

central asia travel guide

Central Asia Travel Guide: Exploring the Heart of the Silk Road

central asia travel guide opens the door to one of the most fascinating and often overlooked regions of the world. Nestled between the Caspian Sea and the vast steppes of Mongolia, Central Asia is a tapestry of ancient history, diverse cultures, stunning landscapes, and vibrant cities. From the majestic peaks of the Tien Shan mountains to the endless deserts of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's historic Silk Road cities, this region offers a unique travel experience that blends the old and the new. If you're curious about venturing off the beaten path, this guide will help you navigate the wonders of Central Asia and make the most of your journey.

Why Travel to Central Asia?

Central Asia is a crossroads of civilizations, where East meets West through centuries of trade, migration, and conquest. Travelers are drawn to the region for its rich cultural heritage, breathtaking natural scenery, and warm hospitality. Unlike more tourist-heavy destinations, Central Asia offers an authentic travel experience with relatively untouched landscapes and vibrant local traditions.

The countries that make up Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan—each have their distinctive charm. From the bustling bazaar stalls filled with spices and handicrafts to the tranquil mountain lakes and ancient ruins, Central Asia invites you to slow down and explore at your own pace.

Getting Around Central Asia

Travel logistics can seem daunting at first, but Central Asia's improving infrastructure makes it increasingly accessible. Major cities like Almaty, Bishkek, Tashkent, and Ashgabat serve as gateways to the wider region.

Transportation Options

- **Air Travel:** International airports in major cities connect to Europe, Russia, China, and the Middle East. Domestic flights can save time between distant cities.
- **Trains:** The Trans-Caspian and other rail lines offer scenic and economical travel. Overnight sleeper trains are popular between capitals.
- **Shared Taxis and Marshrutkas:** These minivans or shared taxis are common for shorter distances and provide an immersive local experience.
- **Car Rentals and Private Drivers:** For more flexibility, especially in remote areas like the

Pamir Highway, hiring a car or driver is recommended.

Top Destinations in Central Asia

Each country in Central Asia boasts unique attractions worth exploring. Here's a closer look at some highlights.

Uzbekistan: The Heart of the Silk Road

Uzbekistan is famous for its well-preserved Islamic architecture and Silk Road heritage. Cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva are treasure troves of stunning madrasas, mosques, and bazaars. The Registan Square in Samarkand is an iconic symbol of Central Asia's grandeur.

Kyrgyzstan: Adventure and Alpine Beauty

If you love outdoor activities, Kyrgyzstan is the place to be. The country's rugged Tien Shan mountains offer incredible trekking, horseback riding, and camping opportunities. Don't miss the pristine Issyk-Kul Lake, one of the largest alpine lakes in the world, surrounded by dramatic peaks.

Kazakhstan: Vast Steppes and Modern Cities

Kazakhstan's sprawling landscapes include everything from deserts to forested mountains. The cosmopolitan city of Almaty is a cultural hub with excellent museums and vibrant nightlife. For nature lovers, the Charyn Canyon resembles a mini Grand Canyon and is perfect for hiking and photography.

Tajikistan: The Pamir Mountains and Ancient Fortresses

Known as the "Roof of the World," Tajikistan's Pamir Mountains provide some of the most breathtaking high-altitude trekking routes. The Wakhan Corridor offers a glimpse into ancient Silk Road history and stunning natural beauty. Dushanbe, the capital, combines Soviet-era architecture with modern developments.

Turkmenistan: The Mysterious Desert Land

Turkmenistan remains one of the more enigmatic Central Asian countries. Its capital, Ashgabat, is famous for its white marble buildings and grandiose monuments. The Darvaza Gas Crater, often called the "Door to Hell," is a fiery natural gas field that has been burning for decades—a surreal sight for adventurous travelers.

Practical Tips for Traveling in Central Asia

Traveling through Central Asia requires some preparation to ensure a smooth and enjoyable trip. Here are a few practical tips:

Visa and Entry Requirements

Visa policies vary by nationality and country. Some Central Asian nations have simplified visa regimes or offer e-visas, but it's important to check the latest requirements well in advance. Keep in mind that certain regions, especially near borders, may require special permits.

