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Photos by: Takutdinova Diana

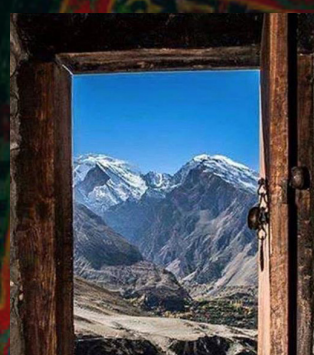
WE ARE FROM TAJIKISTAN

Musical arts
of Pamir



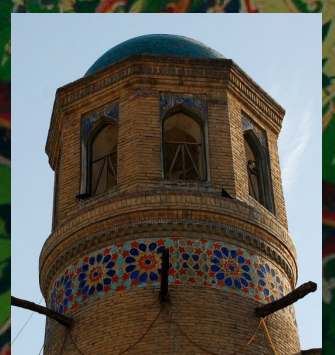
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Interesting places to visit in my home village

Sometimes we are in deep thought, believing that growing up makes us smarter. And indeed, it does. When I was very young, I lived in a village called Urmetan in Tajikistan. I may refer to this age as “The Age of Foolishness.” This is because I was not able to discover those values and uniqueness that Urmetan had. The beauty of other towns and cities in my country caught my attention and closed my eyes to the true significance of my home village. There, I was actually living in a real nature, which left me with great memories.

During my childhood, I often asked my grandmother: “Why do dogs and cats, cows and goats, birds and bugs always follow me when I go somewhere?” And she would warmly respond: “It is because they like you.” But later on, I found out that the natural environment of Urmetan is notable for its biodiversity. Wherever I went, I could see living species on the land, in the trees, and in the sky.

The word “ur-metan” is composed of two words: “ur” means “to bite” and “metan” is a type of iron. It has no academic definition, but locals believe that the village’s name indicates the great strength of its people. Urmetan is surrounded by giant mountains along with colorful rocks and nature.

Travelers get their first inspiration just before they get into the village: the nature with its green lushness, the beautiful fan-furrowed river bed, the freshly tilled earth, the big shady trees, the singing of wild birds, and the flocking of numerous cranes paint an ecstatic, beautiful landscape. And when people enter the village itself, the people double travelers’ inspiration with their unique hospitality, friendship, lifestyle, and customs. They never let any guest leave the village without having lunch or dinner. When they enter any house, their hearts shine like the sun giving out its bright light in the morning. Elder people especially welcome them with a cheer-

ful smile and happiness glowing in their faces.

Interestingly, village people like to introduce their hand-made foods and products to others. The most common of these are qurut and jurqot, which one can find at the home of any family in Urmetan.

Jirgot is known as a traditional sour milk product in Tajikistan. It is a very healthy product with rich natural vitamins and minerals. One can find these products not only in Tajikistan but also in Kyrgyzstan. That is to say, these two nations with different cultures have a few common foods.

Apart from that, Urmetan has many historical, traditional, valuable, and naturally beautiful places. There are more than five shrines or holy places—specifically, houses of important religious figures—with very old architecture that offer a glimpse into the lifestyle of people who lived here hundreds of years ago. In particular, the shrine of Shaykh Abulqosim Gurgonii Tusi (976-1059) is a well-respected and often-visited place not only in Urmetan but in Tajikistan. Shaykh Abulqosim was a profound and religious person from Iran. Once in his dream, he found himself in the land of Sughd (Urmetan) keeping a light in his hands and bringing brightness to this society. After that event, he came to Urmetan, made a great positive change there, and passed away in this land. This being the case, Shaykh Abdulqosim’s gravesite has been a shrine and valued place to visit in Tajikistan ever since.

Furthermore, some places are naturally exquisite and make one stop and take a deep breath. I believe that one can actually gain energy to tap into for greater strength from visiting these places. The nature of my hometown is like a positive force that makes one take time to think profoundly and feel the beauty of life.

