

The UNESCO Map of the Pamirs and its implications of ecotourism in Tajikistan

THE PAMIR-ARCHIVE
THE HISTORY OF EXPLORATION
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Introduction

Tajikistan is a land of majestic peaks, glaciers, and high mountain deserts. The country, rich in cultural heritages and in diversified landscapes, is still waiting to be discovered. Tourism is poorly developed and thus, many mysteries remain to be uncovered by those willing to venture into the country.

The Pamirs, a mountain range covering the Eastern part of Tajikistan - administratively known as 'Gorno Badakhshan' since Soviet times – are particularly remote and have had a special status due to their geographic location.

This spectacular mountain region of Central Asia has been inaccessible for visitors from abroad for many years. Nowadays, it attracts a growing number of foreign tourists for its unique cultures and natural beauty. The herein presented map of the Pamirs is an essential tool to initiate ecotourism in this high mountain area.

The beginning of tourism in the Pamirs

Mass tourism began early in former Soviet Union. In 1929, there were already 250000 soviet tourists traveling to different areas of the USSR. The "Allunion Society of Proletarian Tourists" (VOPT) was increasing its number of members year by year.¹

If we don't count the numerous scientific travelers as "tourists", which traveled through the Pamirs since the occupation of the Russian at the end of the 19th century, the first signs of tourism were found in the 1920ies. It was a group of 8 tourists (**Fig. 1**) of the Tourist Club of Moscow who entered into the heart of the Pamirs in 1928 together with the Soviet-German Alai-Pamir Expedition. The head of the german part of the expedition, W.R. Rickmers, acted as guide and showed them the beauty of the wild glaciers.² A journey to the longest alpine glacier of the world, the Fedchenko glacier, was already available to book at the VOPT for 115 Ruble³, a fourth of an average annual salary at that time!⁴

Very little is known about further tourist activities in the Pamirs during the Sovjet time. The border to Afghanistan and China made the area to a political hot-spot, closed for any foreign visitors. In the late 60ies, foreign mountaineering expeditions to Peak Communism and Peak Lenin brought back tourism. Even some mountaineers from the German Democratic Republic got access to the Pamirs.⁵

They used simple orographical sketch maps in scale 1:100'000, copied once from the secret « Russian General Staff Maps » series (**Fig. 2**). All these maps were made for mountaineers, without any touristic indices. Although, there existed some booklets containing information about touristic sights and simple maps (**Fig. 3**).⁶

Tourism in independent Tajikistan

¹ Na vtoroj turistitskoj konferentsii, *Vsemirnyi Turist*, 1929, No 5, p. 158

² Die Alai-(Pamir-) Expedition 1928, *Deutsche Forschung*, 1929, Heft 10, p. 44

³ Ekskursii po SSSR letom 1929g., *Vsemirnyi Turist*, 1929, No 4, p. 124

⁴ Tony Cliff, Staatskapitalismus in Russland, Sozialistische Arbeitergruppe, Frankfurt/M. 1975

http://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/cliff/1955/staatskap/tc_sk01-d.htm#s16

⁵ See for example: Krause, Jensen, Rump, *PAMIR-zwei Handbreit unterm Himmel*, Sportverlag Berlin, 1977

⁶ F.G. Patrunov, *Po Tadzjikistanu*, Profizdat, Moscow, 1987

In 1988 a Swiss trekking company was allowed to bring foreign trekkers to Tajikistan. This first sprout of Tourism ended in 1990/91 with the breakdown of the USSR. A brutal and terrible Civil War in Tajikistan followed, which lasted from 1992 to 1997.

The Civil War brought Gorno Badakhshan, the Tajik Pamirs, close to a famine. The international community started a development program by the initiative of Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Pamiris.

During this instable time, tourism was ceased in Gorno Badakhshan. Fortunately, the situation enhanced in 2002 because of the changes in Afghanistan and progress in the living situation in the Pamirs. Hence, the UNESCO decided to include the Murghab area of the Eastern Pamirs, the most poorest and isolated area of the Pamirs, in their Project "Cultural and Eco-tourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central Asia and in the Himalaya".⁷

In the Tadjik Pamirs, UNESCO is cooperating with the NGO ACTED, *L'Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement*. Their activities include training programs for local tour guides, production of high-quality craft items, promotions for home-stays and bed-and-breakfast accommodations, fully involving local communities in these income-generating activities. Recommendations on best practices, Web resources and a database on community profiles, including maps, research data, and regional attractions and resources, are included within the project.

The aim is to promote these unspoilt regions of the world to attract foreign tourists and researchers, while helping local communities to benefit fully from the economic opportunities that their environments can bring.