Language and Communication

Russian remains widely spoken and serves as a lingua franca across the region, but local languages such as Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Turkmen, and Tajik are dominant in everyday life. Learning basic phrases or using translation apps can enhance your interactions.

Currency and Money Matters

Each country has its own currency, and cash is king in most places, especially outside major cities. ATMs are becoming more common but can be scarce in rural areas. It's advisable to carry some US dollars or euros for emergencies.

Health and Safety

Central Asia is generally safe for travelers, but standard precautions apply. Drinking bottled water, avoiding street food that looks unhygienic, and carrying basic medications are wise choices. Travel insurance is highly recommended, particularly if you plan on trekking or adventure activities.

Best Time to Visit

The ideal time to visit depends on your interests. Spring (April to June) and autumn (September to early November) offer mild weather and fewer tourists. Summer can be hot, especially in desert areas, while winter attracts skiers and snow lovers to mountain resorts.

Cultural Etiquette and Local Experiences

Central Asia is deeply rooted in traditions and hospitality. Visitors are often welcomed warmly but

should respect local customs.

Respecting Traditions

Dressing modestly, especially when visiting religious sites, is appreciated. Removing shoes before entering homes and mosques is customary. When invited to a local's home, bringing a small gift like sweets or tea is a kind gesture.

Sampling Central Asian Cuisine

One of the best ways to connect with the culture is through food. Don't miss trying plov (a hearty rice and meat dish), lagman noodles, shashlik (grilled meat skewers), and samsa (savory pastries). Tea is a central part of hospitality and often served with sweets or dried fruits.

Markets and Bazaars

Exploring local bazaars is a highlight of Central Asia travel. They burst with colors, smells, and sounds—from fresh produce and spices to handmade carpets and jewelry. Bargaining is common and expected, so feel free to engage in friendly haggling.

Adventure and Nature Activities

For those seeking outdoor thrills, Central Asia offers a playground of activities:

- **Trekking:** Routes in Kyrgyzstan's Ala-Archa National Park or Tajikistan's Pamirs provide stunning mountain scenery.
- **Horseback Riding:** Experience nomadic culture by riding through valleys and along mountain trails.
- **Desert Exploration:** The Kyzylkum and Karakum deserts invite exploration by 4x4 or camel trekking.
- **Wildlife Watching:** Spot rare species like the snow leopard or ibex in protected reserves.

Each adventure brings you closer to the essence of Central Asia's natural beauty and deep-rooted traditions.

Traveling through Central Asia is not just about seeing new places—it's about immersing yourself in a region where history, culture, and landscape converge in extraordinary ways. Whether you're

wandering through ancient Silk Road cities, hiking alpine trails, or sharing tea with locals in a remote village, this journey promises memories that last a lifetime.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the must-visit countries in Central Asia for travelers?

The must-visit countries in Central Asia for travelers include Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, each offering unique cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and historic Silk Road sites.

When is the best time to travel to Central Asia?

The best time to travel to Central Asia is during spring (April to June) and autumn (September to October) when the weather is mild and pleasant, avoiding the extreme cold of winter and the intense heat of summer.

What are some essential cultural tips for traveling in Central Asia?

Essential cultural tips include dressing modestly, respecting local customs and traditions, asking permission before taking photos of people, and being polite and patient as hospitality is highly valued in Central Asian cultures.

What transportation options are available for getting around Central Asia?

Transportation options in Central Asia include domestic flights, long-distance trains, shared taxis (marshrutkas), buses, and rental cars. The train network is extensive and affordable, especially in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Are there any safety concerns travelers should be aware of in Central Asia?

Central Asia is generally safe for tourists, but travelers should stay informed about local conditions, avoid remote border areas, take standard precautions against petty theft, and respect local laws and customs to ensure a safe trip.

Additional Resources

Central Asia Travel Guide: Exploring the Heart of Eurasia

central asia travel guide provides a detailed insight into one of the world's most intriguing yet

often overlooked regions. Nestled between Europe and Asia, Central Asia comprises five former Soviet republics—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan—each offering a unique fusion of history, culture, and natural beauty. This travel guide aims to navigate the nuances of visiting Central Asia, highlighting key attractions, cultural considerations, logistical tips, and the evolving tourism landscape.