Khiradmand Sheraliev



Musical arts of Pamir

The Musical Arts of the Pamir is a unique five-volume study of the rich and diverse musical heritage of Pamirs, covering performance, dance, theatre and pantomime, and the music performed during rituals. The work is the culmination of decades of field research on all genres of musical heritage by renowned scholars Dr Nizom Nurdjanov, Dr Fayzulla Karomatov, and Dr Bahriniso Kabilova. The publication of the first three volumes includes Volume III: Ritual Music: Wedding, Birth, and Funeral, a newly released, original text focused on national ceremonies and the music and dance of celebrations. Drawn from primary source material and field work, Volume III features transcripts and notes on compositions connected with life cycle rituals as well as calendar holidays. The release of the series includes the republication of the first two volumes, first commissioned in 1959 and published in Moscow in 1978 and 1986, respectively. Volume I: Musical Heritage of the Pamirian Tajiks, provides an overview of Pamirian Tajik spiritual culture, including the detailed characteristics of folk music, musical instruments, and the context of the Pamir region. Volume II: Musical Performance and Dances of Pamirian Tajiks, contains descriptions, notes and verbal texts of various patterns of musical performing arts, including pantomime, dance, choreography, and theatre performance. Though recognized at the time of their release as significant contributions to the field, the works are long out of print. These volumes include a diversity of songs, included those dedicated to the Soviet context. The series is widely viewed as the most comprehensive work on Pamir musical heritage and culture to date, preserving the diverse musical heritage of Tajikistan while revitalizing traditional music for a broader audience.

Maina Shodmonbekova



photos from: akdn.com

About Navruz and Mehrgan in Tajikistan

The independence of Tajikistan has led to the revival of cultural celebrations. Literary and historical sources as well as the works and treatises of scholars indicate that our ancestors considered the two holidays Navruz and Mehrgan sacred and welcomed the arrival of these holidays, each of which has its own origin story.

Mehrgan was the sixteenth day of Merah, the month of autumn that our ancestors honored and have celebrated since ancient times. This celebration took place during the harvest season, that is, during the harvest of fruits and vegetables. People spread blessings, showed kindness to each other and sang songs from the book of the Avesta. Then the musicians and singers entertained the audience. Every year, Tajik people celebrate autumn and the Mehrgan festival with great fanfare and splendor, demonstrating their agricultural products, a rich Tajik table, and national salads, which is one of the traditions of our ancestors. This celebration is closely related to the plentiful food people are able to gather during the autumn harvest. Mehrgan is a special event, and people still enjoy the short moments of happiness where they all eat food and enjoy a pleasant day with people who are close to them.

The start of independence created a new period in the revival of the civilization of the Tajik people, and Navruz became a symbol of this revival of the Tajik culture. Love, devotion, wisdom, and reason are the

basic principles of Navruz. This holiday has a long history, and is mentioned in the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi and the Navruznameh of Omar Khayyam, which dates back to the time of King Jamshed Kayoni. This holiday was called the «Sunna of Jamshed» during the Arab conquest. Every year on March 21, Navruz is celebrated in all corners of Tajikistan. People put on new holiday clothes and throw away their old and torn clothes. They decorate the Navruz table with sevens (Things start with “S” and have symbolic meanings) sumanak, bread, and other foods. Women traditionally stand around the pot mixing a meal called sumalak and watch the younger generation dance with good intentions for the whole day. The queen of Navruz contest is held among women, and young men and women will organize a flower party and will read spring poems. After independence, Tajiks have learnt to celebrate old events as a sign of prosperity and abundance. Many people enjoy celebrations where food is plentiful and treasured time is spent with loved ones. Traditional events such as Mehrgan and Navruz are viewed as representations of Tajiks: of their will to live in a peaceful community where respect and understanding is widespread and every family and person is happy with what they have in their life.

