PAMIR HIGHWAY ESSENTIAL GUIDEBOOK

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I. Meeting Point

Tours starting from Dushanbe:
All group tours will begin at **9:00 AM from Dushanbe Mall (Locals call it Ashan/Ашан)** (***address:*** Bekhzod Street 47 / кӯчаи Беҳзод 47). Please make sure to arrive on time.
Our driver will pick you up from this location. Dushanbe Mall is a convenient meeting point where you can do some shopping, buy snacks and water, exchange money, or use the ATM before the trip.

Before leaving please buy 5 or 10 liters of bottled water and put on the car trunk. You can get more water in Khorog, Murgab and Sary Mogol villages.

Nearby accommodations to Dushanbe Mall (easily bookable via Booking.com):

- Hello Dushanbe Hostel
- Yellow Hostel
- Almaz Hotel
- Soro Hotel
- Sharq Hotel
- Rumi Hotel

Drop-off in Osh:
On the last day you arrive in Osh around 6-7 pm and get drop-off at any hotel in Osh. Just let the driver know your hotel address in advance.

Tours starting from Osh:
The tour will start at **9:00 AM from our Visit Alay office in Osh** (***address***: Ergesh Alieva 245). Please be on time.
Before starting the journey, there will be a short stop at a large supermarket so you can buy snacks, water, or any essentials for the road.

Before leaving please buy 5 or 10 liters of bottled water and put on the car trunk. You can get more water in Murgab and Khorog towns.

Nearby accommodations to our office (available on Booking.com):

- Park Hostel
- ABS Guesthouse
- Family Run Guesthouse (WhatsApp: +996552430222)
- Eco House
- Osh Grand Hotel Chavo

Drop-off in Dushanbe:
On the last day, you arrive in Dushanbe around 3-4pm and get dropped off at any hotel in Dushanbe. Please inform the driver of your hotel address in advance.

II. Additional Expenses

- **Daily Expenses:**
  - Accommodation with dinner and breakfast: $25 per person/day
  - Entrance fees: $20 to 40 (for the whole trip)
  - Lunch: $5 to $7 per person/day
  - SIM Card: $15–$20
  - Water and snacks: $1 to $3 per person/day

- We will book all accommodations in advance, except in Dushanbe and Osh, where you'll pay the hosts directly. All accommodation and meal expenses must be paid in local currency—USD and Euros are not accepted.
  For 7 days tour we recommend exchanging $200 USD = 2000 Tajik Somoni.
  For 9 days tour 250 USD = 2500 Tajik Somoni will be more than enough.

- Please note that ATMs are only available in Dushanbe and Osh, and may have high fees or low withdrawal limits. In Dushanbe, you can easily withdraw Tajik Somoni or exchange USD and Euros. In Osh, Tajik Somoni is only available at exchange offices in Kelechek Bazaar and may be limited. If unavailable, you can exchange currency later in Murghab.
- Please note that in Murgab, only USD can be exchanged, as the local bank does not accept Euros.
- Check local bank websites for exchange rates:
  - Tajikistan: Eskhata Bank
  - Kyrgyzstan: DemirBank

III. Food and Accommodation

- **Dietary Considerations:**
  - Vegetarian options are limited; purchase snacks and necessary products in Dushanbe, Khorog, Murgab and Osh.
  - Always wash vegetables and fruits thoroughly before eating.
- **Guest Houses:**
  - Shared rooms are common.
  - Showers and flush toilets are not available in Jizeu, Karakul, and some guest houses in Alichur and Langar.
  - Bring towels, toilet paper, and wet wipes.

IV. Must-Have Items and Notes

- **Travel Essentials:**
  - Copies of passport, visa, and GBAO permit (11 copies recommended, those who purchased GBAO from us then we will take care of your Passport and GBAO copies).
  - Power banks and spare batteries.
  - Warm clothing and layers.
  - Sun protection: Sunglasses, sunscreen, and lip balm.
  - Headlamp and extra batteries for night use.
  - Wet wipes, toilet paper, and hand sanitizers.
- **Navigation:**
  - Use the Organic Maps or Maps.me apps for hikes and treks.

