



PARAMOUNT JOURNEY

EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE

## EXPEDITION

### Yagnob & Zarafshan

These valleys are a melting pot of Sogdians and other Central Asian tribes, of civilisations dating back to the time of Alexander the Great



Little know of the **Zarafshan Valley** is the district of Kuhistoni Mastchoh. This region is largely undiscovered from a tourists point of view, yet envelopes various cultures that have been in the area for millennia. With villages and mines dating back further than the 8th century, through to established and comfortable lodging offered by a very warm and generous people.

The **Yagnob** is a place where time did not just stand still, it was never invited in. With cultures and geography that are extraordinary and unique, this region is one that will see any visitor looking back with the fondest of memories, and unforgettable images in their mind



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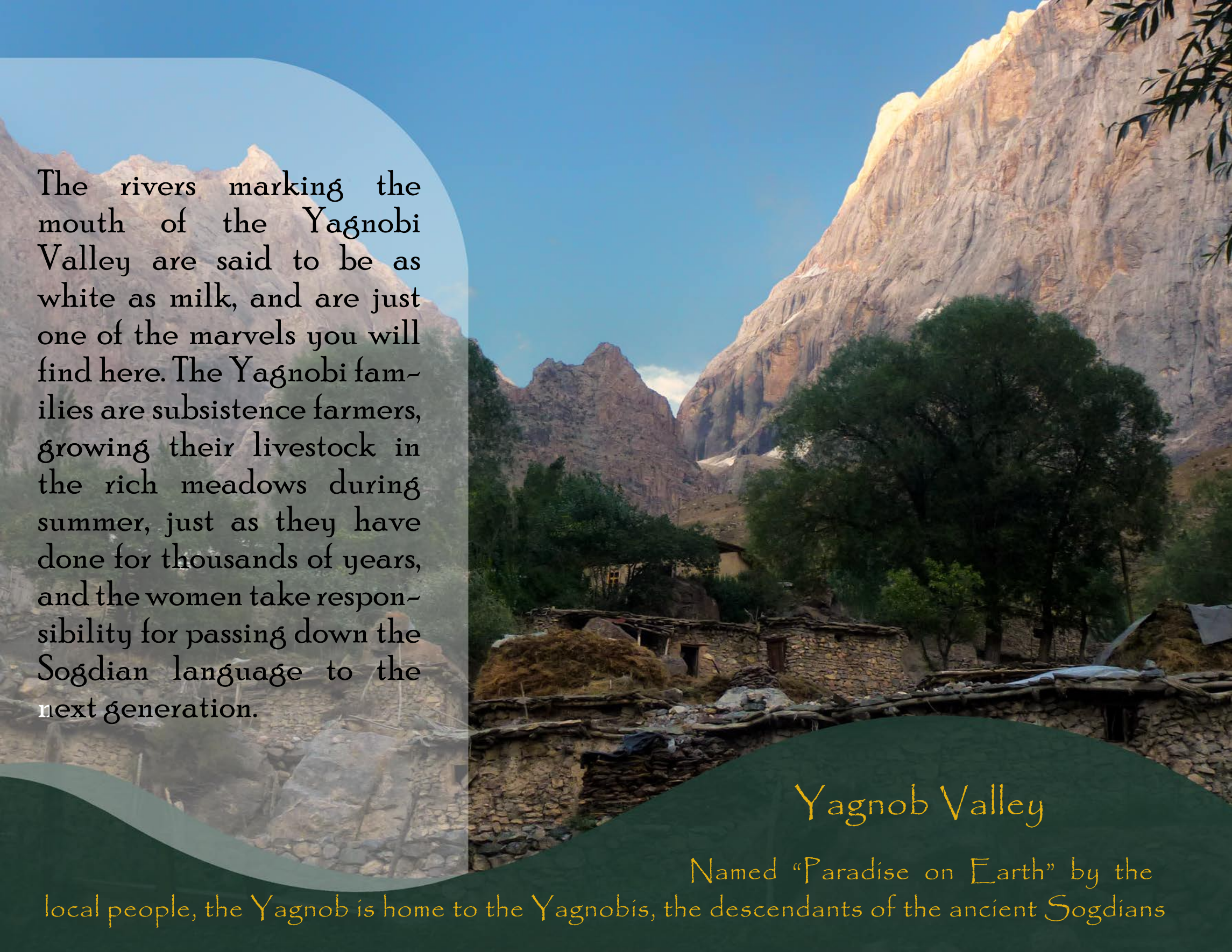


The Zarafshan Valley, is truly a vast land of contrasts. With an isolated and historic history shrouded in a mystique all its own, it is a must-see for anyone wishing to experience the surviving remnants of the old Silk Road, isolated and ancient cultures, and an opportunity to partake in history that is thousands of years old.