Azizmurodov Saiyod Sodiqjonovich



Urban legends of my home town

The history, culture, and traditions of groups of people are closely connected with the stories and legends that were told by their ancestors. Many of them have been perceived by different tellers and listeners. Therefore, these legends can change because they are oral traditions. However, their mystery, beauty, and diversity calls people to imagine the incredible events recounted in the stories. Central Asian countries are famous for their various oral literary heritages that have blended over the centuries. These stories mostly depict people's ways of life, their values, and their beliefs at a certain period of time. As we know, Central Asia has faced several invasions by Greek, Arab, and Mongol attackers. This history is reflected in the stories we tell.

One of these well-known legends is “Childukhtaron,” which my grandmother used to tell us. Today, in the southern part of Tajikistan there is a holy place called “Childukhtaron” that locals consider to be a sacred valley. The name of the valley can be translated as “forty girls.” The legend about this place recounts forty young girls' courageous actions. People believe that before the occupation of the Mongol Empire in that valley lived forty

beautiful virgin girls. For Mongol invaders, one reason to conquer a village was to take girls as slaves and concubines. Realizing Genghiz Khan's defeat, they wanted to confront their enemies and defend their land. However, their cruel enemies were all-powerful men whose victory seemed inevitable. Therefore, saving the whole valley was very hard for these young girls. The only help they could ask was from God; they prayed to God to remain untouched and safe. As a result, they were turned into silent stone pillars, and their village was also saved. The brave girls did not allow the Mongol troops to enter and conquer their community.

Nowadays, in this valley there are stones that resemble humans. Every spring locals decorate the entire valley with ribbons and flowers in memory of these heroines, keeping the tradition alive despite development and modernization. In my point of view, such traditional stories still evoke strong emotions. They complete our past and engage new generations.

Tahmina Ustoeva

A Letter from Pamir

At this moment of sorrow, I was given an opportunity to cheer our readers by speaking about one of the most ancient and incredible regions of Tajikistan. It is a region where people are proud of their culture and traditions; it is a region where people have dreams like the high mountains of Pamir and long River Panj. One might already have guessed that this story will be about Badakhshan, a place which is far from other regions yet globally known for its miraculous history.

Despite the fact that I grew up and spent most of my childhood in Khujand, I have never forgotten my Pamiri roots. I believe my soul belongs to the place where my ancestors lived, for which I feel honored. Such belonging makes me go back there every summer and be close to my friends, relatives, and most importantly to the breathtaking mountains. The fresh breeze and clean glacier water is heavenly and priceless.

If you decided to visit Pamir you should not miss walking along the streets of Khorugh and Chorbogh Park, where you can meet all the community members of Badakhshan during the holidays and lively gatherings. The ancient languages spoken there such as Shugni, Yazghulam, Ishkashimi, Munji, Yigdha, and others make you wonder at the region's rich culture.

After reading this piece, many of you might find yourselves wanting to visit Pamir to discover more about this region. This lovely place makes up almost 45% of Tajikistan's territory but only 3% of its population. This tells you that a great adventure awaits you after the quarantine give a shot to the land of Badakhshanis who are virtuous in their daily lives and proud of their world-known historical heritage. Until then, one should not forget that this small place has a big heart that is always awaiting your visit.

Kamila Kurbonmamadova

My Mountains, My Home

The roof of the world—that's how people oftentimes refer to Pamir and its mountains in Tajikistan. The place that inspires every single person who comes here.

Pamir's borders pass mostly through the territories of Afghanistan, China, and Kyrgyzstan, and its mountains mostly lie in the Gorno-Badakhshan province of Tajikistan, stretching across other higher mountain systems of the world like Tien Shan, Karakorum, and the Hindu Kush Himalayas. It is also well known that the Great Silk Road crossed a number of parts of the Pamir Mountains starting from the 1st to 7th century.

The river Pyanj is one of the rivers that divides Afghan and Tajik land. Once you enter Gorno-Badakhshan Province, it is amazing how one can easily observe people's simple lives. An incredible view with the same glorious nature can be seen on the other side of the river where small Afghan villages are located.