V. Weather and Altitude

- **Elevation of Stops:**
  - Dushanbe: 750m (2,460 ft)
  - Kalai-Khum: 1,200m (3,937 ft)
  - Jizev Village: 2,083m (6,834 ft)
  - Khorog: 2,123m (6,966 ft)
  - Langar: 2,900m (9,514 ft)
  - Maljuran Valley: 3,750m (12,303 ft)
  - Alichur: 3,900m (12,467 ft)
  - Murghab: 3,600m (11,811 ft)
  - Karakul: 4000m (12,992 ft)
  - Tulparkol Lake: 3,500m (11,483 ft)

- **Weather:**

The weather is hot during summer from Dushanbe to Khorog ranging from 18C to 38C, chilly during the nights. Please have your jackets ready from Langar, since the weather might be cold at night from here on. Below is the weather and elevation data of Tajikistan.

VI. Communication and Connectivity

- **SIM Cards:**
  - Recommended providers in Tajikistan: MegaFon and Tcell. Cost: $15–$20.
- **Internet Access:**
  - Wi-Fi is available in most areas, except Jizeu, Langar, Alichur, and Karakul. No cellular network in Jizev Village.
- **Power and Charging:**
  - Solar panels in Jizeu, Alichur, and Karakul villages.
  - Charge all devices and power banks before arriving at these locations.
- **Walkie-Talkies:**
  - Provided for hikes and treks to maintain communication in areas without mobile coverage.
  - Update the driver every two hours during treks.

VII. Health and Well-Being

- **Altitude Sickness:**
  - Altitudes in Murgab and Karakul may cause altitude sickness.
  - If you are concerned, then take altitude sickness pills at least a two-three days before the trip if necessary.
  - Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- **Medical Kit:**
  - A first aid kit is available in all vehicles.
- **General Hygiene:**
  - Bring hand sanitizers and toiletries

VIII. Hikes and Treks

- **Jizev Valley Hike:**
  - Distance: 6 km (3.7 miles).
  - Elevation: 2,495m (8,179 ft).
  - Duration: 2 hours
  - Notes: Dangerous in early spring due to avalanches. Carry snacks and spare clothes.
- **Trek to Mahan Peak:**
  - Elevation: 4,400m (14,435 ft).
  - Duration: 5-6 hours.
  - Notes: Pack lunch and essential items.
- **Panorama Ridge Hike:**
  - Elevation: 4,800m.
  - Duration: 3–4 hours.
  - No special equipment needed.

IX. Getting There & Away

Since most of our Pamir Highway tours start from Osh and Dushanbe, below are the options on how to get to these starting points.

Getting to Osh from Bishkek:

- **Shared Taxi (Marshrutkas):**
  - Available at Osh Bazaar in Bishkek.
  - Price: 30 to 35 USD
- **Daily Flights:**
  - Several direct flights from Bishkek to Osh.
  - Price: 65 USD.
  - Tickets: Available at bookit.kg

Getting to Dushanbe from Samarkand:

- **From Samarkand to the Jartepa Border Crossing:**
  - *Yandex Taxi:*
    - Cost: 15–20 USD.
    - Travel Time: ~1 hour.
  - *Marshrutka (Minibus):*
    - Cost: 5 USD.
    - Travel Time: 1–1.5 hours.
    - Availability: Departs from Kaftarkhona Terminal once full.

- **From Jartepa to Dushanbe:**
  - *Shared Taxi:*
    - Cost: 15–20 USD per seat.
    - Travel Time: 3.5–4 hours.
    - Note: Departs when all seats are filled.

X. Frequently Asked Questions

- **Do I need a visa for Tajikistan?**

Most nationalities can enter Tajikistan visa-free. Some travelers may need to apply for an e-visa. You can check the visa requirements for your passport here: https://conf2024.dushanbewaterprocess.org/visa-to-tajikistan-2/

- **Do I need a GBAO permit?**

Yes. All travelers entering the Pamir region are required to have a **GBAO permit**.
If you book the tour with us, we can arrange the permit for you and prepare all the necessary copies for checkpoints. It will cost 35 USD. Please send us a clear photo or scan of your passport as soon as you request the permit.

- **Do I need OVIR registration in Tajikistan?**

If you stay in Tajikistan for 14 days or less, you do not need OVIR registration. If you stay for more than 14 days, you need to register at OVIR. Please let your driver know in advance, and they will stop at an OVIR office during the trip and help you with the registration process.

