

# Tajikistan

## Country information

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A former Soviet republic, Tajikistan plunged into civil war almost as soon as it became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991.

A rugged, mountainous country, with lush valleys to the south and north, it now faces the challenge of strengthening peace and reviving its ruined economy.

### AT A GLANCE

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**Area:** 143,100 sq km (55,251 sq miles)

**Population:** 6.7 million (UN, 2007)

**Capital City:** Dushanbe (population: 0.7 million)

**People:** Tajiks 80%, Uzbeks 15%, Russians 1% and Others 4%.

**Languages:** Tajik and Russian

**Religion(s):** Sunni Muslim 85%, Ismaili Shiites 5%, some Russian Orthodox Christians and Jews.

**Life expectancy:** 64 years (men), 69 years (women) (UN 2007)

**Main exports:** Aluminium, electricity, cotton, fruit, textiles

**GNI per capita:** US \$330 (World Bank, 2006)

**Currency:** Somoni

**Exchange rate to 1 USD:** 3.43 (26 June 2008)

**Exchange rate to 1 Euro:** 5.39 (26 June 2008)

**Weather:** +33 +38°C (26 June 2008)

**Time zone:** UTC +5

**Internet domain:** .tj

**International dialling code:** +992

**Government:** Republic

**Head of State:** President Emomali Rahmon (PDP)

**Registered political parties:** People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Islamic Revival Party, Communist Party, Democratic Party, Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party, Agrarian Party, Party of Economic Reforms.

**Membership of international organisations:** OSCE, UN, NATO Partnership for Peace, IMF, World Bank, ADB, IBRD, IDB and EBRD.

**Membership of regional organisations:** CIS Customs Union, CSTO, Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, EAEC.

### ECONOMY

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## Basic Economic Facts

**GDP:** US\$3.7bn (2007)

**Annual GDP Growth:** 7% (2007)

**Inflation:** 20% (2007)

**Major Industries:** Nonferrous metallurgy, mining, hydro-power, textiles, cotton, fruit.

**Major trading partners:** Russia, China, Turkey, EU, Iran

**Foreign direct investment:** US\$ 70 mn (2007 projection)

**Debt:** US\$ 1.175 mn (2007 projection)

Tajikistan has one of the lowest per capita GDPs among the 15 former Soviet republics. Only 7% of the land area is arable. Cotton is the most important crop, but this sector is burdened with debt and an obsolete infrastructure. Mineral resources include silver, gold, uranium, and tungsten. Industry consists only of a large aluminium plant, hydropower facilities, and small obsolete factories mostly in light industry and food processing. The civil war (1992-97) severely damaged the already weak economic infrastructure and caused a sharp decline in industrial and agricultural production. While Tajikistan has experienced steady economic growth since 1997, nearly two-thirds of the population continues to live in abject poverty. Economic growth reached 10.6% in 2004, but dropped to 8% in 2005, 7% in 2006, and 7.8% in 2007. Tajikistan's economic situation remains fragile due to uneven implementation of structural reforms, corruption, weak governance, widespread unemployment, seasonal power shortages, and the external debt burden. Continued privatization of medium and large state-owned enterprises could increase productivity. A debt restructuring agreement was reached with Russia in December 2002 including a \$250 million write-off of Tajikistan's \$300 million debt. Tajikistan ranks third in the world in terms of water resources per head, but suffers winter power shortages due to poor management of water levels in rivers and reservoirs. Completion of the Sangtuda I hydropower dam - built with Russian investment - and the Sangtuda II and Rogun dams will add substantially to electricity output. If finished according to Tajik plans, Rogun will be the world's tallest dam. Tajikistan has also received substantial infrastructure development loans from the Chinese government to improve roads and an electricity transmission network. To help increase north-south trade, the US funded a \$36 million bridge which opened in August 2007 and links Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

## HISTORY

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### Recent History

Tajikistan gained independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991. Conflict was avoided in the immediate struggle for power, but tensions quickly escalated, and by the end of 1992, civil war had broken out.

The civil war in 1992-1997 between the government of President Rahmon and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) left around 50,000 dead, over 10% of the population (of then approximately 5.7m) displaced and caused \$7 billion in damages. UN-mediated talks led to a cease-fire in October 1994, and on 27 June 1997 both sides signed the General Agreement on Peace and National Accord in Moscow. The accord created a National Commission for Reconciliation (CNR) to bring together government and UTO figures. As a result, the Islamic Revival Party received a number of ministerial positions. A Russian-led and dominated peacekeeping force was stationed inside Tajikistan.

A United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT - established by UNSCR 968 of 16 December 1994) assisted with implementing the cease-fire agreement. Its mandate expired in May 2000. A United Nations Peace-building Support Office (UNTOP) which succeeded it finally closed in July 2007, a decade after the signing of the peace agreement.

