolejbus č. 1, autobus č. 3). Asi 3 km na dále na sever (konečná trolejbusu č. 1 "Cemzavod") je stanoviště aut na Chodžent. Auto do Sarvody (nástup na Fanské hory) jezdí ze stejného místa.

Na západ (Hissor). Auta se shromažďují na konečné autobusů a městských maršrutek v západní části města - jeďte od

presidentského paláce nebo od Zeleného bazaru (bazar Barakat) autobusem č. 8 směrem dolů přes most stále rovně až na konečnou u výjezdu z města. Maršrutka do města Hissoru 3 TJS (z Hissoru je samotná pevnost cca 5 km, lze si vzít i taxi - v roce 2008 10 TJS), auta do Tursunzóde 7-9 TJS). Autobusy do Hissoru a Tursunzóde jezdí autobusy také z hlavního autobusového nádraží (viz níže).

Na východ (Chorog). Odjezd z garáží nedaleko letiště, nejlepší doprava taxíkem nebo autobusem č. 8 z náměstí Ajního, vystupte kousek po odbočení doprava směrem k letišti, ptejte se na „Badachšanskaja avtobaza“. Cena Dušanbe – Chorog cca 250 TJS/os. (2013).

Na jih (Kuljob). Odjezd z autobusového nádraží (z centra maršrutka č. 19, 25). Odjíždějí odsud autobusy do Kuljóbu, Dangary (rodiště prezidenta Rahmónóva), Šaartuzu, Pjandže na samotném jihu země u hranic s Afghánistánem), Hissoru a Tursunzóde. Maršrutky jsou asi o 1/3 dražší, ale také skoro o polovinu rychlejší (pro srovnání maršrutka Dušanbe-Kuljób 13 TJS (3,5 h), autobus 10 TJS (5-6 h)

Na letiště: autobus č. 8. Letiště je cca 20 minut chůze od začátku třídy Rudakí (náměstí Sadriddína Ajního), taxi by nemělo stát z centra více jak 15 TJS, z okraje 20-25 TJS (2010).

Taxíky: Za jednu cestu z centra do mikrorajonu byste neměli platit více jak 10 TJS (2008), z letiště/na letiště potom 15 TJS (v noci však 20-25 TJS). Vzhledem k omezení provozu minibusů po třídě Rúdakí projíždí od severu města k vlakovému nádraží taxíky č. 3 (případně řidiči ukazují tři vztyčené prsty), které za jednotnou cenu 2 TJS/os. převážely cestující na jakoukoliv vzdálenost.

Maršrutky: Pokud budete bydlet na okraji města (což není vyloučeno), obvykle je nejefektivnějším způsobem dopravy malá dodávka – maršrutka (cena 2 TJS, 2013).

Autobusy, Trolejbusy: Autobusová a trolejbusová síť je nadále řídká, pomalá a přelidněná, autobusy a trolejbusy však mají povoleno jezdit po hlavních třídách.. Výhodný je například autobus č. 8, který jede po Rúdakího třídě od prezidentského paláce až na letiště. Na sever po Rúdakího třídě potom jezdí trolejbus č. 3 (vlakové nádraží-severní část města – park . Z trolejbusů je centrální trolejbus č. 1, který projíždí celou Rúdakího třídu až k cementárenskému závodu (stanoviště aut na sever Tádžikistánu). Veřejná doprava stojí 1 TJS autobusy/trolejbusy (2013), linkové taxíky za 3 TJS.

Ubytování:

Většina cizinců hledá byt v okolí prezidentského paláce, kde je však nenižší cena okolo 30 USD za osobu a noc, lze však sehnat i jednopokový byt za 20 USD. Zeptejte se na stanovištích taxi, aby Vás ubytovali někde mimo centrum za menší peníz (lze sehnat okolo 10 USD na noc v jednopokojovém bytu). Pokud si najímáte taxikáře, který nemá byt zrovna u známého, tak obvykle zaplatíte mnohem více. Rozdíl v ceně majitel bytu zaplatí jako odměnu taxikáři. Jinou taktikou je koupit si některé s místních novin a obvolat inzeráty nabízející pronájem bytů.

V případě zájmu můžete zavolat Lenu (mobilní telefony +992 93 501-56-23 nebo +992 91 874-89-81), pokud se nahlásíte 2-3 dny dopředu, pronajímá byty v centru města, ale cena je okolo 70-75 USD za 3-pokojový byt (vhodny pro skupiny).

