



Trekking in the Fann Mountains



Hello team!

Hello team and welcome aboard this Epic adventure!

This trip to the stunning Fann Mountains will take you on a journey through the history of the ancient Silk roads while getting you deep into one of the most stunning mountain ranges on Earth.

Good choice for signing up!

We are beyond excited to welcome you to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan this year!

This information pack is LOADED with everything you need to start preparing yourself for the journey ahead.

Please read this entire document thoroughly as there are many important details to take note of.

This information pack will be your primary trip resource and one you can keep circling back to in preparation for this Fann Mountains expedition during the months ahead.

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Visas for Entry

Participants will need to consider visa procedures for two countries on this trip: one for Uzbekistan and one for Tajikistan.

Many Western nations may enter Uzbekistan visa-free for a period of 30 days. US citizens will need to arrange an E-visa visa beforehand. Those who need visas can acquire it [via an online portal](#). It can take a few weeks to get the visa so don't delay in getting this sorted.

Always check before booking the visa policy of both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan for your nationality.

TAJIKISTAN VISA:

- Visa on arrival is possible for many nationalities - but we always prefer to apply in advance to save any surprises at the border and just so it is all done and squared away.
- Visa costs \$30 USD and you can [apply for Tajik Visa here](#).
- For address in Tajikistan, Put "Trekking in Fann Mountains / Artuch Base Camp Hotel"
- From 2.5 months prior to arrival, it is already possible to apply for the visa, so feel free to apply anytime and at least 2 weeks before arrival.

UZBEKISTAN VISA: REQUIRES A DOUBLE-ENTRY E-VISA FOR \$35 ACCORDING TO:

<https://mfa.uz/en/pages/visa-republic-uzb>

- [Apply for Uzbek Visa Here](#)

Some help with the application, beyond the obvious fields:

- select DOUBLE-entry visa
- Provide the passport details of the passport you will be travelling with.
- Arrival date: your flight arrival date (e.g. 20 Aug)
- Departure date: your flight departure date plus 3-5, e.g. 5 Sept (for any emergencies)
- Preliminary place of residence in Uzbekistan: Hotel Dilshoda, Samarkand, Oqsaroy 150
- The main difficulty is usually uploading the photo. The requirements are: 35mm x 45mm, 300DPI, less than 1MB, in .jpg format and to 'ICAO standard' - most importantly, the face must take most of the 35x45 frame!
- The processing time is 3 days but apply 1-2 weeks in advance to have time for any issues with uploading the photo.
- Payment is online by credit card.

Additional resources:

- Uzbek visa policies by country: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visa_policy_of_Uzbekistan
- Tajik visa policies by country: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visa_policy_of_Tajikistan

Flights

Arrival: Samarkand or Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Departure: Samarkand or Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Participants need to be in Samarkand, Uzbekistan by noon at the latest on day 1 of the trip.

Popular flight connections are either via Istanbul or Tashkent.

Those entering Uzbekistan via Tashkent will be responsible for transiting themselves to Samarkand via whatever means they prefer. Uzbek Airlines offers limited flights between the two cities on a weekly basis (time of departure varies by day). The high-speed train is also a viable option (travel time: 2 hours) and may be more convenient. There are several trains departing each day from Tashkent to Samarkand.

Airline Companies we recommend:

- Uzbek Airlines - cheaper direct flights to Tashkent are available from USA and Europe.
- Turkish Airlines - Direct flights are possible from Istanbul via Turkish Airlines, either to Samarkand or Tashkent.

When do you need to be in Uzbekistan

- To experience the full itinerary, you need to be in the hotel/meeting place and be rested by noon of day 1. We will confirm the exact time and meeting place just prior to the start of the tour.
- Consider arriving in Samarkand one day before the tour starts. That way you can get a good night's rest before the trip starts the next day. Accommodation is paid on your own if you are arriving early.
- Otherwise, please try to arrive before noon in Samarkand on day one.

Food in Central Asia

- Food in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan can vary greatly depending on where we are. In cities, there will be a respectable diversity -- international restaurants and local fare can be found everywhere and are of a high quality. Plov -- stewed rice, meat, veggies and spices -- is the national dish of Uzbekistan and will be featured heavily on local menus.
- In the more remote parts of the country, cooking is more traditional. Classic Central Asian cuisine is very filling -- there will be a lot of freshly baked naan bread, fermented dairy, soups, and mutton. Spicing is simple. Vegetables are generally hearty and include potatoes, dark greens, and roots.
- Uzbek and Tajik people love to offer sweets and jams at the end of every meal.
- Food whilst camping will be the best possible quality, but please have realistic expectations of what we can deliver in the backcountry. Our main meals while trekking will be quality freeze dried meats & veggies with healthy cereals prepared by your guide.