If I had to choose one word to describe the nature

of Pamir, it would be "pristine," since most of the nature in Pamir is distant and barely reachable. Pamir, however, is not only rich in mountains, but also in rivers, crystal-clear lakes, glaciers, hot springs, large botanical gardens, semi-precious and precious stones, and people with unique customs, languages, and hospitality.

No words can explain the beauty and magnificence of the Pamir Mountains' nature. Pamir is a place each of us should visit. Its nature is truly divine. One of the most astonishing and miraculous attributes there is the night sky. Not only one would be amazed by the mountains and many other beauties of Pamir's nature, but also by the sky full of twinkling and shooting stars in the dark night. The Milky Way is clearly visible there.

If you visit Pamir once, its nature and wildlife will forever be remembered and will not leave you uninspired.

Begin Fayzullobekova



My story in Tajikistan

My acquaintance with Tajikistan and Dushanbe in particular began in 2008, when I came with my colleagues to participate in a youth camp organized by our partners from Tajikistan. This trip was quite exciting for me: it was a journey to the country which, on the one hand, is only one hour away by flight (even by not the fastest plane), but on the other hand is still a country that you just read about.

Dushanbe turned out to be a very beautiful and unusual city. For some reason, according to my first impressions, the architecture of the central streets reminded me of the Russian cultural capital St. Petersburg.

What was shocking in the first place and unusual for me personally: was the fact that the people around me spoke a completely unfamiliar language. Locals made eye contact absolutely easily, so it seemed that I was always in the spotlight.

The city seemed very large and spacious: wide streets, high-rises, and large neighborhoods. The streets looked neater, due to the small number of advertising signs and billboards. Especially in comparison with Bishkek, where each store is covered with numerous advertising banners and many kilometers of advertisements are hung over the roads.

In 2014, I married a woman from Tajikistan. Since then, I have been to Dushanbe quite often, and each time I was surprised at how fast the city was changing. It was as if I came to a new city every time. I must say that on average, I came to Tajikistan approximately once a year and it turned out to be enough to create new high-rise buildings, shopping centers, and even whole parks with large trees in Dushanbe. What's interesting about those trees is that when the parks and alleys were built, saplings that were already quite tall were planted in the ground along with their roots.

It is important to mention why I like Tajikistan and Dushanbe in particular.

The first reason is urban transportation. Many small vans are driven in the city; locals call them "tangemki." They are named after the heroine of a Korean drama that seemed to be popular at the time when these little cars from Korea appeared on the roads of Dushanbe. The most vivid impression of them: "Wow, you must be kidding me? Only seated places, wo-hoo!"

Secondly, I should mention Tajik cuisine. The real discovery and symbol of Tajikistan for me was "kurutob". Kurutob is a puff pastry torn into small pieces called fatir (in our country it is called kattama), seasoned with chopped tomatoes and onions, and all this was poured with diluted sour milk and hot butter or linseed oil. This is all served on a large wooden plate, always with hot peppers. By the way, my wife and I often cook this dish at home.

In Dushanbe, there are entire cafés that cook only kurutob, they are called kurutobkhona (literally, a house of kurutob), although there are enough other cafés where you can eat pilaf, barbecue, and other dishes of national and world cuisine, but kurutob became, as it seems to me, the real culinary calling card of Tajikistan. Seriously, if you were in Tajikistan and did not try kurutob, then you can assume that you did not come to Tajikistan.

Over many trips to Dushanbe, I have developed a contradictory attitude to the weather. Probably the most pleasant time for me was either the beginning of mid-spring or autumn. It was very cold in winter (this is probably felt more strongly due to problems with central heating, which were present in the city until recently), and in summer, especially in August, there is unbearable heat and seasonal winds begin to blow, which brings massive dust flows with them. It created natural dust storms (as you can see in adventure films). My fireproof wife, however, treats heat absolutely calmly: for her forty-degree heat is not heat at all, and she almost never has issues with skin after getting a tan. I noticed a similar insensitivity to heat among many residents of Tajikistan. It was especially surprising to see Tajik students in shirts and jackets in the midst of a summer examination session.