The implementation of the peace accord was, for a time, threatened by warlords fighting to keep control of parts of the country. In November 1998 troops loyal to the renegade commander, Mahmud Khudoberdiyev (an ethnic Uzbek), mounted an armed incursion into northern Tajikistan. They were repelled after some fighting, but this was a worrying sign of the disenfranchisement felt by the northerners (principally Uzbeks). In 1999 and 2000, armed Islamic rebels opposed to the Government of Uzbekistan used Tajikistan to mount armed incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. There were several political murders in 2001, but since 2002 levels of violence have decreased substantially. Despite the fact that the IRP and other UTO forces retain very few positions in government, the political and security situation is now stable.

### **Longer Historical Perspective**

Much, if not all, of what is today Tajikistan was part of ancient Persia's Achaemenid Empire (sixth to fourth centuries BC), which was subdued by Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC. The northern part of what is now Tajikistan was part of Soghdiana, a distinct region that intermittently existed as a combination of separate oasis states and sometimes was subject to other states. As intermediaries on the Silk Route between China and markets to the west and south, the Soghdians imported religions such as Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Manichaeism.

Islamic Arabs began the conquest of the region in earnest in the early eighth century. Conversion to Islam occurred by means of incentives, gradual acceptance, and force of arms. Islam spread most rapidly in cities and along the main river valleys. By the ninth century, it was the prevalent religion in the entire region.

In the development of a modern Tajik national identity, the most important state in Central Asia after the Islamic conquest was the Persian-speaking Samanid principality (875-999), which came to rule most of what is now Tajikistan, as well as territory to the south and west. During their reign, the Samanids supported the revival of the written Persian language.

Beginning in the ninth century, Turkish penetration of the Persian cultural sphere increased in Central Asia. The influx of even greater numbers of Turkic peoples began in the eleventh century. The Turkic peoples who moved into southern Central Asia, including what later became Tajikistan, were influenced to varying degrees by Persian culture. During subsequent centuries, the lands that eventually became Tajikistan were part of Turkic or Mongol states. The Persian language remained in use in government, scholarship, and literature. Among the dynasties that ruled all or part of the future Tajikistan between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries were the Seljuk Turks and the Mongols. In the early sixteenth century, Uzbeks conquered Tajikistan but the Uzbek state began to break apart soon after the conquest. By the early nineteenth century, the lands of the future Tajikistan were divided among three states: the Uzbek-ruled Bukhara Khanate, the Kokand Khanate, centred on the Fergana Valley, and the kingdom of Afghanistan. These three principalities subsequently fought each other for control of key areas of the new territory.

Tajikistan was created in 1924 as an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) within the Uzbekistan SSR. The new autonomous republic included what had been eastern Bukhara and

had a population of about 740,000, out of a total population of nearly 5 million in Uzbekistan as a whole. Its capital was established in Dushanbe, a mere village of 3,000 in 1920. In 1929 Tajikistan was detached from Uzbekistan and given full status as a Soviet socialist republic. The territory that is now northern Tajikistan (Soghd) was added to the new republic. In many respects, Tajikistan was one of the least developed of the Soviet Republics, and has suffered particularly severely from the collapse of the previously unified Soviet economy.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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Tajikistan is land-locked and is the smallest country in Central Asia by area. Tajikistan is bordered by Uzbekistan to the West, Afghanistan to the South, China to the East and Kyrgyzstan to the North. The country is largely (93%) mountainous, with around half its territory lying above 3,000 metres. The highest peak in the former Soviet Union, Peak Somoni (formerly Peak Communism – 7,500 metres) is found in the Tajik Pamir mountains. The climate is extreme continental with hot dry summers in the plains, where temperatures can exceed 40 degrees, while winter temperatures on the Pamir plateau can drop to –40. Tajikistan has an abundant supply of water with the main rivers being the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya (also known as the Pyanj). About 1 % of the country's area is covered by lakes. The bulk of the population lives in the flatter, agricultural areas – the Ferghana Valley to the North, the Gissar and Vakhsh Valleys closer to the capital, and the Khatlon region to the South.

## **POLITICS**

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Almost immediately after independence, Tajikistan was plunged into a civil war that saw various factions, allegedly backed by Russia and Iran, fighting one another. All but 25,000 of the more than 400,000 ethnic Russians, who were mostly employed in industry, fled to Russia. By 1997, the war had cooled down, and a central government began to take form, with peaceful elections in 1999. Presidential elections in November 2006 resulted in a landslide victory of 79% for the incumbent, President Rahmon, who has effectively been in power since 1992. As a result of a constitutional referendum in 2003, Rahmon could run for a further term of office, potentially allowing him to remain President until 2020. The last Parliamentary elections, which were held in February 2005, resulted in an overwhelming majority for the President's party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP). International observers concluded that neither Presidential nor Parliamentary elections had been fully in accordance with international standards. While a façade of democracy is in place, in practice power is concentrated in the hands of the President. Nevertheless, President Rahmon retains genuine popularity as the man seen as being responsible for bringing peace to the country and managing to retain its stability.