Marian’s Guest house (http://mariansguesthouse.com/), cena 70-80 TJS/pokoj, tel. +992 93 5050089, adresa: ul. Šotemur 67/1, e-mail: marians@tajnet.com. Údajně pohodlné ubytování, bylo mi doporučeno, není vyzkoušeno, nicméně cena je poměrně příznivá).

Hotely v Dušanbe jsou obvykle předražené a zaplatíte v nich přinejmenším 40 USD (Dušanbe nedaleko centrálního parku) či Todžikiston (náměstí u historického muzea). Odzkoušený je poměrně levný hotel Vachš na ul. Rudaki (přímo u Ajního divadla opery a baletu) za cca 30 USD za dvoulůžkový pokoj (2013). Na některých pokojích jsou ještě vidět nedokonale zamazané stopy po kulkách z občanské války (do prosince 1992 zde bylo sídlo jednoho z opozičních polních velitelů), jinak cena odpovídá kvalitě.

Trekking ve Fanských horách

V minulosti populární hory jsou volně přístupné. Pokud po vás někdo bude chtít povolení (licencija/razrešenije na poseščenije gor), tvrďte jako kolovrátek, že to není třeba. V roce 2013 však Ajninský region (respektive lesní správa) zavedl poplatek za vstup do lesní zóny (příčinu nehledejte) ve výši 15 TJS/den (lze zaplatit pouze 1 den) na obou stranách Fanských hor (nad táborem Vertikal') i u Iskanderkulu. Klasická cesta (maršrut) je vyznačena na přibližném schématu. Lze se od něj odklonit směrem na jih od průsmyku Čimtarga na Iskenderkul. Celý maršrut Artuč - Alauddín - Mutnoje ozero - Iskenderkul zabere cca 4-6 dní, cesta Artuč – Alauddín – Sarvoda s jednodenním výšlapem na Mutnoje ozero zabere cca 4 dny.

Doprava:

- z Dušanbe do městečka Sarvoda (cca 50-60 TJS za 1 osobu v autě, 2013), auta odjíždějí od "Cementnogo zavoda" - stejně jako směrem do Chodžentu). Z centra města budete pokračovat dál po směru jízdy. Na severním okraji města je most, za nímž je odbočka doleva nahoru. Na Alaudínská jezera je to odtud cca 1 den pochodu.
- z Pendžikentu do alplagera Artuč (nástup do hor) - pronájem auta cca 180 TJS (2012).

Ubytování: Vysokohorský tábor Vertikál Alauddín (http://www.fanyvertical.ru) pod Alauddínskými jezery poskytuje možnost ubytování (cenově přizpůsobeného západním standardům), stravu, registraci a jiné více nebo méně užitečné služby.

History

Until the mid of the first millennium B.C. the territory of modern Tajikistan in the areas of Amudarya and Sirdarya were settled by Eastern Iranian tribes. Bactria and Sogdiana were the most ancient states, lying along the banks of the upper and middle Amudarya. In the 6th – 4th century B.C. these states were part of the Akhamenids Empire established by Persians. The agricultural area of Sogdiana, that included Fergana and Zerafshan valleys and reaching in the west the area of Bukhara, played an important role in international trade, as it was on trade routes that linked China and Central Asia. The Akhamenid State collapsed in 330 B.C. under pressure from Greek-Macedonian forces. Bactrians, Sogdians and other people of Central Asia were conquered, in spite of their heroic resistance to the army of Alexander the Great.

About 200 years later, the population of Bactria and Sogdiana together with massaget nomad tribes overthrew the Greek-Macedonian sway. A state was established in Bactria – Tokharistan, which later together with Sogdiana became part of the big Kushan kingdom. The Silk Road crossed via Tokharistan and silk was bought at the markets near the river Tarima and was delivered to the countries of Greek-Roman Empires of the west. In the reverse direction from Rome and Byzantine to China, glass products (such as crystal and thin multi-coloured glassware) were imported, from Central Asia – items such as adornments, gems and from India – paper, woolen fabrics and spices.

In the 5th century, Tokharistan, Sogdiana and other areas of Central Asia were under the rule of Ephtalits, and later in the 6th century – nomad Turkic speaking tribes occupied the same region. Sogdians had a great influence on the nomads, who while settling mixed with the local population. During the 6th and 7th centuries in Tokharistan and Sogdiana there were many slaves and at the same time the formation of a feudal system had already started. As a result the economy and culture developed quickly. Iron, copper, lazurite and rubies were extracted at mines, irrigation channels were constructed, and arid places were irrigated. The importance of feudal cities started to grow, as well as craft and trade was developing. The main languages were Bactrian and Sogdian – which are Eastern Iranian languages. Numerous independent principalities emerged with the development of feudal relationships. But they were weak and could not resist the Arabs, who in the 7th & 8th centuries invaded Central Asia.

