

TOURISM

Tajikistan represents a unique tourist attraction of modern times, as it possesses a great cultural-historical heritage, original culture, and a favorable geographical location, a variety of natural landscapes, recreational zones, flora and fauna. The history of Tajik people is rooted in the mists of time, to the beginning of human civilization. The oldest objects found in the territory of modern Tajikistan are the proof of that. Opening of the first monuments of Stone Age in 1956 was a kind of sensation. 60 sites of stone tools' findings were recorded in a country's territory. More than 10 thousand items made of stone were excavated in sites, located at an altitude of 4200 meters above the sea level, in hard-to-reach regions of high mountains. They are presented as large tools such as scrapers and notched tools which preserve Paleolithic traditions during processing. The age of Stone Age open monuments is mostly related to VIII-V BC. Rock carvings – petroglyphs, carved on rocks or on separate stones of some figures of animals, people or whole compositions, represent a separate, very specific area of archaeological research in Tajikistan and since then more than 10,000 drawings on rocks have been detected.

Tajikistan Mountains and valleys, people living on its territory, are already mentioned in ancient sources of classical authors such as Pliny and Ptolemy. Since ancient times the territory of Tajikistan was located on important historical routes of the Great Silk Road connecting the East and the West. It occupied an important place in international trade and cultural exchange, from the earliest times linking the possessions of Bactria - Taharistan (Chaganian, Shumon, Ahorun, Qubodiyon, Vakhsh, Hotal, Rasht, Kumed, Darvoz, Vanj, Rushan and Wakhan), Sogda, Istaravshan (Ustrushan) and Ferghana with India, Afghanistan and China. The Great Silk Road did not only become an exchange of goods between the East and the West, but also an exchange of ideas, cultures and people. Consequently, a kind of cultural community, an amazing composition was created, in which with a varying degrees of intensity both "Western" and "Oriental" features manifest. For example, across the entire Great Silk Road, weapons manufactured by Sogdian craftsmen were famous. It is a known fact that in 718, the rulers of Sogdiana, donated a chainmail to China, which the local gunsmiths took as a sample and spread it in the Chinese army. Sogdian leather and jewelry items, silk fabrics and colored salt had an excellent reputation. Sogdiana exported "golden peaches" which so much amazed the aliens, white and yellow cherries, sheep and graceful fast horses.

Today in the oldest cities of Tajikistan Khujand, Istaravshan, Penjikent, Kulyab, an appearance of which has changed significantly over the years, the ancient historical, cultural and craft traditions are carefully preserved. The famous dynasties of gold embroidery products craftsmen, craftsmen producing silk, abrasive, batik, embroiderers of knives, craftsmen of ceramics whose products are well-known throughout the world. Among the tourists visiting these ancient cities,

the most popular is ethnographic tourism, which, apart from learning the historical traditions, culture and life of people, gives an opportunity to learn the basics and skills of ancient forgotten crafts under the guidance of famous artists.

Kairakkum reservoir, titled as Tajik sea, is located in the east of Khujand, and has been formed by the construction of hydropower station on Syr-Darya River, which has become an excellent tourist destination. Sanatoriums, holiday houses, camping sites located in beautiful orchards, have been constructed on its shores.

Modern Tajikistan is a mountainous country with absolute altitudes from 300 up to 7 495 meters above the sea level. 93% of the country is covered by mountain ranges that are related to the Pamirs, Hissar-Alay and Tien-Shan mountain system. The mentioned ranges are separated by rich and fertile lands of Ferghana, Zarafshan, Vakhsh and Hissar valleys. The complexity of the relief and large amplitude of mountain systems' altitudes causes an exceptional variety of flora and fauna.

Tajikistan is a country of the highest peaks, powerful glaciers, and rapid turbulent rivers, inimitable in its beauty lakes, unique flora and rare animals. It is precisely the mountainous, floor landscape that defines a specific and unique nature of Tajikistan, the richness of its forms, brought to life by a variety of climatic zones. In an hour and a half hour's flight, one can leave the sultry heat of Vakhsh valley and reach the arctic cold of the Pamirs eternal snows. On the basis of 13 existing state wildlife sanctuaries and preservations of "Zorkul", "Romit", "Mozkul", "Dashti Jum", "Shirkent" historical Park, as well as the Tajik National Park a unique environment, landscapes and natural monuments are preserved in its original form. As well as rare species of plants and animals listed in the Red Book, are preserved, including the horned goat (morhur), mountain argali (Marco Polo), Bukhara argali (ureal), spotted Bukhara deer, snow leopards, the Tien-Shan brown bear, striped hyena, Indian mountain goose. 84 species of mammals, over 365 species of birds, 49 species of reptiles, about 52 fish species and more than 10000 species of insects inhabit in the republic's territory. Flora of Tajikistan consists of more than 5,000,000 species of higher plants, including many endemics. The territory of the Tajik National Park covers 2.6 million hectares, that covers 18 percent of the country's territory and 60 percent of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the republic. In recent years, the Directorate of the National Park, actively implements measures for promotion of eco-tourism infrastructure and improvement of ecological situation in the highlands of the Pamir.