Understanding Central Asia's Geographical and Cultural Landscape

Central Asia spans a vast terrain characterized by diverse landscapes ranging from arid deserts and expansive steppes to towering mountain ranges like the Tien Shan and Pamirs. The region's strategic location along the ancient Silk Road has imbued it with a rich historical tapestry, where Persian, Turkic, Mongol, and Russian influences intertwine. This multicultural heritage is evident in the architecture, languages, and traditions that travelers encounter.

Kazakhstan, the largest country by area, offers cosmopolitan cities such as Almaty and Nur-Sultan juxtaposed with vast wilderness. Uzbekistan is famous for its well-preserved Silk Road cities like Samarkand and Bukhara, boasting stunning Islamic architecture. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan attract adventure travelers with their mountainous terrain, ideal for trekking and outdoor activities. Turkmenistan, while more restrictive in terms of tourism, is home to remarkable sites like the ancient city of Merv and the surreal Darvaza Gas Crater.

Key Highlights and Attractions

- **Samarkand and Bukhara, Uzbekistan:** These ancient cities are cultural jewels featuring grand madrasahs, mausoleums, and bustling bazaars that have witnessed centuries of trade and scholarship.
- **Almaty, Kazakhstan:** Known for its modern skyline and proximity to the Trans-Ili Alatau mountains, Almaty blends urban appeal with access to nature.
- **Issyk-Kul Lake, Kyrgyzstan:** The second-largest saline lake in the world, surrounded by alpine peaks, is a popular spot for relaxation and water sports.
- **Pamirs and Fann Mountains, Tajikistan:** These remote mountain ranges offer some of the most breathtaking trekking routes globally, attracting serious mountaineers.
- **Darvaza Gas Crater, Turkmenistan:** Often called the "Door to Hell," this continuously burning natural gas field is a unique spectacle.

Travel Logistics and Entry Requirements

Navigating entry requirements in Central Asia can be complex due to varying visa policies. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have relatively liberal visa regimes, allowing visa-free or e-visa access for many nationalities. Uzbekistan has simplified its visa processes recently, with e-visas available to visitors from over 80 countries. Conversely, Turkmenistan maintains stringent visa controls, often requiring invitations and pre-approved permits, which can pose challenges for independent travelers.

Transportation infrastructure varies widely. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have developed rail and air networks connecting major cities, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rely more on road transport with limited domestic flights. Public transport within cities tends to be basic but functional, with minibusses (marshrutkas) commonly used.

Best Time to Visit

The ideal period for Central Asia travel depends on the region and activities planned:

- **Spring (April to June):** Pleasant temperatures and blooming landscapes make it suitable for sightseeing and trekking.
- **Summer (July to August):** Hot in lowland areas, but perfect for high-altitude hiking in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- **Autumn (September to October):** Mild weather and fewer tourists; an excellent window for cultural tours and outdoor adventures.
- **Winter (November to March):** Harsh cold limits travel options but opens opportunities for winter sports in certain areas.

Cultural Sensitivities and Traveler Etiquette

Central Asia's cultural fabric is woven with Islamic traditions, nomadic heritage, and Soviet-era legacies. Respect for local customs is essential to foster positive interactions. Modest dress is advisable, especially when visiting religious sites or rural areas. Hospitality is a cornerstone of Central Asian culture; visitors can expect invitations to share meals and tea, which should be accepted graciously.

Language can pose a barrier, with Russian widely spoken alongside local languages such as Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Turkmen. English is less common outside major cities, so learning basic phrases or hiring local guides can enhance the experience.

Safety and Health Considerations

While Central Asia is generally safe for travelers, standard precautions regarding personal belongings and situational awareness apply. Road conditions vary, and mountainous routes may be challenging, especially during adverse weather. Vaccinations for routine diseases and travel-specific immunizations should be verified with healthcare providers before departure.

Emerging Trends and Sustainable Tourism

Central Asia is gradually gaining traction as a tourist destination, driven by governments' efforts to promote cultural heritage and nature-based tourism. Initiatives to develop eco-tourism and community-based travel experiences are underway, aiming to balance economic benefits with environmental and social impacts.