DAILY MEALS

This adventure tour requires a lot of energy output each day and a big part of our job is keeping everybody well-nourished, happy, and energized. Below is a list of what you can expect whilst on the trek:

- Breakfast typically consists of oatmeal with locally-sourced sun-dried fruits — such as prunes, cheese, savour biscuits or naan bread. One example of a non-typical breakfast is millet with pumpkin and raisins! We also put out an assortment of cheeses, flat breads, and cured meat.
- For lunch on the trek we normally have soup, for example, borscht, peas or lentils, served with crisps, fried chickpeas and cheese. We enjoy refreshing drinks made with freeze-dried berries such as cranberries, blackcurrants or lyngenberries. Lunch is usually prepared once we leave camp.

Examples of dinner's main are chicken tikka masala, Georgian-style baked eggplants with paprika or lentil stew with vegetables. There are also herbal teas with local treats such as tahini halva, gingerbread or nuts with honey.

Please let us know early on if you have any diet restrictions/preferences. If you are vegan, you might want to consider bringing some of your own food, as it can be very difficult to cater to individuals in a big group, though we always do our best.

Personal Snacks on this Trip

Snacks e.g. protein bars or energy gels are NOT provided. You should bring your favorite trekking snacks from home and/or stock up in Samarkand with cheap and quality local dry fruits and nuts before the trek.

Safety in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan

You may have guessed, but this adventure tour carries a certain amount of risk since we are traveling and trekking DEEP into the mountains in a developing country. This is not your average holiday per se. This is an active expedition.

Guest Safety is Epic's #1 priority and our experienced ground team does everything within their power to set our group up for a safe adventure. The name of the game is security and safety first and injury prevention.

In case of emergency, your Epic trip leader is equipped with a satellite communication device, which can contact outside emergency first responders from any place in Central Asia.

Travel Insurance for This Trip

Every trip participant is required to have Travel Insurance. Make sure the Insurance you have covers nature activities like trekking and being up to 4800 m in altitude, as well as helicopter evacuation. Here are our travel insurance recommendations:

- [Safety Wing](#)
- [World Nomads](#)
- [Global Rescue](#) - staff pick

Money for the Trip

The currency used in **Uzbekistan** Som | **Tajikistan** Somoni

It is very easy to exchange money in both countries if you are bringing USD, Euro or British Pounds (bring un-damaged bills), USD rates are best. There are also Atm machines around as well - but we recommend bringing cash as foreign bank cards do not always work.

Tips for Staff

Epic staff including our ground team in Uzbekistan/Tajikistan go above and beyond for guests before, during, and after the trip to make sure that everyone has the best possible trekking experience imaginable. So how do you show your guides some love? Well, besides bringing coffee, tipping is the next best option.

Note: Below we have included the industry standard recommendation to offer our staff some additional compensation based on your overall experience and keeping in mind the length of the trip. Show your staff some love!

Tipping recommendations (in USD) : Lead Guide: \$ 100 - 125+ per guest.

Tipping recommendations for porters/mule handlers (in USD) : \$50 per guest

Accommodation For This Trip

We will be staying at a locally owned high standard guesthouse accommodation (twin sharing rooms).

Trip prices are based on twin sharing rooms. Room sharing for solo travelers is always done with a member of the same sex, unless you are traveling with a friend or as a couple.

Note : Single rooms are available upon request. The surcharge for single accommodation will be \$250 for the main itinerary and \$350 if they take out the Khiva add-on. If we have an odd number of clients for same-sex room sharing, then a trip participant may be required to pay the supplement.

We try to stay at guest houses within walking distance to shops, pharmacies, ATM machines, grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, bars, etc when possible.

Breakfast every morning when we are staying in town will be at the hotel.

What To Pack for The Trip

This "What to Pack" chapter is one of the most important sections of this entire information pack. Please read it carefully to ensure you have the right gear for the trip.

Our daypacks usually weigh around 7-10 kilos, as donkeys carry everything not necessary during the day — that is our food rations, cooking utensils, fuel, tents and sleeping bags.