One of the unique corners of nature in the upper Amu Darya River is titled as "Tigrovaya balka". Here, in natural primordial environment, inhabit such animals as the European red deer Hangul, desert antelope Jayran, leopard, jungle cat, hyena, black-and-gold Tajik pheasant, and desert partridge-Chil, snake eater eagle, wild boar, badger and porcupine. Of reptiles, valuable for science and medicine, there is the porcupine. Of reptiles, valuable for science and medicine, there are the

Central Asian cobra, viper, carpet viper and numerous groups of other non-poisonous snakes. There is trout, marinka, catfish, mudfish, carp, grass carp in rivers and lakes, and an ancient relic fish skafiringus, is preserved in the lower reaches of the river Vakhsh. There are 125 facilities of tourist, sanatoria and health resort sectors functioning in the republic, including 51 hotels and 9 resorts, the rest are holiday houses and recreation areas, tourist bases and recreation camps. The majority of hotels are located in Dushanbe, Khujand, Kurgan-Tube, Kulyab and Khorog. Tajikistan has 3 international airports in Dushanbe, Khujand and Kulyab. The republic's territory is crossed by three branches of railways from the west to the east, which link the central, northern and southern regions of the republic through the territories of neighboring Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Natural and recreational resources of the republic, the availability of historical and cultural monuments, predetermine the features of formed national tourist product, promotion and implementation of which provides a stream of foreign tourist to Tajikistan on the world tourism market. In this regard, the priority-driven sectors of international tourism in the country are considered the following:

- Mountaineering, mountain sports and ecotourism; - Rafting, paragliding, downhill skiing;
- International hunting;
- Historical and educational, ethnographic tourism;
- Sanatorium-and-spa treatment.

Majestic Pamir - one of the most famous highlands of the world, with absolute altitudes of 2800 up to 7495 meters above the sea level, known worldwide as the "roof of the world" is located in the territory of Tajikistan. Here, the tourist resources include the climbing routes to the highest mountain peaks Ismoil Somoni and Eugenia Korjenevskaya, located at a height of more than 7,000,000 meters, hunting facilities, natural landscapes, caves and mineral springs of thermal and cold, carbonate and silicate waters. Annually, international climbing expeditions are conducted in Tajikistan, during which climbers from around the world, ascend the highest peaks of the country. Climbers from all over the world, aim for the conquest of Ismoil Somoni (7.495 meters) – a high-altitude pole of Pamir. The unique topography of the region favors the development of tourist trips and trekking of various degrees of difficulty, engagement in specific sports such as rock climbing, mountaineering, skiing, hiking, combined with hunting and photo hunting, rafting, paragliding, snowboarding, speleotourism and other types of extreme tourism.

Tajikistan is the richest country in reserves of fresh water resources. Almost half of water resources of the Central Asian region are formed in high-altitude rivers, lakes and glaciers of the country. The Republic of Tajikistan ranks eighth in the world on reserves of hydropower resources. Particularly, the Gorno-Badakhshan

Autonomous Region of the republic is very rich in lakes, which have the most varying origins. The largest of them are Karakul, Zorkul, Rangkul, Shorkul, Bulunkul as well as Lake Sarez, which was formed as a result of earthquake in 1911. In general, in the Pamir, in the altitude range of 3200 up to 5000 meters are concentrated 1450 lakes and 220 rivers or 83% of the total area of lakes surface in Tajikistan. The largest lake in the Pamir is a unique salty Lake of Karakul located at an altitude of 3,914 meters above the sea level. Its maximum depth is 236 meters. It is believed that it was formed during the boulder-period and the bottom of the lake, as well as some of its banks is covered with permafrost for miles.