The population of Sogdiana and Tokharistan tirelessly struggled for their liberation. Because of continuous revolts it became difficult for the Arabs to keep control of Central Asia with the help of their governor-generals; therefore they more often resorted to the help of the service of their feudal partners. Their participation prepared the ground for releasing Central Asia from Arab rule. Hence, at the end of the 9th century independent from the Bagdad caliphate (successor of Muhammed), the Tajik state of Samanid formed. In the period of its most extensive growth Samanid stretched from the deserts of Central Asia to the Gulf and from the borders of India to Bagdad. During the Samanids Empire Tajik people and culture became widespread and Tajik language became dominant. The Samanids state lived in peace for more than 100 years which fostered the growth of cities , craft, development of farming and trade and mining. This was truly the era of Renaissance that produced some of the world's greatest humanitarians such as the founder of the Persian-Tajik poetry – Rudaki, creator of the immortal poem – 'Shahname' Firdawsi, and world renown scientist-Encyclopaedis Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna). However internal conflicts and frequent raids of nomads undermined and weakened the Samanid state, which in 999 collapsed under the strike of the Turkic speaking tribes. The dynasties of Karakhanids (in the North) and Gaznavids (in the South) founded their power on the ruins of the Samanids state.

In the beginning of the 13th century (1219-1221) Central Asia was invaded by Mongols, under the command of Chingizkhan. The country was completely devastated, cities destroyed, gardens and vineyards turned into pastures for horses of the invaders. Not long before his death Chingizkhan he divided the invaded lands between his sons. The main cultural areas of Central Asia went to ulus (independent principalities) of his second son Chagatai. People showed resistance. The biggest revolt broke out in 1238 in Bukhara, which was led by a craftsman Mahmud Tarabi. Another revolt in Samarkand was led by "sarbadars" – hanged men, who defeated the Mongol army in Bukhara, which brought to power a new ruler – Tamerlan.

Timur's ascent to power in 1370 temporarily put an end to feudal factions. Timur, as a result of his numerous campaigns to conquer Eastern countries and unheard cruelty and genocide especially towards the Persian speaking population, built an enormous empire with its capital in Samarkand. The majority of today's Tajikistan was part of Timur's empire. During the reign of his son and especially his grandson Ulugbek– prominent scientist, astronomer and loyal ruler – the widely abandoned oasis of Central Asia was restored with the flourishing of astronomy, math, history, literature and art. But the inter-dynasty struggle and raids of nomads undermined this empire too. The leader of Uzbek nomad tribes Muhammad Shaibani khan, who lived in Ural, using hostility between the descendents of Timur, invaded Central Asia in 1500-1507. During his rule the state consisted of independent principalities with the biggest ones being Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Balkh.

From 1557 to 1598 Central Asia was ruled by Shaibanid Abdulla Khan, founding Bukhara kingdom. In 1598 Abdulla Khan was killed and the power moved to the dynasty of Ashtarkhanids, being the rulers from a dynasty of Mongols. In this period downstream of Amudarya Khivin a principality was formed. Due to continuous wars and excessive taxes the economy of this area declined. All the following centuries of this principality remained backward and politically disconnected. What is known today in modern Tajikistan as Kulyab, Gissar, Karategin, Darvaz, Vakhan, and Shugnan principalities already existed. The majority of Tajiks of Central Asia lived in Bukhara and Kokand principalities, and minority in independent principalities.

During the second half of the 14th century, areas of Central Asia were conquered by Russia and Turkestan and a general government was formed on its territory. The Northern areas of Tajikistan and the Pamirs were part of this new territory, and the

central and Southern areas (called Eastern Bukhara) were left in the ownership of vassal of the Russian tsar – emir of Bukhara. At the end of the 14th century the tsarist government implemented agrarian reforms which meant that the settled population received irrigated lands, however the majority of lands was withheld for the benefit of the government funds. Increases in taxes, numerous duties and illegality provoked in those areas of the emirate frequent disorders. Especially one of the biggest revolts was in 1888 in Baljuvan bekstvo, which was ruled by chum maker Vose. In 1900 peasants of Kelif bekstvo staged a rebellion, in 1901 – in Denau, in 1902 –in Kurgan Tube. All these outbursts of the peasant farmers were cruelly suppressed. World War I particularly intensified opposition and disintegration of society. In summer 1906 the biggest revolution broke out which was suppressed by the army of Emir. On 31 March, 1917 the administrative centre of Russia influenced Central Asia and caused the Turkestan general government to be abolished.

