

TAJIKISTAN - A TREKKING DESTINATION YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD OF



Tajikistan can be proud of its breathtakingly beautiful landscape. However, few travelers have seen its beauty. Local tourism experts believe that the country has the potential to become a world class trekking destination and some measures are already being taken to reach this goal.

The Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast is a yet undiscovered destination. It makes up almost half of Tajikistan's landmass, but is home to less than five percent of the population. It is often nicknamed as the "roof of the world" by locals.

The Pamirs are an ideal trekking destination. You will not find any modern influence here, just an untouched paradise of high-altitude and physically challenging valleys.

There are many attractions in the region. From lakes to some of the highest peaks in the world. The most notable peaks are Peak Ismoil Somoni, Peak Lenin and Peak Karl Marx. The region is also home to the world's longest mountain glacier, Fedchenko (77km).

Besides the wilderness, locals can also boast about Tajikistan's architectural and cultural beauty. Ancient shrines of Muslim saints, fortresses and rock paintings can be found in the area. Other than that, many markets are located here, selling literally everything from CDs to mountain herbs.

However, the region does not get international recognition as a holiday site, not even a trekking destination. It is rare for a foreign tourist to be found hiking in the mountains in Tajikistan. Thus, the government plans to improve the country's tourism sector and to increase the foreign inflow.

Tajik universities have been introducing academic tourism courses in universities since 2012. But there is little focus on outdoor skills. Fortunately, the lack of experienced guides in the area did not go unnoticed. Christine Oriol, a French development worker, noticed this issue and launched a training course.

Her aim is to teach a group of young Tajik women some important outdoor skills needed for trekking. Skills like map reading, tent pitching etc. "Women never go to the mountains. There are very few male guides, and women guides absolutely don't exist in Tajikistan. The mountains are considered mostly as a man's area," Oriol noted.

It remains to be seen, whether Oriol's training course can serve as a boost for tourism in the region. However, action is being taken in Gorno-Badakhshan in order to increase the clientele and visits to this so far undiscovered part of the world.

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