The region's relative obscurity compared to conventional tourist hotspots offers travelers an authentic and less commercialized experience. However, infrastructure development is uneven, and some areas lack modern amenities, which requires flexibility and preparation from visitors.

Practical Tips for an Optimized Travel Experience

- **Plan ahead:** Research visa requirements and book accommodations in advance, especially during peak seasons.
- **Use local guides:** Engaging knowledgeable guides enriches cultural understanding and supports local economies.
- **Currency and payments:** Cash is king in many parts of Central Asia; ATMs and card acceptance are limited outside major cities.
- **Connectivity:** SIM cards are affordable and widely available; however, internet access can be spotty in remote locations.
- **Pack appropriate gear:** Weather can fluctuate dramatically; layered clothing and sturdy footwear are recommended.

Venturing into Central Asia offers a compelling journey through landscapes and histories that have shaped civilizations. From the bustling bazaars echoing with centuries-old trade to serene mountain vistas, this region invites explorers to uncover its multifaceted charm with curiosity and respect. As tourism infrastructure evolves, Central Asia stands poised to become a vibrant destination for discerning travelers seeking depth beyond conventional routes.

Central Asia Travel Guide

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central asia travel guide: *Central Asia anglais* Bradley Mayhew, Mark Elliott, Tom Masters, John Noble, 2013-10-01 Comprehensive advice on transport options, border crossings and how to get visas is given in this title as well as new in-depth coverage of eco-tourism and community-based tourism options. Additionally, this guide offers historical and practical information on the Silk Road, one of the world's great adventure trips

central asia travel guide: Lonely Planet Central Asia Lonely Planet, Stephen Lioy, Anna Kaminski, Bradley Mayhew, Jenny Walker, 2018-06-01 Lonely Planet: The world's number one travel guide publisher* Lonely Planet Central Asia is your passport to the most relevant, up-to-date advice on what to see and skip, and what hidden discoveries await you. Enjoy booming Almaty's cafes, clubs and shops, wind through rugged mountains past ancient tombs, hot springs, and remote Kyrgyz yurt camps on Tajikistan's Pamir Highway; and wonder at the architecture in Uzbekistan's Samarkand - all with your trusted travel companion. Get to the heart of central Asia and begin your journey now! Inside Lonely Planet's Central Asia: Colour maps and images throughout Highlights and itineraries help you tailor your trip to your personal needs and interests Insider tips to save time and money and get around like a local, avoiding crowds and trouble spots Essential info at your fingertips - hours of operation, phone numbers, websites, transit tips, prices Honest reviews for all budgets - eating, sleeping, sightseeing, going out, shopping, hidden gems that most guidebooks miss Cultural insights provide a richer, more rewarding travel experience - covering history, art, literature, music, architecture, landscapes, wildlife, Islam in Central Asia, the Silk Road, Central Asia today Covers Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and more eBook Features: (Best viewed on tablet devices and smartphones) Downloadable PDF and offline maps prevent roaming and data charges Effortlessly navigate and jump between maps and reviews Add notes to personalise your guidebook experience Seamlessly flip between pages Bookmarks and speedy search capabilities get you to key pages in a flash Embedded links to recommendations' websites Zoom-in maps and images Inbuilt dictionary for quick referencing The Perfect Choice: Lonely Planet Central Asia is our most comprehensive guide to the region, and is perfect for discovering both popular and offbeat sights. Travelling further afield? Check out Lonely Planet's Mongolia, China and Iran guides for a comprehensive look at all those countries have to offer. About Lonely Planet: Lonely Planet is a leading travel media company and the world's number one travel guidebook brand, providing both inspiring and trustworthy information for every kind of traveller since 1973. Over the past four decades, we've printed over 145 million guidebooks and grown a dedicated, passionate global community of travellers. You'll also find our content online, and in mobile apps, video, 14 languages, nine international magazines, armchair and lifestyle books, ebooks, and more. TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 winner in Favorite Travel Guide category 'Lonely Planet guides are, quite simply, like no other.' - New York Times 'Lonely Planet. It's on everyone's bookshelves; it's in every traveller's hands. It's on mobile phones. It's on the Internet. It's everywhere, and it's telling entire generations of people how to travel the world.' - Fairfax Media (Australia) *Source: Nielsen BookScan: Australia, UK, USA, 5/2016-4/2017 Important Notice: The digital edition of this book may not contain all of the images found in the physical edition.