In October 6, 1920 the first all Bukhara national assembly was proclaimed and the Bukhara People Soviet Republic was established. Farmers were exempted from taxes, households that were affected by war were given loans, seeds and agricultural instruments. In 1924 a new state emerged in Central Asia: the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, which also included the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1929 the Tajik ASSR was reformed into independent Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic.

As a member of USSR the Tajik Republic transformed into an agrarian-industrial country for a short period of time. Tajikistan became the main source of fine-fibre cotton for the USSR. A working class formed in the republic, as well as a national intelligentsia, and the first higher education institutions came into existence. It is also worth noting that Tajikistan's contribution in the fight against fascism in World War II was of some importance. More than 190,000 envoys fought in battlefronts of the war and more than 60,000 worked at military plants of Siberia and other cities of Russia. Fifty four envoys of the republic were awarded the highest military award as Heros of the Soviet Union. After the war ended the economy of Tajikistan grew to a new level. Production of row cotton continued to increase. Tajikistan as part of USSR took the first place on productivity of cotton and third on gross yield.

Industry was well developed due to construction of some big hydro-power stations among one of which was Nurek, which is the biggest in Central Asia.

In September 1991 with the break-up of the Soviet Union a new state emerged on the world map – the independent democratic republic of Tajikistan. In 1992 critical political conflict on the ground of regional-clan conflicts burst out which led to civil war. Protracted negotiations between Tajiks under aegis of UN starting in April 1994 concluded by signing the Treaty for Peace and Reconciliation in Tajikistan on June 27, 1997 by the President of Tajikistan E.Rahmon and A. Nuri, the leader of the United Tajik Opposition in Moscow.

Today Tajikistan is an independent democratic state which is recognized by 117 countries worldwide. The country is a full member of the UN and some other international organizations.

Population

The process of formation of Tajik nationality started as early as the 4th – 5th century and ended on the verge of the 9th – 10th centuries with the Samanids state. The ethnic groups of Tajiks were some of the ancient tribes of Central Asia: Bactrians, Sarmatian, Tokhars, Soghdians, Saks, and Massagets.

As all the Iranian-speaking people, and also Dards of India and people of Nuristan, Tajiks consider their ethnic origin as Arians. The direct predecessors of Tajiks were people speaking Eastern-Iranian languages. However the predecessors of modern Tajiks did not speak Persian — as they were related to the Western Iranian group of languages. The new Persian language, known as "farsi" in Iran and "dari" in Afghanistan was defined as "Tajik language" in Central Asia starting from the 8th century AD. The Eastern-Iranians adopted the Persian language in the period of the Muslim invasion of Central Asia by Arabs, which provoked migration of Persians (western Iranians) to Central Asia (including western China). As a result of this influence, local Eastern Iranians (Tajiks) started to speak Persian. But undoubtedly backgrounds for their languages were the early Eastern Iranian languages and dialects.

Anthropologically Tajiks are referred to as a Caucasian race. Dark hair and eyes, skin tones range from olive-skinned to light skin color which are typical for Tajiks. Inhabitants of the valley areas of Soghd have noticeable Mongoloid features: less hair, wide faces and narrow-shaped eyes. Lighter colored hair and eyes are common in the Pamirs.

The national composition of the country is defined by its historical fortune. The country until the great geographical discoveries was on the world trade roads and for the entire period of existence it repeatedly underwent different invasions and conquests. The territory of Tajikistan, offered spacious areas and therefore stimulated an unusual diversity of the ethnic composition of the population especially in the Southern areas.

From the general mass of Tajiks, the pre-Pamirian Tajiks single out by their languages, life style and other signs. These are Shugnani-Rushani, Khufi, Yazgulyami, Vakhani, Ishkashimi, and Bartangi. They form the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) within Tajikistan. Another special group of Tajiks are the Yaghnobi – direct descendants of Soghdians, living in the high mountain valley of Yaghnob (influx of Zerafshan). Their language is one of the dialects of ancient Soghd languages, which was spoken by a part of modern Tajiks ancestries until invasions of Central Asia by Arabs in the 7th and 8th centuries. Now Yaghnobis speak two languages – Yaghnobi and Tajik.