Trekking, mountain biking or even donkey riding through this area, you'll encounter the truly breathtaking sight of the pearls of the Tajikistan - mountainsides strewn with ancient archaeological finds, ruined cities, long-closed mines, and warm, welcoming populations who will open up their homes to guests.

## Zarafshan Valley

It is an area that is cut-off and little-visited by foreigners, but that they should come here anyway because there is a huge amount to see



The rivers marking the mouth of the Yagnobi Valley are said to be as white as milk, and are just one of the marvels you will find here. The Yagnobi families are subsistence farmers, growing their livestock in the rich meadows during summer, just as they have done for thousands of years, and the women take responsibility for passing down the Sogdian language to the next generation.

## Yagnob Valley

Named “Paradise on Earth” by the local people, the Yagnob is home to the Yagnobis, the descendants of the ancient Sogdians

# ITINERARY

## DAY 1

Welcome to Tajikistan! On arrival at Dushanbe airport you will be met by your guide and transferred to the hotel. For the rest of the day you can rest or explore Dushanbe.

## DAY 2

We start our journey towards Yagnob over the Anzob mountain pass, Overnight at the guesthouse in Margeb. The village is located in dramatic location surrounded by jagged peaks, with the giant Zamin-Karor rock wall.

## DAY 3

We hike towards the first Yagnob village (Bedef) requires at least four hours of walking (18 km). Camping in the meadow near village yards.

## DAY 4

This day starts with an easy walk along Yagnob river by taking the clear path, then passing by three other villages, and few bridges to cross. Overnight at the Yagnobian guesthouse in Pskan.

# EXPEDITION TO YAGNOB



EXPEDITION OVERVIEW MAP

## DAY 5

This day we will have opportunity to acquaint with indigenes in Pskan and other surrounding villages and continue the journey after the lunch. Camping near the Qiansi village.

## DAY 6

The path widens, moves away from the river, then few hops across side streams. The incline remains gradual. Pass the aylaq and a river on widen place, then take the clear path towards the Honi Pass (3,664m). Camp at the foot of the Honi pass.

## DAY 7

Follow the zigzag of the path up to the pass. The pass is initially ascent but then levels out. After the settlement you reach a downhill track leading to Rufigar, and a well-earned dinner and bed.

## DAY 8

After a breakfast at the guest house at Rufigar we drive through Rommit Nature Reserve back to Dushanbe.



# EXPEDITION TO YAGNOB AND ZARAFSHAN VALLEYS

This is an excellent challenge in one of the most beautiful and isolated regions in Tajikistan. It is a journey to experience its remoteness, the constant sight of mountain peaks and the hospitality of the people living from their flocks and small fields in a harsh environment. You will experience the country from a unique, on-the-ground perspective, staging several day-long treks in Yagnob Valley. The end of the valley opens a view to the wild and dramatic place with view to a spectacular summit Samarkand (5086m).



## HIKING MAP IN YAGNOB



Day 1 - 20 km    Day 3 - 16 km    Day 5 - 8 km    Day 7 - 18 km  
 Day 2 - 10 km    Day 4 - 13 km    Day 6 - 10 km    Day 8 - 60 km

Hiking Distance 95 km, Elevation: min-2107, avg-2686, max-4040

The Expedition includes a trek over Tabaspin Pass (4040m) and further descend towards Zarafshan river valley. The mountain pass does not require any technical experience and the skills required on the mountain, it will be taught on the higher slopes. The last part of the trek is more picturesque than further part of the valley, with long scree slopes leading down to the river gorge, interspersed with typical mountain villages surrounded by woods and fertile fields. The trek finish in the Langar Village, situated along Zarafshan river. The village has houses with walled gardens and orchards of apples, almonds, walnuts, apricots and mulberries, so creating a green patch in a rather arid area. The program includes a day stop in Veshab village before departure.



# ADVANCED TREKKING IN YAGNOB AND ZARAFSHAN VALLEYS



## ITINERARY OF THE EXPEDITION

- Day 1** Dushanbe - Marghib (135 km)
- Day 2** Marghib - Bedef (18 km)
- Day 3** Bedef - Pskan (10 km)
- Day 4** Pskan - Camp 1 (12 km)
- Day 5** Camp 1 - Sari Pul (11 km)
- Day 6** Sari Pul - Langar (41 km)
- Day 7** Langar - Rog (41 km)
- Day 8** Rog - Mazori Poyon (32 km)
- Day 9** Mazori Poyon - Camp 2 (16 km)
- Day 10** Camp 2 - Dushanbe (214 km)