- **Do I need a visa for Kyrgyzstan?**

Most nationalities can enter Kyrgyzstan visa-free. Some travelers may need to apply for an e-visa. You can check the visa requirements for your passport here: https://www.evisa.e-gov.kg/get_information.php?lng=en

- **What is the accommodation like?**

Accommodation is in simple local guesthouses and yurt camps. Expect shared rooms and shared bathrooms, warm blankets, and basic but cozy comfort. Hot showers may not always be available, especially in remote areas.

- **What kind of food should I expect?**

You can expect simple, home-cooked meals typical of the region. These usually include rice, potatoes, soups, fresh bread, and tea. Meals are filling and designed to provide enough energy for long driving days and high-altitude conditions.

Vegetarian options exist but are basic. Bring snacks from Osh/Dushanbe.

- **How long are the driving days?**

Driving time is usually around 4-6 hours per day. On some days, it can be longer (7+hours), depending on road conditions and weather.

- **What is the road condition like?**

The roads are mountainous and can be rough, dusty, and slow in some sections. Your driver knows the route well and will always choose the safest and most comfortable pace.

- **Is the altitude dangerous?**

The route reaches altitudes of around 3,500-4,600 m. We recommend drinking plenty of water, walking at a relaxed pace, avoiding alcohol, and informing your driver or guide immediately if you feel unwell.

- **What should I do if I feel unwell?**

Please inform your driver immediately if you feel unwell. All vehicles are equipped with a basic first-aid kit. In more serious cases, evacuation to the nearest town or medical facility will be arranged using a different local vehicle. Any costs related to medical assistance or evacuation will be covered by the client.

- **Do I need to hike?**

No. All hikes on the Pamir Highway tour are optional. If you prefer not to join a trek, can take short walks around the lakes or nearby areas at your own pace.

- **Is it safe to travel in the Pamirs?**

Yes. The Pamir region is generally safe, peaceful, and welcoming to travelers. Local people are friendly, drivers are highly experienced, and security checkpoints along the route are routine and straightforward.

- **Can I use a drone?**

Generally, no. Drone use is restricted in border and military areas and may cause serious issues. Many travellers bring it but use only in the mountains away from check points, military buildings

- **Are toilets Western-style?**

Mostly yes. In towns and most guesthouses along the Pamir Highway, you will find Western-style toilets. However, in some **remote villages such as Karakul or Jizeu**, toilets may be simple **pit toilets** located outside the house.

- **Can I have a private room?**

Accommodation is mainly in local homestays, where rooms are often shared. Private rooms are not always available in remote villages, and when they are, they usually come with an additional cost.

- **Can I drink tap water?**

No. We do not recommend drinking tap water. Please stock up on bottled water in larger cities, as availability is very limited in remote areas.

- **What if my plans change and I cannot do the tour?**

Please inform us as early as possible so we can review your situation and assist you in the best way possible.

You can find our full refund and cancellation policy at the link below:
https://visitalay.com/payment-policy/

For a quick communication and more questions please contact:

Azi – Tour manager +996556007030 WhatsApp

DOCUMENTS & FORMALITIES – DETAILED ANSWERS

1. When exactly do I need to send my passport details for the GBAO permit?

We kindly ask you to send your passport details **10–14 days before the tour start date**.
This timeframe is necessary to apply for the GBAO permit and prepare all required checkpoint copies in advance.
If your booking is confirmed closer to the departure date, please send your passport details **immediately after booking** so we can check whether the permit can still be issued in time.

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2. Is a passport photo enough, or do I need to send a scanned copy?

A **clear photo of your passport** is fully sufficient.
Please make sure that:

- the photo page is fully visible
- all text is sharp and readable
- there are no reflections, shadows, or cropped edges

A professional scan is **not required**. A high-quality smartphone photo is perfectly acceptable.

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3. How many copies of documents are needed, and who prepares them?

Along the Pamir Highway, there are **multiple security and border checkpoints**, especially inside the GBAO region.
If you arrange the GBAO permit through us:

- **We prepare all required copies** of your passport and GBAO permit
- You do **not** need to make copies yourself

If you arrange the GBAO permit independently:

- We recommend carrying **10–12 paper copies** of:
  - your passport photo page
  - your GBAO permit

Having extra copies helps avoid delays at checkpoints.

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4. Can the GBAO permit be obtained at the border or later during the trip?

No.
The **GBAO permit must be arranged in advance**.
It **cannot be obtained at the border**, at checkpoints, or during the journey.
Travelers without a valid GBAO permit will **not be allowed to enter the Pamir region**.
For this reason, we strongly recommend arranging the permit **before arrival in Tajikistan** or directly through us as part of the tour organization.