For Tajikistan, as for any mountain region, the uneven distribution of population on high altitude areas is typical. The lower

areas of the large river valleys are intensively developed and densely populated. Slopes and highlands are less populated or are devoid of any permanent inhabitants. The main mass of the population live in cities, districts and villages, located at altitudes up to 1,000 m. The majority of Tajikistan's population live in zones from 1,000 to 2,000m and only some at the altitude of more than 2,000m.

In the South of Tajikistan a small number of Arabs live. Turkmens of the Ersari tribe settled in the lower reaches of Vakhsh from the middle of 14th century. Kyrgyz people settled in the North-Eastern part and Eastern Pamirs. Central Asian gypsies live in separate clans – local people call them "jugi" or "luli". Russians, Tartars, Georgians, Armenians, Germans and Central Asian Jews also live in the cities of Tajikistan.

The majority of the Tajik population professes Islam. Most of the country's population are Sunni-Muslims, and only a small proportion of Tajiks are Shiite Muslims. One of the characteristics of Tajikistan is its high population growth with now about 7 million people living in the country.

Dushanbe is the political, cultural and economic centre and capital of Tajikistan modern and brimming with lush green vegetation. Dushanbe (until 1961 was called Stalinabad) is located in the centre of the Gissar valley at an altitude of more than 800 m above sea level. From the North and East it is surrounded by foothills, crowned with snow – white caps of the Gissar range. The Gissar range reaches from both sides of Varzob River (within the boundaries of the city called Dushanbinka). There are some 120 glaciers in the upper part of the Varzob river basin creating a favourable microclimate.in the mountain gorges and in outskirts of Dushanbe The Varzob River generously grants drinking water and irrigates neighbouring orchards and fields. And the picturesque mountain gorge offers a place for recreation and a comfortable base where guests from all parts of the world come to relax and explore.

Due to closeness of the mountains, the inhabitants of the capital can feel a light breeze and evening freshness in the hot periods of the summers. There is distinct continental climate in Dushanbe with arid and hot summers and humid cool winters. The most beautiful time of year is the warm and dry autumn – time for harvesting.

Modern Dushanbe ironically is an ancient city with great historical heritage and at the same time it is rather young (it is 80 years old). The true age of Dushanbe is subject to scientific arguments as numerous discoveries of archaeologists, ethnographers and historians found buried treasures of Sasanid silver coins, wedge-shaped copper axes of the 2nd century B.C., skilfully made earrings from alloyed gold and silver, bronze and gold-plated detail of horse harness with relief image of a head of Greek god Dionysus), give evidence that almost 2500 years ago this place was inhabited by people who lived in a relatively highly developed culture of handicrafts and city buildings.

On the slopes of Putovskiy remnants of settlements of the Greek-Bactrian kingdom (end of 3rd century B.C.) were found and an ancient city of Kushan (7th – 8th century) on the left bank of the river Dushanbinka.

he settlement of the Kushan period is believed to have been rather large. However when it emerged within the territory of the modern city the mystery has not been able to be resolved.

The first mention of Dushanbe goes back to 1676. In sources it is called "Kasabai Dushanbe" which is indicative of the status of the city. The city was in advantageous location on the crossroad of caravan roads, linking Gissar valley with Bukhara and Samarkand, Pamirs and Afghanistan. The word "Dushanbe" itself is translated as "Monday" refering to the day when the large bazaar or market happened. In the 19th century Dushanbe spanned an area of 272 ha with a population of 710,000 people.

At the beginning of the 20th century Dushanbe was a small village with some hundreds of people living here. Later it united with villages of Sari Osiyo and Shohmansur. According to memoirs of the Russian officer B.N. Litvinov, there were 42 small shelters and some hundreds of people; there was no electricity, water supply – water was fetched from the river and delivered in waterskins from lamb leather. The first diesel electricity was built in September 1924.

The more dynamic development of Dushanbe started from 1929 when the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was established. By this time the first paved street, mill, soap factory, creamery and cotton-cleaning factory, metal workshop and mechanical and joiner's workshops emerged. The same year a film studio was launched.

In 1931 Dushanbe was renamed into Stalinabad and had this name for another 30 years. Soon on the Varzob river the first hydro electrical station was constructed and the capital lit up with electricity. In 1938 city development with the population of 170 000 was mapped out. Against the background of snowy mountains and blue sky new buildings such as the Opera and Ballet, the "Vakhsh" hotel, state and specialists houses, and a number of other beautiful architectural creations, which after decades are still giving the capital of Tajikistan a beautiful streetscape.

In 1938 within the territory of the Tajik SSR Gharm, Kulyab and Leninabad districts were established. In 1961 the capital of Tajikistan reclaimed its former historical name – Dushanbe.