## DETAILED ITINERARY

- DAY 1** Welcome to Tajikistan! On arrival at Dushanbe airport you will be met by your guide and transferred to the hotel. For the rest of the day you can rest or explore Dushanbe.
- DAY 2** We start our journey towards Yagnob over the Anzob mountain pass, Overnight at the guesthouse in Margeb The village is located in dramatic location surrounded by jagged peaks, with the giant Zamin-Karor rock wall
- DAY 3** We hike towards the first Yagnob village (Bedef) requires at least four hours of walking (18 km). Camping in the meadow near village yards.
- DAY 4** This day starts with an easy walk along Yagnob river by taking the clear path, then passing by three other villages, and few bridges to cross. Overnight at the Yagnobian guesthouse in Pskan.
- DAY 5** This day we will shortly get acquaint with indigenes in Pskan and other surrounding villages and get familiarized with local traditions and the life of a remote community. We continue ascend to upper side of the Valley leaving the Yagnobi villages behind and enjoying wild unexplored nature. From this part up to Ghuzn village there will be no any settlements on the way except some summer camps of shepherds
- DAY 6** Early morning we start ascent through small glaciers by the path of Rost Pass (4020m) and further descend towards Zarafshan river valley. The mountain pass does not require any technical experience and the skills required on the mountain; on the top, it is possible to see the magnificent panorama of the range.
- DAY 7** The last trekking day, we continue descend along the river and make a short stay in Ghuzn village where there are coal mines that still practice a manual mining. In the evening we will be hosted at Kholov's guesthouse, a very interesting person who has a big and well-groomed garden near his house and down near Zarafshan river.
- DAY 8** After a nourishing breakfast, we can do short walks around village, which has houses with walled gardens and orchards of apples, almonds, walnuts, apricots etc. Later we continue our journey towards Rog village by stopping on the way to Sabah where there are petroglyphs - engravings of animals and people, geometrical forms, etc.
- DAY 9** Rog is the largest village in the Upper part of the Kuhistone Mastchoh, where you can go for the walk around the village, in the narrow streets, meet locals and take a photo them. In the second half of the day, we will head towards Mazori Poyon stopping by on the way to enjoy the nature, view of the valley, potato fields that blossom in August and visiting the shrine of famous religious figures.
- DAY 10** In the morning we start trekking to the foot of Zerafshan Glacier. The Zerafshan river crossing will be done by aerial ropeways and few hops across side streams. Heading to the pass Hoja Muso (3635m) on the rocky ground, we pass by several small lakes on the top of mountain and descend to the south along the Duburso river.
- DAY 11** We star trekking in the new valley (Kamarob nature refuge area) which has a distinctive flora and fauna known for its thickly forested with birch, mulberry, wild fruit and nut trees where in the rivers and streams swim "king's fish". After a lunch break in the picturesque place, we meet our driver in Khoja Ali village and drive to Dushanbe.

Michael is a retired university professor of physical geography, and an experienced guide for extended student field trips. He has also organised and managed his own private visits in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan using his own car, by bicycle, public transport, and hiking. The first time Michael visited Tajikistan was in 1996 when touring through the Yagnob Valley. "I started to love Central Asia when I realised that I don't need to turn around to check whether suspects are following me – which I always had to do in most of Latin American countries" he says.

Michael is one of the Top Contributors on TripAdvisor. He is fluent in German, English, Italian, Spanish and French, and has a broad knowledge of the natural world, as well as socio-economic fields.