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5. Do I need a visa if I enter Tajikistan from Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan?

Visa requirements depend on **your nationality**, not on the country you enter from.

- Many nationalities can enter **Tajikistan visa-free**
- Some nationalities must apply for a **Tajik e-visa in advance**

Crossing into Tajikistan from **Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan does not change visa rules**.
We recommend checking the official Tajik e-visa website or confirming requirements based on your passport nationality before travel.

MONEY & PAYMENTS – DETAILED ANSWERS

1. How much cash do I realistically need to bring?

For daily expenses along the Pamir Highway, we recommend the following amounts **per person**:

- **7-day tour:** around **200 USD**
- **9-day tour:** around **250 USD**

This budget usually covers:

- accommodation with dinner and breakfast
- daily lunches
- entrance fees
- bottled water and snacks

This amount is generally sufficient, even with some flexibility for extra snacks or small personal expenses.

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2. In which currency do I pay in guesthouses?

Guesthouses and homestays along the Pamir Highway accept **only local currency – Tajik Somoni (TJS)**.
Payments in foreign currency are **not accepted** in most villages.
Please make sure you exchange enough cash **before leaving major cities**.

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3. Can I pay in US dollars or euros?

In general, **no**.

- Guesthouses, cafés, and shops require **Tajik Somoni**
- USD or EUR are **not accepted for daily payments**

Exceptions:

- In **Murghab**, USD can sometimes be exchanged
- Euros are usually **not accepted** for exchange in Murghab

For smooth travel, always carry enough **Tajik Somoni** for several days.

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4. Where is the last reliable ATM?

Reliable ATMs are available only in:

- **Dushanbe**
- **Osh**

There are **no functioning ATMs** along the Pamir Highway route.
In rare cases, ATMs in **Khorog** may work, but this is **not guaranteed** and should not be relied upon.
We strongly recommend withdrawing all necessary cash **before departure** from Osh or Dushanbe.

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5. What should I do if I run out of Tajik Somoni?

If your Tajik Somoni runs out:

- In **Murghab**, you may exchange **USD** (if available)
- In smaller villages, exchange is **not possible**

For this reason:

- Always keep some **extra Somoni**
- Carry a small **USD backup** in clean, undamaged banknotes
- Plan your cash carefully before entering remote sections

Running out of cash in remote areas may cause **serious inconvenience**, so preparation is essential.

CONNECTIVITY & ELECTRICITY – DETAILED ANSWERS

1. Where exactly will there be NO mobile signal or internet?

There is **no mobile signal and no internet** in the following locations and stretches:

- **Jizeu Village**
- **Langar village (very limited / unstable)**
- **Alichur**
- **Karakul**
- Most mountain passes and driving sections between towns

In these areas:

- no calls
- no mobile data
- no messaging apps

Connectivity may also disappear **unexpectedly** due to weather, terrain, or power issues.

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2. Is it possible to work remotely during the tour?

In practice, **remote work is very difficult and unreliable** on the Pamir Highway.

You may have **limited internet access** in:

- **Dushanbe**
- **Khorog**
- occasionally **Murghab**

However:

- connections are slow and unstable
- power outages are common
- internet cannot be relied on for video calls, uploads, or deadlines

We strongly recommend **not planning remote work** during the Pamir Highway tour and informing colleagues or clients in advance.

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3. Will a power bank be enough?

Yes — **a power bank is essential** and usually sufficient if prepared correctly.

Recommendations:

- bring **at least one high-capacity power bank (20,000 mAh or more)**
- fully charge all devices whenever electricity is available
- use airplane mode in areas without signal to save battery

Power banks are crucial for:

- phones
- cameras
- GPS / maps
- headlamps

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4. Are there power outlets in guesthouses?

Yes, **most guesthouses have electricity and power outlets**, but with limitations:

- electricity may be available only in the **evening**
- power may come from **solar panels**
- outages are common, especially in remote villages

Important notes:

- do not expect multiple sockets
- charging may be slow
- always charge devices **as soon as power is available**

We recommend bringing:

- a **multi-port USB charger**
- a **universal plug adapter**
- a reliable **power bank**

D. ALTITUDE & WELL-BEING

1. On which day do we reach the highest altitude?

The highest altitudes on the Pamir Highway are usually reached in the **second half of the tour**, depending on the itinerary.