In mid 2000 Professor Buri Karimov, ex-chairman of Gosplan of Tajik SSR made a statement about reconstitution of the former network of administrative-territorial division of 1944-1947, which coincide with the historical-cultural regions of Tajikistan: Soghd, Zerafshan; Gissar, Vakhsh; Khatlon; and Badakhshan. Now the Republic of Tajikistan consists of 13 districts of republican subordination, 55 villages and 368 sub-districts.

Dushanbe itself transformed every day into a more beautiful capital with developed infrastructure, modern new buildings and unique sightseeing sites.

The central road of the capital is Rudaki Avenue, named after the famous Tajik poet. It is almost 12 km long from the railway station to the entrance into the mountain gorge of Varzob. Walking along the avenue allows seeing many places of interest of central Dushanbe.

The National Museum of the Republic of Tajikistan is located opposite the hotel "Dushanbe" not far from the railway station. The museum was opened in 1934 and it tells interesting stories of the history, archaeology, and art of the Tajik people and in the private museum of musical instruments a substantial collection of various musical instruments from many countries has been collected.

On the central city square a Memorial complex is erected devoted to the Samanids State of the 9th century with a statue of Ismili Somoni – founder of the first Tajik state. In the right hand of the statue holds the symbol of national unity and revival of Tajikistan – a golden regal sceptre .The architectural memorial complex was constructed in 1999.

The square to honour 800-years of Moscow is one of the most beautiful squares of the city. Framed by Indian lilac (white marble) a big fountain features in the centre which is the favourite place for local's recreation.

One of the most remarkable old buildings of the town is the State Academic Theatre called Opera and Ballet. The theatre was opened in 1940; except classical repertoire, traditional national opera and ballets are also performed.

he Republican library houses some two million books in various languages. It is in deed a true treasure house with a collection of books by people from the ancient East, with over 2,000 manuscripts of Rudaki, Firdousi, Ibn Sina and Saadi.

One of the favourite and frequently visited places is the recently built cultural and recreational park surrounded by many beautiful fountains. On the opposite side of the avenue, straight opposite to the park, there is the building of city administration – Khukumat (government) of Dushanbe.

In the centre of the capital on the right side of Rudaki Avenue performances, unique and famous beyond the boundaries of Tajikistan are performed by the Russian state dramatic theatre.

n the crossroad of Rudaki and Ismoili Somoni Avenues there is an Art Gallery where art items, original – traditional works of local craftsmen and artists can be obtained.

The professional Tajik theatre in Dushanbe came into existence in 1929. It was established on the base of a study group of art amateur performances. Now, it is the first professional theatre in the republic – The Tajik State Academic Drama Theatre.

Each tourist visiting Dushanbe has to visit chaikhane "Rohat". This beautiful museum of national architecture is located by the Presidential palace. Here you can have delicious food of Tajik cuisine and enjoy original and wonderful Tajik architecture.

The State complex "Kohi Vahdat" (Palace of Unity) decorates the northern part of the capital. Large scale public and business meetings, forums, conferences, symposiums, congresses and other significant activities are carried out at this building.

Another name for the northern part of the city is – «studencheskaya. Three of the largest educational institutions – the Tajik pedagogical university (first high education institution of the republic opened in 1931), the Tajik medical university after Abuali ibn-Sina and the Tajik Agrarian University are all located in this part of the city.

On one of the side streets, in front of the Agrarian University, the Botanical garden of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan was established here in 1933; more than 2,000 species of plants from all over the world grow here in this garden.

The Zeravshan valley is part of the Soghd region of Tajikistan and is located between Turkestan Mountains in the north and Zeravshan range in the south. The Zeravshan valley received its name from a full, rough and rapid Zeravshan, which is translated from Farsi as "river, carrying water". Zeravshan originates in the glacies of Macha mountain node. The river provides farmers of this area with water from ancient times. The river is stretched out for 877 km and its length in the territory of Tajiksitan is 316 km.

Often the Zerafshan valley is called Kuhiston, which is translated from Tajik language as "country of mountains". Great mountain range as high as 2000 to 5500 and more meters widen out to the west and merge in the east into grand mountain swell – the Allai range. Climate in Zeravshan valley is continental and semi arid, winter is relatively mild.

ourists are attracted to Zeravshan from all over the world, by its wonderful, absolutely pure Alauddin, Kulikalon and Marguzor lakes, as well as legendary Iskanderkul. This wonderful country of lakes is surrounded by Fan Mountains, located in the north-western Tajikistan between Gissar and Zeravshan ranges, to the west of Anzob pass. 11 peaks placed higher than 5000 meters surround the picturesque barely passable valley. The highest peak – Chimtarga – its height is 5489m above sea level. Not less attractive for mountaineers are peaks of Bolshaya Ganza (5330m), Bodkhona (5300 m.), Chapdara (5050 m.) and Mirali (5120 m.).