However, the animals can only make it as high as the 4,100m camp. From there we have to carry all the stuff to the 4,750m high pass in the first half of the day. Hence you need a reasonably large pack — about 60-70 litres. From there it is mostly downhill for the remainder of the trek.

NOTE: To hire a porter to carry your bag for the duration of the trip including Chimtarga Pass, the cost is approximately \$250 USD (15 kg limit).

Instead of a trekking backpack, you will need to bring a duffel bag, which can be transported via pack mule (included) and human porters. This must be organized well in advance to please inform us if you wish to hire an extra porter.



PACKS & BAGGAGE

- Backpack 70-80 Liter
- Expedition Duffle Bag
- Day Trekking Backpack
with rain cover

ESSENTIAL PERSONAL GEAR

- 0F \ -17C Sleeping Bag
- Inflating Sleeping Pad
- Inflatable Camp Pillow

SPECIALTY EQUIPMENT

- Trekking Poles
- Headlamp
- Grayl Filter Bottle
- Gaiters
- 1L Nalgene bottle
- Ultralight backpacking tent
- Mug
- Spoon
- Bowl

BOOTS & FOOTWEAR

- Waterproof Hiking boots
- Camp Shoes
- Sandals/Tevas/Keens

OTHER PERSONAL GEAR

- Dry Bags
- Sunglasses
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Power Bank
- Chargers/Phone Cable
- Snacks

TOILETRIES

- Toothbrush, Toothpaste
- Biodegradable Soap
- Deodorant
- Sunscreen
- Fast Drying Microfiber
Travel Towel

CLOTHING LAYER SYSTEMS

- Clothes for the city
- Down Jacket
- Hard Shell/Rain Jacket
- Fleece
- 2-3 Hiking T-shirt
- 2 Lightweight trekking Pants
- 3-4 Merinos Trekking Socks
- 1 Base layer Bottom
- 1 Base layer Top
- Hat for sun protection
- Beanie
- Buff and Bandana
- Gloves LightWeight
- Underwear / Bras

Meeting the People

Although both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are overwhelmingly Muslim, both are staunchly secular countries. Church and state are distinctly separate and religion doesn't play as hugely into the daily lives of locals as other more traditional Islamic nations.

For example, the purchase and consumption of alcohol is legal in both countries. One can easily find it in most markets and drink it freely without stress of being judged (just so long as one doesn't let themselves go and acts foolishly).

That being said, there are some etiquettes in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan that should be practiced in order to be respectful:

- Avoid showing knees or shoulders in public places, especially in religiously significant ones such as madrassas and mosques. Wear pants while in the cities and at least a t-shirt (a long sleeve may be preferable for the sake of blocking the sun).
- The best way to greet someone is with a firm handshake and good eye contact. Putting your off-hand over your heart and adding a slight bow is a way to show additional respect.
- The consumption of pork is strictly taboo and will be absent from most menus.
- In some more traditional families, men and women are separated from one another and go about their daily business only with their own gender. This is a waning custom though and seen less often.
- Avoid public displays of affection.
- Meals are ended with a modest prayer - a simple gesture of bringing one's hands to their face and moving them down, as if washing the face. Once this is done, the meal is over.
- It is a good idea to bring small souvenirs for shepherd families and candies for kids. You will be rewarded with home-baked bread and yogurt!

Weather In Central Asia

The weather in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan can be EXTREMELY variable. While it may be bright and sunny in the capital, it could be snowing in the mountains. Lower elevations are generally hotter and drier; snow is common at any time of the year in the mountains, even summer. A storm can happen at any time.

It is important to remember that most of Uzbekistan is arable desert and that Tajikistan is mostly mountainous. In Uzbekistan, summer heat waves are regular although less likely as autumn (September-November) approaches. In the mountains of Tajikistan, temperatures are comparatively cooler but days can sometimes "feel" hot at times. As is usually the case in the mountains, precipitation is a possibility year round.

Here is what you can expect from each place we visit:

- Samarkand - Temperature. In August, the average high-temperature is essentially the same as in July - a still moderately hot 27.4°C (81.3°F). In August, in Samarkand, the average low-temperature is 15.1°C (59.2°F).
- Bukhara - Average weather in August in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. The average minimum temperature (usually the minimum temperature is noted during the night) in Bukhara in August is 18.0°C (64.4°F). August is a dry month with an average of 10mm (0.4in) rain. The average maximum daytime temperature lies around 34.0°C (93.2°F).