In general, I really like the city, the cuisine, and the attitude of people. However, I categorically did not like the slow and expensive Internet, and some problems with heating, gas, and hot water, which I observed in some old apartment blocks. In Dushanbe, they sell beautiful juicy fruits and vegetables, local people are very sociable, and everyone always calls out—you will for sure gain extra 2-3 kilograms during even a short trip to Dushanbe.

I hope that the quarantine will be over as soon as possible, the coronavirus will retreat, and my family and I will be able to once again go to this beautiful country on vacation.

Boris Sanamiants



Growing up in Tajikistan

Since my childhood my family has lived in many different places, but nothing compares to when we were living in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, where I lived half of my life. I was 12 when we moved to the beautiful city of Dushanbe. It was nothing compared to that period of our lives. I graduated high school in Tajikistan, and it was one of the best times of my life with all its ups and downs. I studied at Dushanbe International School, which many Tajiks know about the politicians' children—even the president's sons—go there. I shared wonderful times with the friends I made there and with whom I am still in contact.. I remember every day after school my best friend and I would go roaming around the opera ballet park called Operka and then take the trolleybus back home.

I remember Ismoili Somoni's statue next to Rudaki Park in the city center, and my favorite place, which I would often visit, was the National Library. Each year in Dushanbe they celebrate different ceremonies and concerts in front of the statue of Somoni. Each New Year they build different designs of Christmas trees, decorating them with beautiful lights the same they would do for Navruz and Eids. The one grand ceremony that I loved was Flag Day. Tajik people would put a lot of effort to make it as memorable as possible.

Each year we would visit my home country of Afghanistan for a month, so we would take the highway and cross the border at Shir Khan, seeing all the beautiful nature and places along the way. Coming back from Afghanistan, we had a favorite place near the border on the Tajikistan side where

people would harvest mushrooms and cook them fresh. The place was not a closed restaurant but a green area on the mountains with small camping tents. Summer in Tajikistan is very fun because you can visit Varzob and Khujand for your summer holiday. We had two favorite dachas in Varzob which we would visit often one was Guli Maida and the other was Jasmine. We would swim there all day, eating shashlik and dancing. As for Khujand, it was a little far from Dushanbe so we would go there for a week to Bahoriston resort, and I cannot tell enough about those times. Our house in Dushanbe was in front of Kokhi Borbad, and on one side there was the Ismaili Center of Dushanbe and the other side there was qarabolo, which was a great place to walk. We would walk and pass by the Hyatt Regency Dushanbe, then there would be Kokhi Navruz, a zoo, and a park nearby. It was a lovely place, and now that I am writing about it, I realize how much I have missed it over these past three years. Tajik people are very friendly, and I am proud that I have many beautiful friends there whom I can still count on if I visit Tajikistan.

Growing up in Tajikistan was amazing, and I am counting days until I can visit it again. I feel at home there because of the country's similar traditions to my own homeland and also the fact that we share a language. Speaking of language, I can claim that I have a "Kulobi" accent because of my dialect and the confirmation of my Tajik friends, who call me Kulobi dukhtarak haha.

Shahdukht Tapesh



photo by: Takutdinova Diana

My first impression from Bishkek

Going to study at AUCA was the first-ever time I'd left my motherland. When I arrived in Bishkek to fulfill my dream of studying at AUCA, I knew a lot about the university, but little about Bishkek. It was night, I was in a taxi, and suddenly Bishkek appeared. There were no skyscrapers, but there were short but beautiful trees and impressive buildings, though as it was night, I did not see everything clearly.