Typical high points include:

- **Alichur Plateau** – around 3,900 m
- **Karakul Lake area** – around 4,000 m
- Optional hikes may reach **4,400–4,800 m**

The itinerary is designed to allow **gradual acclimatization**, with overnight stops increasing in altitude step by step.

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2. Does everyone need to take Diamox (acetazolamide)?

No. **Not everyone needs Diamox**.

Most travelers acclimatize naturally without medication. Diamox is usually considered if:

- you know you are sensitive to altitude
- you have experienced altitude sickness before
- you prefer an extra preventive measure

If you plan to take Diamox:

- consult your doctor **before the trip**
- start **1–2 days before reaching high altitude**, if advised

Never start medication without medical advice. Hydration, slow pace, and rest are often sufficient.

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3. What should I do if I feel unwell at night?

If you feel unwell at any time, especially at night:

- **inform your driver immediately**
- do not ignore symptoms such as headache, nausea, dizziness, or shortness of breath

All vehicles carry a **basic first-aid kit**, and drivers are experienced in recognizing altitude-related symptoms.

If necessary:

- the itinerary can be adjusted
- descent to a lower altitude can be arranged
- evacuation to the nearest town or medical facility will be organized

Early communication is key — do not wait until symptoms become severe.

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4. Can I skip a hike and just rest?

Yes. **All hikes on the Pamir Highway tour are optional**.

You are free to:

- skip any trek
- rest at the guesthouse
- take short walks nearby at your own pace

Skipping a hike does **not affect the itinerary** or the group experience.

E. LIVING CONDITIONS & COMFORT

1. Will there be a shower every day?

No. **Showers are not available every day**.

- In towns like **Dushanbe, Khorog, and Murghab**, showers are usually available
- In remote villages (Jizeu, Alichur, Karakul), showers may be:
    - very basic
    - limited to cold water
    - unavailable

Wet wipes and basic toiletries are essential for comfort.

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2. How cold does it get at night?

Night temperatures vary greatly:

- lower regions: **10–15°C**
- high-altitude areas: **0–5°C**, sometimes colder

Even in summer, nights can feel cold due to altitude and wind.
Warm layers are essential:

- thermal top
- fleece or down jacket
- warm socks

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3. Do I need a sleeping bag?

A sleeping bag is **optional but recommended**.
Guesthouses provide:

- beds
- blankets

However, a sleeping bag is useful if:

- you feel cold easily
- you want extra warmth
- you prefer personal bedding for comfort

A lightweight sleeping bag is usually sufficient.

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4. Is there Wi-Fi in Khorog and Murghab?

- **Khorog:** Wi-Fi is usually available in guesthouses and cafés, but it is **slow and unstable**
- **Murghab:** Wi-Fi is very limited and unreliable

Do not expect strong or consistent internet, even where Wi-Fi exists.

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5. Can I charge my camera or drone? And why can't drones be flown?

Charging:

- Cameras and electronics can usually be charged when electricity is available
- Power may be limited, solar-based, or only available in the evening

Drones:

- **Flying drones is strongly discouraged**
- The Pamir region includes **border and military-sensitive zones**
- Drone use can cause:
    - confiscation of equipment
    - serious legal issues
    - questioning at checkpoints

For your safety, **do not bring or fly a drone** unless you have official permission.

F. START & END LOGISTICS

1. Can you pick me up from my hotel instead of the meeting point?

In most cases, **yes**, but this must be confirmed in advance.

Group tours usually start from a **fixed meeting point** for timing and coordination.

Hotel pick-up may be possible if:

- your hotel is centrally located
- it does not delay the group

Please inform us of your hotel details in advance.

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2. What if my flight is delayed?

If your flight is delayed:

- inform us **as soon as possible**
- share your updated arrival time

We will do our best to assist, but:

- same-day arrival is strongly recommended
- significant delays may require private transfers at additional cost

Arriving at least **one day before the tour start** is highly recommended.

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3. What time will we arrive in Osh / Dushanbe on the last day?

Estimated arrival times:

- **Osh:** around **6–7 PM**
- **Dushanbe:** around **3–4 PM**

These are estimates and may change due to:

- road conditions
- weather
- border procedures

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4. Can I fly out on the same evening?

Same-day flights are **not recommended**.
Delays are common on the Pamir Highway.

We strongly advise:

- booking flights **the next day**
- staying overnight in Osh or Dushanbe

This ensures a stress-free end to the journey.