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## Run Dushanbe

Tajikistan

### Overview

Incredible, yet relatively unknown, Tajikistan is one of the most unique countries in the world. Sitting in Central Asia, it not only has fascinating history as a former Soviet bloc country, but the friendliest people you will ever meet and the most incredible breath taking scenery. This tour will not only get you there to experience all of this, but to also join in the local Tajik celebrations for their 'Day of the City' running in the Dushanbe International Half Marathon - an AIMS certified race.

Learn more about the marathon and Tajikistan at [www.dushanbeinternationalhalfmarathon.com](http://www.dushanbeinternationalhalfmarathon.com)

This tour will be led by our one of our most experienced tour leaders, Rich Beal. Rich has led tours all over the world since 2004, and has personally designed and researched all our Tajikistan tours. Because of his close connection to the country, his fellow Tajik guides and friends like to joke the country is basically his third home (China and Mongolia being first and second)!

*Please note that the itinerary may differ slightly to what is below, but your tour leader will do their best to ensure that as much is covered as possible and will also add in extras when there is time. We visit Tajikistan regularly and know the best places to go to make your trip even more unique. We will make the most of your time in Tajikistan to guarantee the experience of a lifetime.*



## Itinerary Overview

*Check out the brief overview of our **Run Dushanbe Tour** – or scroll down to see the in-depth run through of each day of the trip.*

<b>Day 1.</b>	Arrival Day
<b>Day 2.</b>	Dushanbe
<b>Day 3.</b>	Dushanbe International Half Marathon
<b>Day 4.</b>	Drive to Takob & Khoja Obi Garm
<b>Day 5.</b>	Drive to Panjikent
<b>Day 6.</b>	Drive to Iskanderkul
<b>Day 7.</b>	Return to Dushanbe
<b>Day 8.</b>	Departure Day



## Day 1

### Arrival Day

#### AM

- The tour group meets at 13.30 in the hotel reception for an orientation & introduction meeting.
- Afternoon drive to Hissar Fortress. This large and impressive site is said to date back to the days of Cyrus the Great (around 600BC) and to have been captured 21 times by invading forces – making one question how effective a fortress it is! Much of this area has been restored over the years and there is a lovely museum offering a nice introduction to the country and history- a great chance to learn about the country's history and catch up with local people who also visit the site.

#### PM

- Upon our return to Dushanbe we will stop by a local school to photograph an interesting statue of Lenin, a soviet remnant, and learn a bit about the educational system too.

**Accommodation:** *Hotel Vatan*

**Included Meals:** *Dinner*



## Day 2

### **Dushanbe**

#### **AM**

- We begin with a half-day walking tour of the sleepy capital of Dushanbe, including Victory Park, Rudaki Street, Central Park, Monument of Ismaili Somoni.
- We will also follow the route of the Dushanbe Marathon. Along this route we will learn about the development of the city over the years. From its ancient origins, to the Soviet-era (when it was called Frunze), to modern day Dushanbe.

#### **PM**

- This afternoon is free for further exploration or for training for tomorrow's big event, we have secured the use of Dushanbe's premier gym should you wish to work out and get ready for the adventure ahead!

**Accommodation:** *Hotel Vatan*

**Included Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



### Day 3

#### ***Dushanbe International Half Marathon***

##### **AM**

- Today is our main event! We make an early start for this unique opportunity; The Dushanbe International Half Marathon! Running with local athletes and amateurs, winding through the city, a life-changing experience – medals and prizes for finishers and winners!

##### **PM**

- After the morning's exertions you deserve some rest! Therefore the afternoon will be free for relaxation or for further exploration with your tour leader visiting the nearby local market for some local flavours and experiences.
- We also expect celebrations in some local parks to mark the City Day Holiday. So we will find them and join in, the most welcoming people in the world will definitely show you a good time on this occasion – be ready for some socializing and great photo opportunities too!

**Accommodation:** *Hotel Vatan*

**Included Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



## Day 4

### **Drive to Takob & Khoja Obi Garm**

#### **AM**

- The tour continues as we depart Dushanbe and follow the Varzob river into the mountains, driving up through the Varzob Gorge where we will stop on the way for photos of this scenic area. Our goal for this morning is the small village of Takob. Upon arrival we will hike for 30 minutes through this hamlet where we will be rewarded by a visit to a local family whose home has amazing views of the surrounding area
- We will have lunch given to us in the local Tajik way; sitting on the floor. You will lose count of the number of courses!

#### **PM**

- We continue our drive through the mountains until we reach our destination; the Khoja Obi Garm Spa, a vast sanatorium built into the side of a mountain above natural hot springs – like a James Bond villain's lair meets the hotel from The Shining! A true relic of the USSR days.
- A full range of 'treatments' can be enjoyed here, from radon baths to massages, leeches to swimming, or simply explore and relax. This is one of those great Soviet-era buildings that are hard to find these days, you will love this experience!

**Accommodation:** *Khoja Obi Garm*

**Included Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



## Day 5

### **Drive to Panjikent**

#### **AM**

- We begin with a long drive from the health resort over mountain roads out across the Fan Mountains working our way up through the 'Tunnel of Death' – an Iranian-built long road tunnel burrowing under the mountains, the nickname overstates the danger but it can be nerve-racking although it is very safe in reality.
- We stop along the way from breathtaking shots of this beautiful mountain range. Our destination is Panjikent. We will make a detour en route to visit the tomb and Museum of Rudaki – (Panjikent is the birthplace of Abu Abdullah Rudaki, considered by many to be the father of Persian poetry)

#### **PM**

- This afternoon we have a historical tour of ancient Panjikent, viewing ruins of the Sogdian town founded in the 5th century and finally abandoned in the 8th century by the Arabs after their conquest of the region. Foundations of houses, a citadel city bazaar, and Zoroastrian fire temples are all visible as we walk around this UNESCO listed site. Dinner tonight will be a traditional style in a beautiful local home.

**Accommodation:** *Sugd Hotel*

**Included Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



## Day 6

### **Iskanderkul**

#### **AM**

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

#### **PM**

- We drive along small mountain roads past local villages, abandoned factories, and scenic and stunning views. Eventually arriving at the remote and secluded Iskanderkul (Alexander Lake – named for Alexander the Great).
- We have the option of hiking or relaxing by its beautiful shores. The lake sits at an altitude of 2195 metres; a stunning alpine body of water.

**Accommodation:** *Iskanderkul Chalets*

**Included Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*





Day 7

**Return to Dushanbe**

**AM**

- After a relaxing morning for photos, further hiking or sleeping, we return over the mountain pass to Dushanbe.

**PM**

- We should arrive into the capital mid afternoon. You can make the use of your free afternoon for some last minute sightseeing into one of the history museums, local shopping or browsing one of the unique Soviet-era antique shops.

**Accommodation:** *Hotel Vatan*

**Included Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*



Day 8

**Departure Day**

**AM**

- Airport transfers are provided to all travellers.

**Included Meals:** *Breakfast*