It was a stressful enough time for me to leave my motherland and my loved ones. I wanted to purchase a local SIM card for the internet so I could talk to my family back home. I did not find a SIM card store in the area where I lived. Because of the city tour organized by AUCA, I knew about Asia Mall, which was far from the Oktyabr District, so my task became to get to that store. I avoided public mini-buses as I did not know Kyrgyz culture and was worried about getting lost, so I decided to go by taxi. Frankly, though, I was afraid to be deceived. I found a taxi cab, asked if I could use a taxi service, and got into the car. I started telling the driver about myself. During our conversation, I found out that he was in trouble; someone had called him but refused his services when he arrived at the destination. The atmosphere between us was relaxed. Then he asked

me why I wanted to go to Asia Mall I described my situation to him. He was a bit surprised and said that there was another store that was closer. We agreed to go there. When we arrived, he went with me and even helped with the purchase of SIM card, not because of a desire for money but just because of his desire to help me. Even though the task he helped me with was a small one, for me, it was significant and memorable gesture from a person I did not know. Through this act, he convinced me that I am not alone in this big city. Moreover, he told me the main things about the city and culture of the Kyrgyz people. We became friends afterward, and we still keep in touch.

AUCA is a place full of outstanding people, and I felt support from them, but I did not know what was happening outside. That's why for me, the stranger's help was so special. That occasion, I've become much more confident, and I learned anew that kind people are everywhere. A kind gesture may seem insignificant, but all great things start from these details.

Azizjon Homidov



Tajik Customs and Traditions



Tajikistan and Tajik people are very famous around the world for their hospitality, for the respect they show to other people, for their holidays, and of course for their poets, writers, and artists. All the things mentioned above are elements of the great and ancient Tajik culture and traditions.

Hospitality. Tajik people enjoy having guests and it is no secret that they do it sincerely and with pure soul. There is even special welcoming in there, like whenever any guest comes they bring all the food, tea of course, sweets, that are at home and make a big table so guest would have everything. On each holiday relatives and friends gather at one's home and enjoy the time together.

The respect, behavior and family values are key parts of culture. The young people always should have respect for elder and it has been taught from childhood. And it is shown even in details, like every time when family sits for dinner the eldest in family will start eating first and only then younger ones begin. Another example is that youth always give place for older everywhere, in a bench in the park or a place in the public transport.

As with every country, Tajikistan has many national holidays that are celebrated every year. One of these holidays is Navrooz also called "Tajik New Year" as it is the holiday dedicated for the coming of spring and happiness. It is important to mention that due to the speech of the president of Tajikistan at the UN, on September 30th, 2009, Navrooz was accepted as an International Holiday and became more popular and celebrated in more countries.

Famous Tajik people include Abuabdullo Rudaki, Omar Khayyam, Ibn Sina, Kamol Khujandi and many others whose fame has reached the whole world and whose works inspire millions of people. And these people are still alive because their memory is kept by the generations that have followed after them.

I would like to conclude my text with very famous saying among Tajiks: "Tajikistan feel the friendship!"

Sheroz Mirpochoev

My Home Town

Khujand Fortress is the most exciting and touristic place in my hometown of Khujand. Throughout the whole history of Khujand, the city's heart was its fortress. It is a symbol of the heroism of the citizens of Khujand.

Khujand fortress which is situated in the center of the city, had saved thousands of lives during the wars between VIII-XV centuries. It was the shield for the citizens from conquerors. Khujand fortress was considered one of the most unconquerable fortresses in Central Asia till the period from 1219 to 1220 when it fell under the onslaught of the Genghis Khan's army. The fortress was conquered by Genghis Khan with 25,000,000 soldiers, excluding 50,000 captives, intended for work. Timurmalik, the hero of Tajikistan, who led the defense of the fortress, could not offer resistance to the Mongol fleets and the city was surrendered. The fortress was completely destroyed, and the siege of Khujand has become one of the biggest events in the history of Tajikistan.