central asia travel guide: *Central Asia* Rein Mullerson, 2014-04-04 This is an important analysis of a key but little-known region, in the wider context of world politics. Central Asia has huge oil and gas resources, divided between five independent states - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - each with their own problems and interests. The region is energy-rich and, being situated between Russia and China and close to Afghanistan and other potential trouble-spots, it has acquired immense geo-strategic importance. History is seen and felt everywhere. Old legacies, whether they go back to Genghis Khan or stem from the recent Soviet past, have a profound effect on contemporary issues and political choices. Concentrating on today's

problems against a complex historical background, the book draws on the author's extensive involvement with the region. Considerable attention is paid to Central Asian Islam, human rights issues in the region, and Central Asia's place in the 'war against terrorism'.

central asia travel guide: Tourism in Central Asia Kemal Kantarci, Muzaffer Uysal, Vincent P. Magnini, 2014-09-05 This book will be a major resource for all academic researchers and practitioners interested in issues dealing with the development of tourism, its potential and challenges, and policy and regulatory issues in the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. These countries are gaining more attention as emerging destinations. There is limited research that focuses on these countries with respect to their potential and characteristics as tourism destinations. This book aims to be an invaluable source for both practitioners and academicians who are in international marketing and tourism. The central Asia region (also termed the Silk Road region) as an emerging destination is ripe for future tourism development. The region is rich with historical, cultural, and natural beauty that could provide significant utility to many potential visitors. This book brings together key writings on this topic in a single resource.

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central asia travel guide: Islam in Central Asia: Oxford Bibliographies Online Research Guide Devin DeWeese, 2010-05 This ebook is a selective guide designed to help scholars and students of Islamic studies find reliable sources of information by directing them to the best available scholarly materials in whatever form or format they appear from books, chapters, and journal articles to online archives, electronic data sets, and blogs. Written by a leading international authority on the subject, the ebook provides bibliographic information supported by direct recommendations about which sources to consult and editorial commentary to make it clear how the cited sources are interrelated related. A reader will discover, for instance, the most reliable introductions and overviews to the topic, and the most important publications on various areas of scholarly interest within this topic. In Islamic studies, as in other disciplines, researchers at all levels are drowning in potentially useful scholarly information, and this guide has been created as a tool for cutting through that material to find the exact source you need. This ebook is a static version of an article from Oxford Bibliographies Online: Islamic Studies, a dynamic, continuously updated,

online resource designed to provide authoritative guidance through scholarship and other materials relevant to the study of the Islamic religion and Muslim cultures. Oxford Bibliographies Online covers most subject disciplines within the social science and humanities, for more information visit www.oxfordbibliographies.com.

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central asia travel guide: Insight Guides Silk Road (Travel Guide eBook) Insight Guides, 2017-04-01 Insight Guide The Silk Road is the complete illustrated guide to one of the world's ultimate travel adventures. Passing right through the heart of Asia, this ancient trade route traverses a quarter of the globe from the heart of China to the Mediterranean via a vast, inhospitable expanse of mountains and desert. The guide covers all the sights along the way across 13 countries and 6 time zones, with authoritative chapters on the Silk Road's history and culture to put it all into context. Inside Insight Guide The Silk Road: A fully-overhauled major new edition by our expert Silk Road author. Stunning, specially-commissioned photography that brings the countries along this evocative route to life. Highlights of the Silk Road's top attractions, including the great city of Isfahan, the ancient splendor of Persepolis and China's Terracotta Army in our Best of the Silk Road. Descriptive country-by-country accounts cover the whole route from China to Turkey by way of the 'Stans of Central Asia and the geopolitical nerve centres of the Middle East. Features detail silk production, the ancient treasures that have been discovered along the route, and the colourful bazaars - a reminder of the Silk Road caravanserais of the distant past. Detailed, high-quality maps throughout will help you get around and travel tips give you all the essential information for planning the trip of a lifetime. About Insight Guides: Insight Guides has over 40 years' experience of publishing high-quality, visual travel guides. We produce around 400 full-colour print guide books and maps as well as picture-packed eBooks to meet different travellers' needs. Insight Guides' unique combination of beautiful travel photography and focus on history and culture together create a unique visual reference and planning tool to inspire your next adventure. 'Insight Guides has spawned many imitators but is still the best of its type.' - Wanderlust Magazine