The population of the valley is 300 thousand people that populate 254 villages and the town of Penjikent. Ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and community of Yaghnobis live in the valley. Yaghnobis are descendents of the ancient Iranian tribes of Eurasia: Alani, Sarmatians and Skitians. The modern language of Yaghnobis goes back to the ancient Soghdian language, which was spoken by (Skit-sarmatian dialect group) in ancient Central Asia. Until the Arab invasion of the VIII A.D. those who lived in the Zeravshan valley played important role on the Great Silk Road, which roads crossed Penjikent, Samarkand and Bukhara. In 722 A.D. Soghdians were exposed to Arab troops. Abandoning their lands, Soghdians ran to the mountains, to the village Yaghnob, where the village Pskon actually became the new "capital" of the refugees.

Isolation and inaccessibility of the valley allowed preserving the lifestyle of Yaghnobis. Now, some tens and more villages have

remained in the valley of Yaghnob. Difficult mountain paths lead to Yaghnob valley via passes which are 4000 meters.

Very interesting is the archeological monument – ancient settlement of the Ancient Penjikent. The old settlement consists of strong enforced citadel— kukhendiz, as it was called in Central Asia enforced castle of a ruler; namely the city of Shahristan, fenced with a special fortress wall with numerous towers; suburban settlement (rabada) and a big necropolis, consisting of separate vaults – naus. Ossuariy were placed in the vaults (small clay boxes) with the remnants of deceased. One of the most important discoveries on the territory of the old settlements – remains of water supply network in the form of two lines of ceramic pipes of different diameter.

Not far from Penjikent, Sarazm is located – one of the oldest settlements in Central Asia. Sarazm (top of the Earth) - "origin of world", which is more than 5500 years old, is considered a place of birth of civilization of Tajiks.

Inhabitants of this ancient settlement lived in dwellings with many rooms and with small yards. The monument which is more than 70 hectares distinguishes by its highly developed culture. Many objects of material culture among which painted ceramics, stone made items, bronze knives, daggers and axes were founded. From the materials of Sarazm scientists ascertained that already in III — II B.C. tribes living in upper reaches of the Zerafshan valley had close trade contact with the tribes in Kazakhstan and South Siberia and also with those living in the coast of the Gulf in the valley of the river Ind. The ancient settlement of Sarazm is included in the list of monuments of the World Cultural Heritage of UNESCO.

Good asphalted roads are laid across most part of the Zerafshan region therefore it is not difficult to get to the tourist sightseeing places. There are eight local tour operators functioning in Zerafshan which are members of the Zerafshan council on tourism www.zerafshan.info. The tour operators develop fascinating itineraries and in addition to sightseeing, tours such as following on the tracks of adventure seekers of the past are offered: legendary adventures of Alexander the Great, studying the life and work of Rudaki, travel along the Silk Road. Tourists can hear the language of the ancient Persian kings which has preserved till nowadays, meet with local musicians and famous craftsmen, and familiarize themselves with traditional life style of Zerafshan. Short tours can be made from Dushanbe or from Penjikent to Zerafshan and then back to the city overnight stay. This itinerary is for those who would like to use higher level services.

For those who are interested in holistic study of Tajikistan «sectoral» jeep-tours and other tours which are 2 to 20 days long are offered. All these tours will be organized after learning your preferences. Perhaps one of the most fascinating and substantial tours is a tour to Fan mountains which is 5 to 20 days long. www.zerafshan.info.

1) Dushanbe – tour around the city and one day tours

Most of the international flights to Tajikistan arrive in Dushanbe and tourists as a rule stay in the city minimum a day. This is a quiet city with wide streets surrounded with beautiful plane trees preserved its soviet time atmosphere created by the city architects in 1920. In the centre of the city under the shadow of weighty trees, narrow boulevards and elegant buildings painted in pastel shades are resting. An experienced guide will show the city, tell its history and characteristics of the city buildings, monuments and parks.

National history museum after Behzod

Big collection of exhibits of natural history, ethnography and archeology are presented in the museum. A beautiful minbar (mosque pulpit) and mikhrab (a niche indicated direction to Mekka) are of particular importance. After a tour around the museum will go for a walk to Ozodi squire (Freedom), crossing the entire city centre. There is a monument standing in the squire which is devoted to the founder of the Tajik dynasty of Samanids – Ismoili Somoni. The tour will be ended by a traditional lunch at the national chaikhana Rohat.