However, today, the Khujand fortress still keeps its unique historical appearance as

well as a territory of archaeological places of the first wall foundation. This place is representative of the endurance and boldness of the Tajik nation. Nowadays, most of the part of Khujand fortress has been reconstructed to the Museum of Local History, Archeology and Fortification. This museum has collected household items, pottery that implements found at the fortress territory. All in all, the museum consists of 1200 exhibits, including paintings, books, ancient tools, that show the history of the city. Moreover, Khujand fortress is surrounded by a beautiful and delightful park named Kamoli Khujandi. It makes the view to the fortress even more mysterious and attractive. Khujand fortress became one of the most touristic destinations in recent years, thousands of visitors from all over the world come to see and feel the history of the city. The place brings you back to the events and battles in VIII-XV century, and lets you feel the spirit of my hometown- Khujand.

Sarfarozi Yunusov



photos from: advantour.com

About Garm Chashma

One of the most interesting places in my hometown of Khorog is the hot mineral spring Garm Chashma, which is located in the Ishkashim District of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, Tajikistan. The mineral water comes from deep under the ground in the shape of a fountain. This spring is very beneficial because it is traditionally considered to be a place where people can get rid of skin and gynecological diseases, as well as diseases of the musculoskeletal system, respiratory system, and cardiovascular system. Procedures usually include taking 20 to 25 baths, each lasting 15 minutes. However, people should not stay there too long because it becomes difficult for them to breathe. Coming out of the water and suddenly exposing your body to cold air already causes you to partially lose the feeling of calmness that the spring creates. Even so, you feel that your soul and body have become cleaner, that you breathe much more easily, and that the world has changed for the better while you were in the pool.

Entering the pool for the first time, gives you the feeling that your body is being dissolved, leaving only a sensation of warmth. Your thoughts slow down, and the world around you goes beyond reality. And in terms of the uniqueness and healing properties of the water of the sources of Garm Chashma, no one should forget how beautiful a place it is. Located at an altitude of 2,770 m and surrounded by the magnificent Pamir Mountains, the springs are in the form of natural baths lined with amazing stalactites of white color in various shapes and sizes, making it seem as though you are plunging into a small glacial lake. The clear mountain air itself has a significant healing effect, and the mild climate and amazing landscapes help to relieve all the accumulated stresses and make up for any negative emotions. In addition to the hot springs, there are also cold mineral springs with carbonated drinking water (narzan) which is used as medicinal water. For more than a thousand years people have believed the water flowing from the rocks on the slope of Shokhdara Ridge to be holy, and even now pilgrims who continue to visit this spring consider the water of this spring holy, no matter what causes its healing effect.

Traditions and custom

In Tajikistan we have many different types of traditional clothing, varying from north to south and from west to east. Tajikistan has more than 40 different traditions and cultures, each with different clothing and customs. I want to give you more information about the part that I was born and grown in, Badakhshan (also known as the Pamirs), which is in the eastern part of Tajikistan. Our traditions and clothing go way back to the 10th century. Our ancestors have preserved and kept them through many wars and difficulties, so today it is our responsibility, the responsibility of the young generation, to make sure we do not lose our traditional clothes and preserve them for our new generation. Because this keeps culture and traditions alive. On special part of our traditional clothing is the toqi. We often wear and use it daily. When a newborn baby turns 40 days old or in other words 40 days after the birth we put a toqi near him, so that all the good deeds will be with him. When we celebrate Eid we wear toqi, when we go to prayers we wear toqi, when we have a wedding we wear toqi, and when we go to funerals we have to wear toqi. Therefore, we are very closely connected with this hat all through our life.



There is a reason why we value it so much. The shape of the toqi is round, and it has a certain depth. At the bottom there a beautiful pattern, which we call sherozi, which has symbols from Zoroastrianism. Also there is one small piece fabric which we call pulkak. If I am wearing my toqi and the pulkak is on the right side, it means I am married, but if it is on the left side it means I am single. We call the toqi the “measure of conscience” because when you have a guest in your house and they are about to leave, you have to give them something in a toqi.

It is very important to know where we come from and what our traditions are. We should preserve our culture and traditions because they will define our identity in this big, diverse world.

Hadisa Giyoeva

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