central asia travel guide: Politics of Regionalism in Central Asia JeongWon BOURDAIS PARK, Aigul ADIBAYEVA, Danial SAARI, 2023-08-11 This book addresses how to mitigate regional tensions and enhance cooperative opportunities through well-designed regional institutions and organizations among countries in geographical proximity. We use the case of Central Asia (i.e., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) to employ our conceptual framework of 'externally guided regionalism.' The following questions guide the study: How and by what forces has Central Asian regionalism evolved, and what are the main characteristics and political implications of the continuously evolving regional institutions? We discuss not only the extra-regional influential actors (i.e., Russia, the United States, the European Union, and China), but also intra-regional initiatives, strategies, and struggles in securing stability and sovereignty. Extra-regional actors' growing competition over molding their own kind of multilateralism involving this region has contributed to the current direction of Central Asia's regionalization. Concurrently, Central Asia's political conditions and constraints interactively contribute to ever-increasing institutional sprawl.

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Asia are finally brought to light.

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central asia travel guide: The Management of Public Services in Central Asia David Scott, 2016-03-02 The ending of the Soviet Union in 1991 had a major political and economic impact on Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan was one of the most severely affected countries, suffering a deeper recession than the other republics. During the first five or six years Kyrgyzstan followed the advice of the International Monetary Fund and was considered a model of both economic and political reform. This book analyses the ability of the newly independent government in Kyrgyzstan to create a realistic national vision, prepare a strategy, organise and control its public services to deliver the desired result. Covering a fifteen year period and using the case study of the educational sector – which declined even though the economic situation in Kyrgyzstan improved – the author throws light on many other aspects of a country in transition, in particular, on strategy, implementation and outcomes. Comparisons with other sectors such as roads and pensions, and in particular the health care sector are presented. A multifaceted approach using case studies, phenomenology, interviews, historical and comparative analyses offers a more complete picture of national management of public service and the structure of government administration. The book also investigates the contribution made by the international aid organisations. A detailed study of institutional transformation in Kyrgyzstan, this book is of interest to academics studying former socialist countries in transition, the history of the Soviet Union and Central Asian studies in general.

central asia travel guide: Tajikistan Sophie Ibbotson, Max Lovell-Hoare, 2017-12-04 This new, thoroughly updated second edition of the most practical guide to Central Asia's smallest and least understood country brings to life the 'Roof of the World': Tajikistan. Enhanced trekking details and maps are included, along with more detailed practical information than any other guidebook. Travelling to and entering Tajikistan is easier than ever before with improved transport infrastructure and a new airport terminal in the capital, Dushanbe. Accommodation options in the

capital have also improved with new high-end hotels now open for business. This new edition includes details of all such changes and improvements. With this guide you can explore the Tajik side of the Wakhan Corridor, complete with fortresses, petroglyphs, and stunning views of the Pamirs and Hindu Kush. Also covered are the Fann Mountains, easily the most accessible - and one of the most beautiful - mountain ranges in Tajikistan, the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Sarazm and the Tajik National Park, the hot springs of Garm Chashma, and the Tajikistan section (which forms the majority) of the Pamir Highway, arguably the most spectacular drive in the world. Epic mountain landscapes, glacial lakes, and the mighty Amu Darya - the Oxus River of antiquity - encircle ancient Buddhist sites, Silk Road trading posts, medieval shrines, and planned Soviet cities alike. The modern population continues to draw upon its diverse heritage from Persia, China, Afghanistan and Russia, creating a complex and intriguing culture waiting to be discovered. With first-hand descriptions of everything from Sogdian ruins to playing the traditional sport of buz kashi, trekking on the Murghab Plateau and eating shashlik in garden tea houses, Tajikistan's expert authors bring the country alive in Bradt's new and fully updated edition.

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