Around 200 sources of mineral and thermal waters are functioning in Tajikistan's territory, on the basis of which a sanatoria and health resort sectors of tourism are developed. The most famous of them "Bakhoriston" resort, "Yavroz", "Kaltuch", "Garm-Chashma", "Khoja Obi Garm" resort, "Shaambary" , "Obi Garm", "Zumrad", "Havatag" sanatoria. Tajikistan's sanatoriums and resorts provide services for treatment of such diseases as cardiovascular system, respiratory system, musculoskeletal system, urinary system, gynecological diseases, gastrointestinal tract, liver and biliary tract, as well as skin diseases. In hotcarbonated spring resorts as "Garmchashma", "Bashor" and "Shahdara", travertine - limestone deposits of extruded shapes are formed. They are particularly beautiful on Garmchashma spring, located within 35 km from Khorog city. Garmchashma spring is located at a height of 2325 m above the sea level and is visible from afar due to the extraordinary white travertine. Travertine is a long shaft, descending to a river by laced terraces. Stalactites, as if grown together are hanging on its slopes, giving an impression of solidified cascades and stone bowls. Natural baths are formed on ledges with water of different temperature (up to 62 * C). Man-made unique monument of nature in the Pamirs is the Pamir Botanical Garden, located at an altitude of 2320m above the sea level near the city of Khorog. Against a background of barren slopes, this garden is a real green miracle, where more than 20,000 plants from all the continents are collected. he rare and unusual specimens of plants, asAmur velvet, cork tree, black Austrian pine and a unique collection of roses with the purest colours and incomparable smell are among them. Fan Mountains are particularly popular among the tourists and mountaineers, which are located between Zerafshan and Hissar ranges from Kshtutdari to Fandaria. Today, Fan Mountains are the most accessible for tourists among the all high mountains of the country. In these mountains, mirror blue-green water - Lake Iskanderkul is located, which is the largest lake of Fan Mountains, located in the north of Tajikistan. It is widely spread out at an altitude of 2200 meters. Here, tourists can watch the stars twinkle and mist rising from the lake surface.

On the shore of a lake, within 160 km from Dushanbe, a tourist base "Iskanderkul" is located. This road is crossed by tourists in cars through the amazing gorges of Fandarya, Yagnob and Iskanderdarya. The mountains around seem to be multi-

colored, as they are dominated by bluish, red and purple hues. Iskandardarya gorges are sometimes named as ravines of colored rocks and the forces of wind have turned them into fanciful walls and castles.

A lot of interesting expects travelers in the south of Tajikistan. One of the oldest cities of Central Asia, Kulyab celebrated its 2700 anniversary in 2006, that became a milestone for the country. In forest thicknesses close to Baljuvan district, Tajik archaeologists have unearthed stone tools, the most ancient one found in Central Asia - their age is 850,000 years. There is also a unique open parking of Neanderthals in Dangara district, in the cave area Ogizkichik with the centers, near which 15,000 charred shells of turtles were found.

A great interest for foreign tourists represents an attraction of beautiful surroundings of the ancient Hutalya, today Kulyab. Particularly attractive is the mountain of Hoja Mumin, a unique natural monument, which entirely consists of pure salt of different colors, pale yellow and gray, bluish green and pink. Stocks of salt of Hoja Mumin mountain can provide the whole mankind for many hundreds years. Another miracle of Hoja Mumin is its caves, which are renowned for their musicality. It turns out that wonderful sounds are generated by the wind, as if fingering through the keys, the long and thin glass icicles- stalactites, hanging at the entrance to the cave. A unique historical and architectural monument is a mausoleum of prominent philosopher and religious figure of the IV century Mir Said Ali Hamadoni in Kulyab, where many followers honoring his Sufi teachings perform a religious pilgrimage.

A competitive tourist complex is formed in Tajikistan and more than 75 tourist enterprises are operating.

In order to promote international tourism in the country, the Government made a decision to simplify the visa procedure. At present, documents for entry to the country are issued within three days. The decisions adopted by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan by declaring Varzob, Baljuvan and Romit regions as zones of sanatorium treatment, tourism and recreation, contributes to the gradual revival of tourism industry. More than 65% of sanatorium and resort, tourist sectors are restored in the country, and about 35 private tourist recreation areas are constructed, creating real conditions for the organization of international tourism, employment and investment in the given infrastructure. In order to see and to feel the color and exoticism of Asia, it is essential to visit Tajikistan, to see its rich and diverse markets with an abundance of fruits and vegetables, to wander in the shadowy historic streets of old cities, to sit in the tea houses covered with delicate patterns, to drink flavored green tea, to chat with people and learn their traditions, culture and life, as well as to learn the kindness, greatness and wisdom of its people.