The Map of the Pamirs

End of 2002, ACTED was asking me, if I would like to give my overview map of the Pamirs in scale 1:500'000 for their project (**Fig. 4**). I was working since many years in the Pamirs and was building up a huge database for this area, and realized already other maps of this area (Pik Lenin 1:100'000 and Uzoï Dam 1:110'000)⁸.

This map brought for the first time detailed, accurate and updated information about this region (**Fig. 5-7**). This was only possible with the help of (1) the local staff of NGO's, who updated information about areas, which I was not able to visit during my expeditions from 1991 to 2003, (2) the professional help of the ICC in Barcelona (3) and the University of Berne, which created the digital hill-shading giving the map the artistic 3D impression of this high mountain area (**Fig. 8**). Latest satellite images were used to update river systems, intermittent lakes or glaciers. The symbols as well as the legend of the map were made under the view of the most important features necessary to travel through the still unknown area and to guide the travelers to the most interesting sites (**Fig. 9**). But it was taken into consideration not to show the most sensitive archaeological sites on the map and so the Cave of Shakhty, located in a altitude of 4100m with paintings from the Stone Age, were not shown in the map.

The map was printed in 6 colours (CMYK + 2 Pantone® colours). Pantone® Gray was used for the hill shading and a Pantone® Brown for the contour lines.

The backside of the map gives many geographical and historical background information about the area, information about the Flora and Fauna, sightseeing tips, and two simple city maps of the major cities of Gorno Badakhshan (Murghab and Khorog) (**Fig. 10**).

The map with its comprehensive information is like a little travel guide.

The selling of the map (**Fig. 11**) started well. With more advertisement it should be possible to promote the area to a wider public.

The backside was printed in 4 colours (CMYK).

A first sign of growing tourism is the fact that the Murghab Ecotourism Association (META) reported 237 customers until the end of September 2004, comparing to 45 in 2002!⁹

⁷ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism>

⁸ See: M. Hauser, Aufbau einer Pamir-Datenbank, *High Mountain Cartography 2000*, Kartographische Bausteine, Band 18, Dresden 2000, p. 39-51; M. Hauser, Zum Stand der kartographischen Erfassung der Pamirregion, *Bielefelder Ökologische Beiträge (BÖB)*, Band 18, Bielefeld 2003, p. 47-48

⁹ Pamir High Mountains Integrated Project *Bulletin* 21. 9\04. Murghab 2004

Conclusions

This map represents a key to the discovery of the mythical region of the Tadjik Pamirs. It'll help to trace your way along the historical paths of the high Silk Road, the deep cut valleys of the west and the vast plains of the high plateau of the Eastern part of the region. It'll equip you with relevant travel information for a unique experience of breathtaking landscapes and of diverse cultures united by the celebration of hospitality.

Khush omadid! Welcome in the Pamirs!

Title: The Pamirs

A tourist map of Gorno-Badakhshan-Tajikistan and background information on the region

Scale: 1:500'000

Format: 963x660 mm (folded 107x165 mm) double-sided

ISBN: 3-906593-35-5

Cartography: Markus Hauser (<mailto:pamirmountains@yahoo.com>)

Publisher: ACTED (www.acted.org) and UNESCO (www.unesco.org)

Distribution: Gecko Maps (www.geckomaps.com)

FIGURES 1-10



Fig. 1. Member of the Moscow Tourist Club in his "Alpine Costume". (From *Vsemirnyi Turist*, 1929, No 2)

Fig. 3. Russian "Tourist Map" of 1986 (F.G. Patruncov, *Po Tadzhikistanu*, Profizdat, Moscow, 1987)



Fig. 4. Location map "The Pamirs" (The Pamir Archive + CDE Bern, 2003)

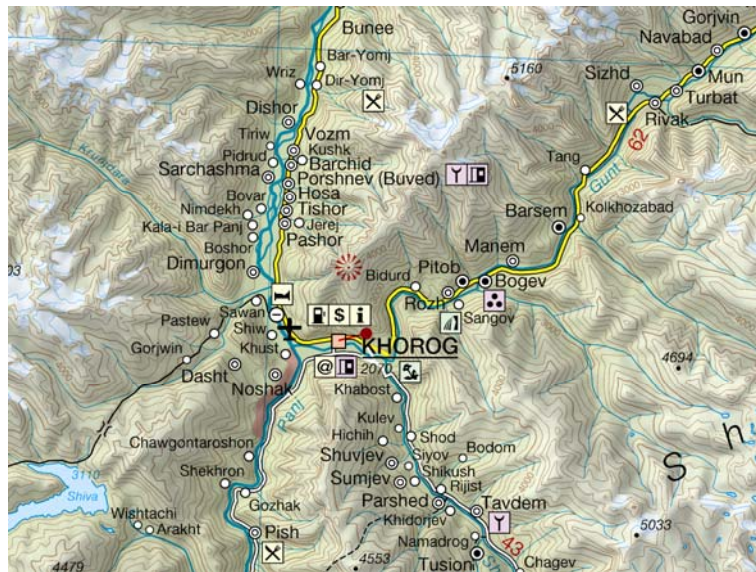


Fig. 5. Khorog, the center of Gorno-Badakhshan, Scale 1:100'000 (Extract from *The Pamirs*, UNESCO 2004)