Visit to Gurminj museum of local instruments and shashmakom

The museum of musical instruments famous as Gurminj Museum was founded in 1990 by Gurminj Zavkibekov (1929-2003), People's Artist of Tajikistan, laureate of the Rudaki State Award. About 100 musical instruments are in the collection, mainly representing the musical traditions of the Pamiris. The museum has also collection of domestic utensils, dishes and national clothes.

National museum on antiquity and Botanical garden

The national museum of antiquity has exhibits of the Greek-Bactrian period, Takht-e Sangin (also small images of Alexander the Great from ivory) and Kabadian, original Soghdian statues and frescos of ancient Penjikent. Unique in whole Central Asia, the statue of the sleeping Buddha, discovered during excavation works in Ajina Teppa 1966 is also presented here; «Buddha in Nervana» is 14 m long. After viewing the museum a tour to the north of the city, Rudaki park with a view to the presidential residence and then to the botanical garden is offered.

Gissar fortress

Gissar was the capital of the Eastern Bukhara province and was in hands of emir's deputy Ibragimbek until 1924, when he was defeated by the soldiers of the Soviet Army. The fortress faces with its gates a bazaar squire surrounded with caravanserai and two madrasah, one of which is an ethnographic museum. Other unique historical findings close to Gissar fortress are the Mausoleum of Makhtumi Azam, Masjid-i-Sangin (stone mosque) and mineral spring Chashma-i-Mohiyon.

Trip to Varzob with picnic

Varzob gorge is a wonderful mountainous location just few minutes' drive from Dushanbe. The main sightseeing sites of the gorge are waterfall Guzgarf and Siyom River valley. There are many picturesque places and recreation bases where you can rest and have food.

2) Penjikent – city tours and one day tours

Penjikent is an ideal point of departure for all long term tours. The city itself is the biggest city in the picturesque Zerafshan valley, located not far from the border with Uzbekistan, 65 km from Samarkand. 6000 years ago the ancient people of this region, Sarazmis, had started construction of this city, where production and trading prospered. From the VI to VIII A.D. this city was one of the most important cultural and art centers of Soghdiana. All tours include visiting local chaikhana, and canteens where aromatic traditional plov of Penjikent is offered.

One day city tour

The ancient Soghdian city Penjikent (V-VIII.) was defeated by Arabs and "buried" for centuries. Excavations of the ancient city are still going one. Amazing view open at the new city from here which developed just 1.5km away from the ancient settlement. The modern Penjikent is receptacle of a unique traditional bazaar. Straight opposite the bazaar there is the biggest in the city mosque. Every Friday about 1500 people gather where to make Friday prayers – Namozi Jum'a.

Ancient Sarazm

In the old settlement there are houses and fire temple with rounded altar, imitating sun rays. There is also a grave yard – 25 m in diameter (IV B.C.) where there are several tombs including the one that belong to a rich woman, known today as "Queen of Sarazm".

Literature and architecture

To the east of Penjikent, in the village of Mazari Sharif, the mausoleum of Muhammad Bashoro (11 century), famous Islamic scholar, who died here in 866, is located. Next to the mausoleum there is the museum of Loik Sherali, the prominent Tajik poet of the XX century. Rudaki – the founder of the Tajik-Persian literature was born in the village Panjrud, not far from Penjikent, and although he spent most part of his life in Samarkand and Bukhara, he came back to his place of origin to spend the rest of his life. His mausoleum is placed in a garden of his native village.

Seven lakes and a picnic

Seven lakes is one of the most fascinating places in Tajikistan. You can enjoy invigorating trip in fresh mountainous air along unique and wonderfully clean lakes.

3) Lake Iskanderkul

In 2 hours drive from Dushanbe or 4 from Penjikent the legendary lake Iskanderkul is stretched out. Breathtaking peaks of the Fan Mountains are reflected in the blue ice-cold water of the lake. Located at the height of 1295 ì, Iskanderkul is the highest mountain lake. It is 72 meters deep. Many interesting legends are linked with the lake. A local legend says that the army of the legendary Alexander the Great passed through these mountains to reach Samarkand. Another legend tells that the Soghdian leader, Spitamen was followed and died close to this area. Some local people state that they see ghostly figure of the battle horse of Alexander – Bucefal, that comes out to the surface of the water in lunar moonlit nights.