- Fann Mountains Trekking - As we gain altitude, the weather can be varied and storms are possible in the afternoon. Above 4000 meters, snow is possible anytime of the year. Likewise, it could also be very pleasant during the day.
- The area benefits from a generally sunny and dry climate in summer. Most of the time we will be trekking in our long-sleeve base layers, caps and light trousers. There may be just one or two short rain showers during the entire trip which means it is possible to get away with a membrane jacket and softshell trousers - it still can be windy on high passes. The climate is continental so day and night temperatures vary greatly. At high camps above 3,000m - which is about 1/3 of the trip duration - there can be subzero after the sunset and early in the morning.

Sim Cards and Internet

Internet access for travelers in Uzbekistan leaves much to be desired. Slow speeds relative to world trends, limited availability, a small coverage area, and a lack of ready-made solutions for foreigners can all be headaches.

Most hotels in Uzbekistan do offer free Wi-Fi, but the best quality connection is only found in 4-5-star hotels. In some budget hotels, Wi-Fi may not work at all or be of very poor quality, suitable only for messenger apps. Internet cafes used to be popular in Uzbekistan but are rare and mostly outdated today. It is possible to get a SIM card when you arrive at the airport if desired.

Uzbek SIM cards don't work across the border in Tajikistan and they don't work in the mountains either where cell signal is poor.

As is the case with most Epic programs, we suggest planning for limited connection and taking the opportunity to detoxify digitally for a few weeks.

Recommended reading on Central Asia

If you want to do some reading about the country before you visit... Here is a list of our favorites:

- **The Great Game:** A historical novel written in the style of an espionage thriller. Explores the proxy wars and shadowy acts of the Russian Empire and the British Empire as they expand into Central Asia in the 19th century. Extremely informative and very well told. A great book for anyone looking for more context on one of the world's most unknown regions.
- **Jamila:** The Second World War is at its peak, and Jamilia's husband is off fighting at the front. Accompanied by Daniyar, a sullen newcomer who was wounded on the battlefield, Jamilia spends her days hauling sacks of grain from the threshing floor to the train station in their village in the Caucasus. Spurning men's advances and wincing at the dispassionate letters she receives from her husband, Jamilia falls helplessly in love with the mysterious Daniyar in this heartbreakingly epic tale.
- **The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years:** Set in the vast windswept Central Asian steppes and the infinite reaches of galactic space, this powerful novel offers a vivid view of the culture and values of the Soviet Union's Central Asian peoples.
- **Inside Central Asia:** A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran: In this comprehensive new treatment, renowned political writer and historian Dilip Hiro places the politics, peoples, and cultural background of this critical region firmly into the context of current international focus.
- **The Silk Roads:** Far more than a history book, this is truly a revelatory new history of the world, promising to destabilize notions of where we come from and where we are headed next.

Early client departure protocol

In the event that a trip participant needs to leave the planned trip itinerary early due to illness, injury, family emergency, personal reasons, or simply because they want to, etc then there are a few things to note:

Should a trip participant choose to leave the planned itinerary early for any reason, from the moment they leave the tour, all expenses from that point onwards are the responsibility of the trip participant and no amount of the tour will be refunded.

This includes, but is not limited to, hotels/accommodation, transportation, emergency helicopter evacuation, , meals, airport transfer, guide services - everything that is normally covered by Epic during your tour is no longer covered once a trip participant decides to leave.

That said, in an emergency situation or in case of severe illness, Epic staff will do everything within our means to aid the trip participant until they are in a safe/stable condition. When possible, Epic staff can also help you book new accommodation, flights, transport, etc when possible - but all of these expenses are for the trip participant to pay.

Point being, our staff will always be available to the best of our ability to facilitate the logistics of your departure, should you choose to leave the trip early.

Liability waiver

All tour participants will be required to sign an industry-standard waiver releasing Epic from liability related to any aspect of this trip. Waivers are usually issued on day 1 of the tour at our first team briefing. If you would like to request a copy of the waiver in advance, please email us.

Paying the balance

- Final balance payments will be due approximately 3 months before the tour begins. If you have a balance owing we will advise you when the time comes to pay.
- Please remember that deposits are non-refundable (refundable in case of trip cancellation)
- If you are unable to attend this adventure please inform Epic as soon as possible.
- If you would like to pay the balance sooner, please email us at contact@epicexpeditions.com.

Again, we are very excited to get to meet you in person soon!
The Epic Team