**MICHAEL RICHTER**  
Expedition Leader







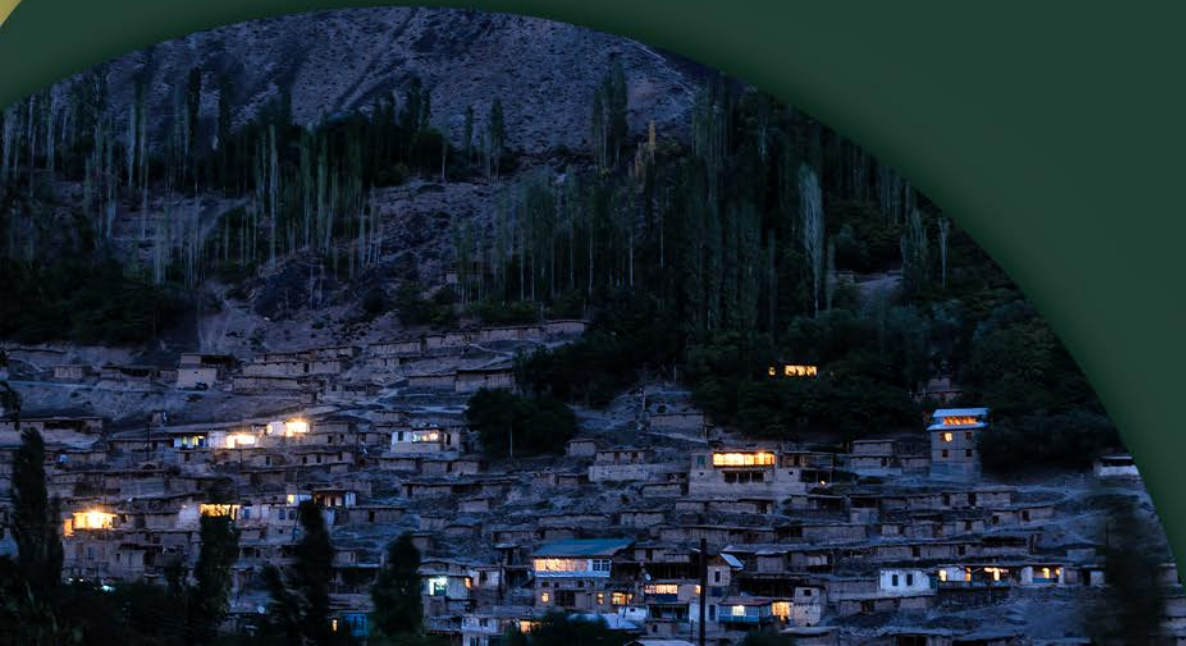
**ALOVADDIN KALONOV**

**Expedition Leader**



Alovaddin is an enthusiastic traveller, who travelled throughout Europe during his studies, as well as covering every hill, valley and remote corner of his home country. He has been a key member of expeditions in the Pamirs, Upper Zarafshan, and led many hiking groups in Tajikistan.

Alovaddin did his Master's degree in finance at Stockholm School of Business, but his enthusiastic desire to share his passion, and to show the pristine landscape and culture of Tajikistan, led him to travel extensively. When he gets an opportunity to leave the city's confines, he gets his camera and strives to conquer the ranges so as to capture the moment when a glorious greeting of the sun kisses the mountains and beyond.



# PRACTICALITIES

## Accommodation

The tourist infrastructure in Yagnob and Kuhistoni Mastchoh is limited. While in Margeb, Langar and Veshab villages the accommodation facilities will include communal sleeping rooms in guesthouses. Apart from this, we will be hosted at private houses in Pskan, Rog, Rufigar, Mazori Poyon, and wild camping as we move off on the trek.

## Food

A typical tajik meal is a sumptuous affair with appetizers and soups, exquisite preparations of meat and specially cooked rice. Tea is the most common drink among the inhabitants of Tajikistan, although some restaurants also serve wine, beer and vodka.

## Transport

To reach the start point and in the Kuhistoni Mastchoh section we will use 4WD vehicle. The areas we travel to are very remote and transport infrastructure is often ageing, inadequate and sometimes non-existent.

## Included

Full services of a PJ expedition Leader with drivers.

- Porter service with donkey
- All transport as outlined in the itinerary
- All specialist and safety equipment
- Accommodation noted in itinerary (inc. camping gears)
- All meals noted in itinerary
- All permits
- Airport pick up/drop off

## Excluded

- International flights
- Visa fees
- Insurance
- Alcohol
- Personal kit and equipment
- Accommodation and meals in Dushanbe
- Gratuities to porters, guides and drivers



# PRACTICALITIES

## Cultural and social etiquett



Men typically salute each other with handshakes and women typically salute women with hugs. With opposite sex the greeting is made only by putting the right hand on the heart.



In the countryside, people wear in traditional clothes. We do not recommend not to bring, shorts, tank tops/singlets and any types of clothes with bare shoulders, above the knee and backs.



Make sure that you ask permission for visiting mosques and shrines from locals if the guide is not near



Ask permission to take photo of someone. Usually, people do not mind if you take the photo of them, but respect their wishes if they refuse. Offer to send hard copy them, Paramount Journey will assist you to keep your promise.



Bargaining is expected in the bazaars but not in places like department stores.

## Suggested Items

Backpack (+50kg)

Sleeping bag

Trekking sticks

Trekking shoes

Warm and windproof clothes

Rain jacket and pants

Stock of clothes

Hat/cap

Sunglasses

Gloves

Sunscreen

Flashlight

First-aid kit

Personal care products

Sleeping bag (possible to rent from us)

Personal crockery (bowl, mug, spoon)

Other personal items you may need





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Discover Tajikistan

## Furhter Information

Throughout the trekking route you will be accompanied by high altitude guide, who is the expedition manager. The expedition leader is responsible for the safety and security of the group as well as decision making, including any changes in the route due to unforeseen circumstances that could threaten the health and well-being of the participants.

The expedition is serviced by a PJ team who are responsible to pitch and take down tents, lay the table for meals, wash up, pack the loads on donkeys, make fire and etc.

The team also includes a dedicated cook and a donkey handler who is responsible for proper packing of the loads on donkeys and portorage.

### PARAMOUNT JOURNEY

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