Tajikistan to this date is one of the few countries in Central Asia to have included an active opposition in its government. In the Parliament, opposition groups have often clashed with the ruling party, but this has not led to great instability.

On October 11, 2007, the Assembly of the Council Commission of the Ministry of Culture issued a decision to ban Jehovah's Witnesses in the Republic of Tajikistan. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses was legally recognized by many post-Soviet republics. Since that time, however, this is the first Soviet republic to ban the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. Recently Tajikistan also gave Iran its support in the membership bid to join the SCO, after a meeting with Tajik President and Iranian foreign minister.

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## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Tajikistan continues to regard Russia as its primary partner for both economic and security co-operation, although the relationship appears to be under some strain at present, largely due to the problems over Russian involvement in the Roghun hydro-power project. Under the terms of agreements signed in October 2004, Russia wrote off around \$250 million of bilateral debt in return for substantial investment in the Tajik hydro-electric and aluminium industries and continues to maintain its largest permanent overseas military base in Tajikistan.

Tajik-Uzbek relations are uncomfortable as the Uzbek Government regards Tajikistan (largely erroneously) as a haven for Islamic fundamentalists and consequently inhibits travel and economic co-operation between the two countries and regularly interrupts gas supplies to Tajikistan. Relations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are generally good, although there are resource-related cross-border tensions at local level in the Ferghana Valley and occasional minor armed incidents on the border, the last notable one being in May 2006.

Tajikistan supported the US-led coalition that overthrew the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and enjoys good relations with Karzai's government. Given the long shared border with Afghanistan, Tajikistan remains a strategically important country in the international community's fight against drug trafficking. Tajikistan shares a common linguistic and cultural heritage with Afghanistan (and Iran) and President Rahmon hopes to develop economic and trading links with Afghanistan, not least as a means of providing Tajikistan with a new southern export route with links to the sea at Karachi.

Tajikistan has deepened its economic and political links with both China and Iran in the last year. Both countries are providing large amounts of untied aid or soft loans for construction projects. Tajikistan is a keen member of the various regional groupings - Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Commonwealth of Independent States and Eurasian Economic Community. However President Rahmon aims to pursue a balanced foreign policy and also maintains good relations with the EU and US, both of whom are major donors to development and security programmes in Tajikistan. The EU has signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Tajikistan, although not all Member States have yet ratified the document. The German Presidency of the EU prioritised relations with Central Asia and drafted an EU Central Asia strategy.

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## MEDIA

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Broadcasting is dominated by state-run radio and TV. More than 30 local and regional private TV stations are on the air, most of them entertainment-based. There are more than 200 registered papers, some of them government-owned and others linked to political movements. A few private radio stations operate alongside state-run radio. Dushanbe's first private station opened in September 2002, after a four-year wait for its licence. Media rights organisations report that, although provided for in the constitution, press freedom is not widely respected in Tajikistan. Reporters Without Borders notes that independent journalists come under great pressure from the authorities, who also control printing plants and determine the editorial line of the state-owned media. A government minister estimated in 2007 that more than one million Tajiks had access to the internet.

### The press

- Minbar-i Khalq - published by People's Democratic Party
- Jumhuriyat - government-owned, published in Tajik three times a week
- Khalq Ovozi - government-owned, published in Uzbek three times a week
- Narodnaya Gazeta - government-owned, published in Russian three times a week
- Neru-i Sukhan - privately-owned, weekly
- Golos Tajikistana - Russian-language weekly, published by the Communist Party
- Tojikiston - privately-owned Tajik-language weekly
- Najot - weekly, published by Islamic Rebirth Party

#### Television

- Tajik TV - state-run, national
- Soghd TV - state-run regional station in north
- Khatlon TV - state-run regional station in south

#### Radio

- Tajik Radio - state-run, operates two national networks
- Radio Sado-i Dushanbe - state-run station in capital
- [Asia-Plus](#) - Dushanbe's first private station
- [Radio Vatan](#) - Dushanbe, private
- [Radio Tiroz](#) - Khujand, private