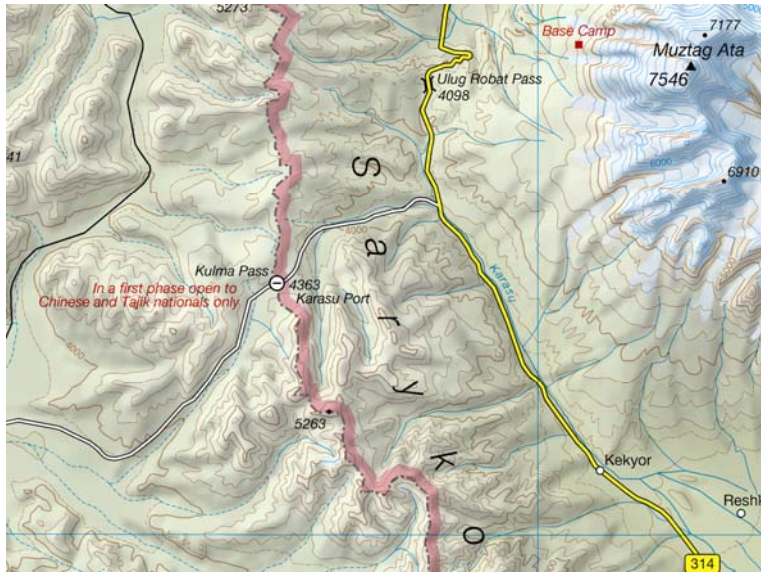


Fig. 6. Karakorum-Highway with new border crossing between China and Tajikistan , Scale 1:100'000 (Extract from *The Pamirs*, UNESCO 2004)



Fig. 7. The Uzoi Dam, formed after a strong earthquake on the 11th of February 1911 (Photo: Markus Hauser, 1995; Map: Extract from *The Pamirs*, UNESCO 2004)

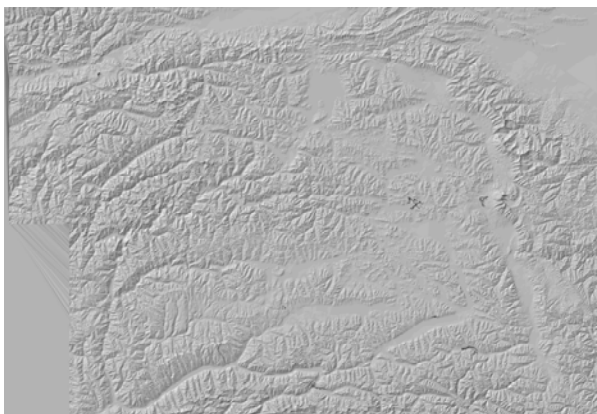


Fig. 8. Source relief (left) and relief used for the print after manual editing in Photoshop (right).

Legend

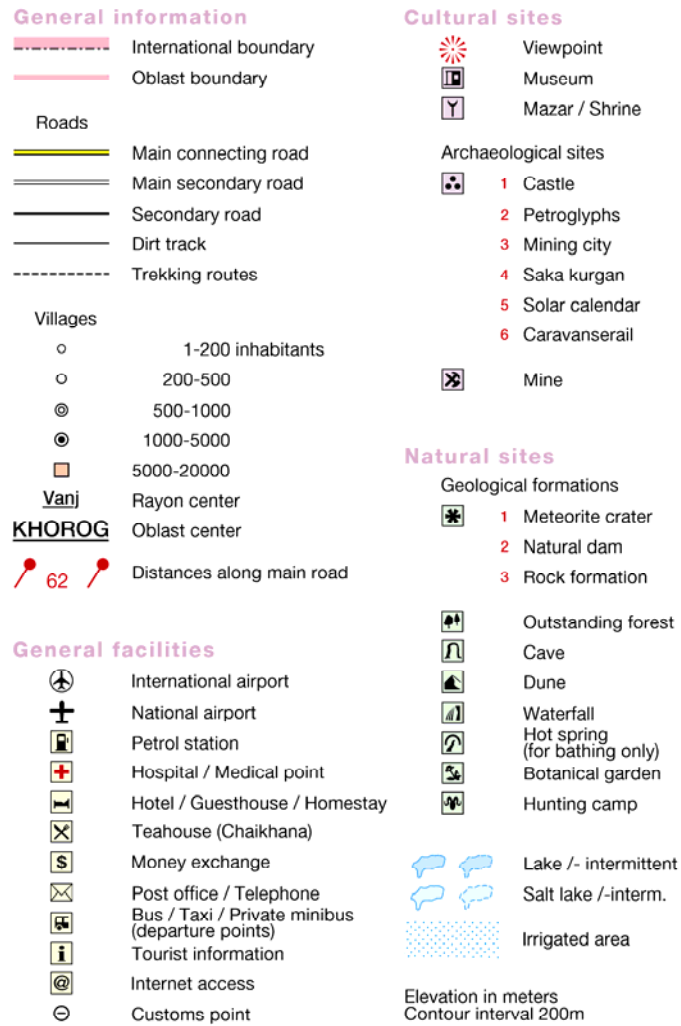


Fig. 9. Legend (From *The Pamirs*, UNESCO 2004)

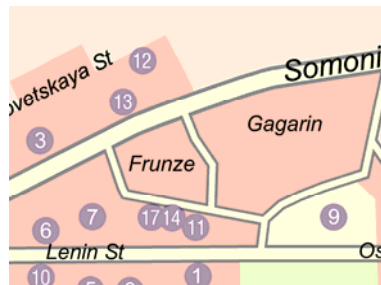


Fig. 10. The city of Murghab, administrative center of the Eastern Pamirs Scale 1:15'000 (Extract from *The Pamirs*, UNESCO 2004)

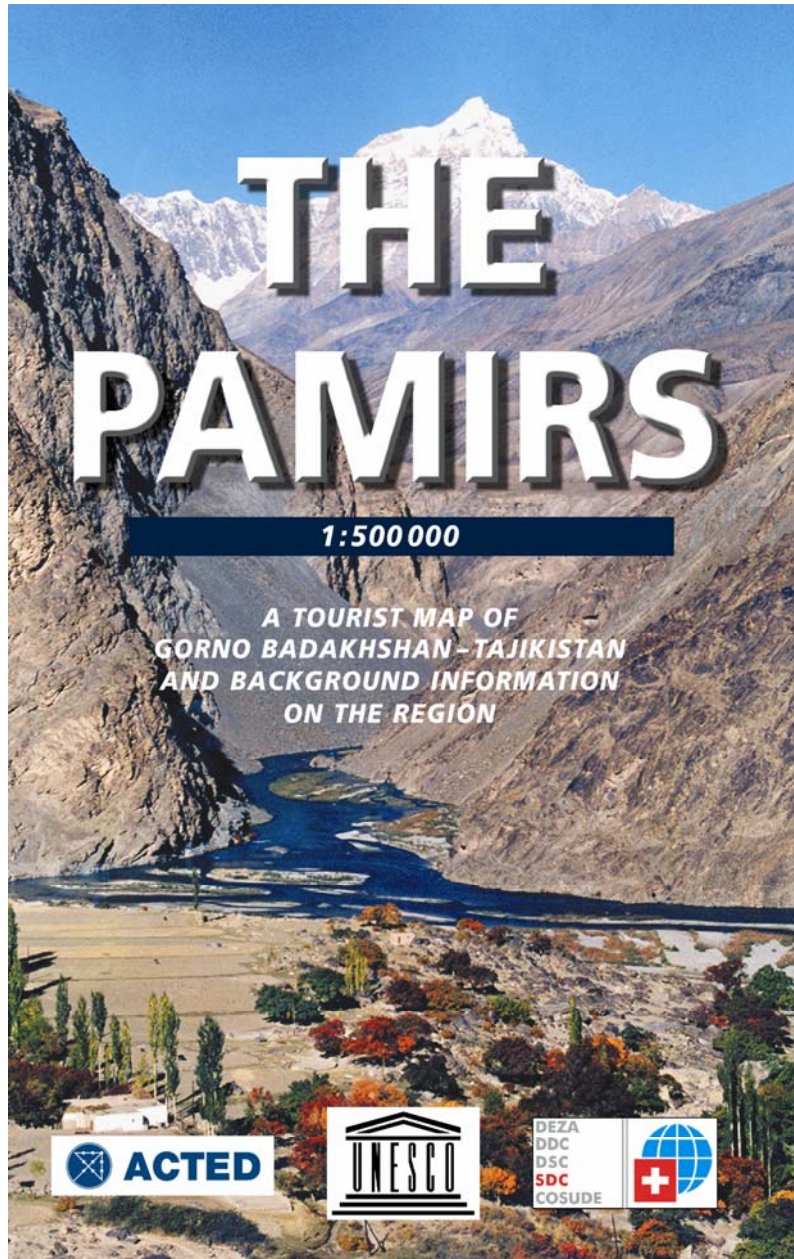


Fig. 11. *The Pamirs*, UNESCO 2004