### HUMAN RIGHTS

Tajikistan is a signatory to most of the UN Conventions on human rights. In June 2004, the Tajik parliament adopted a moratorium on the death penalty and in March 2005 President Rahmon signed into law alternatives to the death penalty, ranging from 25 years to life imprisonment. Prison conditions are grim. Despite high-level lobbying, the ICRC have not been allowed ad-hoc prison access. The court system is largely unmodified from the Soviet era. There is no genuine independent judiciary and bribery of judges and prosecutors is thought to be widespread. Independent media outlets are legal in Tajikistan but penalties for libel and 'irresponsible' journalism encourage self-censorship. This, combined with rather low professional journalistic skills and a limited market for written media (newspapers are only published once a week) results in an underdeveloped media environment, although the analytical quality of articles is improving. Although in the first few years after the end of the civil war Tajikistan appeared to be becoming increasingly democratic, this movement now appears to be in reverse gear. Alarmed by colour revolutions in other CIS countries, the government started to restrict the freedom of NGOs to operate. A draft NGO law caused concern among the international community and lobbying has resulted in some positive amendments to the restrictions proposed on INGOs. However the national NGOs failed to take an equally united stance and will face a more restrictive environment. Civil society generally is still weak in Tajikistan, even in comparison to other Central Asian countries. Registered organisations, including trade unions and political parties must apply for a permit in order to organise any public assembly or demonstration. The constitution provides for freedom of religion, but under law, the Council of Ministers registers religious communities and monitors their activities. A controversial and restrictive draft Law on Religion is still under consideration. Recent government action has included the destruction of unregistered mosques and a ban on women wearing the hijab in educational establishments. According to the law, men and women have equal rights but in practice opportunities for women, particularly in rural areas,

have declined since the end of the Soviet Union. There is some attempt to keep female representatives in local and central government, but most rural girls have few options other than a poor and curtailed education and early marriage. Domestic violence is widespread but rarely acknowledged. People trafficking, especially of girls to the Middle East, is becoming an issue of concern. A further area of concern is the use of forced labour during the cotton harvest. Although officially in violation of Tajik law, many schools and universities are essentially closed for one to two months in the autumn and the pupils and students more or less forced to pick cotton for minimal wages.

## ORIENTATION GUIDE

### SAFETY AND SECURITY

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The international community in Tajikistan considers the security situation in the country stable. The situation has improved dramatically in recent years. Even as late as 1999, people would lock themselves in at night and the streets were deserted. Now the centre of Dushanbe is alive at night with people relaxing in restaurants and cafes. Armed men on the streets seem to be a thing of the past and a feeling of normality has returned. Tajikistan suffered greatly from the 1992-96 civil war, and it has taken some years to restore law and order. But the signs are encouraging that peace is here to stay. The risks to visitors are small, but of course you should minimise them by observing some basic precautions. Though local authorities report a small rise in violent crimes, the general population is not militant. Pick-pocketing and mugging may occur. Do not show signs of affluence or carry large sums of money. Exercise caution, particularly in tourist areas and commercial and public establishments (hotels, clubs, restaurants, bars, schools, places of worship, outdoor recreation events) frequented by foreigners. Travellers should exercise particular caution in crowded public places such as markets. Water and electricity supplies are unstable. Blackouts and brownouts regularly occur. Tourist facilities are very limited.

#### Terrorism

There is a general threat from terrorism in Tajikistan. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. Until 2001, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) used remote parts of Tajikistan as a base for armed incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. However, there have been no significant violent incidents of a political or terrorist nature targeting foreigners since 2001. On 14 November 2007 there was a small explosion at the Kohi Vahdat conference centre in Dushanbe, killing one person. This is still under investigation by the Tajik authorities. There were further small blasts in central Dushanbe on 19 January and 1 February. No-one was injured and there were no obvious targets.

#### Crime

Armed incidents continue between border forces and drug traffickers along the Afghan border. There have been occasional muggings and petty crime against foreigners but Dushanbe is a relatively safe city. Throughout the country there is little evidence of criminality directed against foreigners. In rural areas, however, single women should avoid going out alone at night, and may suffer harassment even during the day.

### MONEY

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#### Bringing Money to Tajikistan

Large denomination bills are most efficient to carry, but bring some smaller denominations for travel and personal exchange. Invest in a money belt that goes under your clothing. Travel with your money divided, so if some is stolen you don't lose it all.

### Travellers' Cheques and Credit Cards

Travellers' Cheques are not accepted in Tajikistan.

### Changing Money

The US Dollar (USD) and Euro (EUR) are accepted at most exchange points. Money can be safely changed at official change kiosks in city centres. The exchange rate is usually on display outside, but ask before changing anyway, as you will often be offered a slightly better rate if you do so. Have the exact amount you want to change ready, rather than peeling a few notes off the top of a tempting wad. Count the Somoni that you receive before leaving the exchange kiosk. You may find it useful to carry a small calculator. Near the entrances to bazaars you will also meet touts and moneychangers. It is illegal to change money with them and also risky - some are swift-handed con artists who can cheat the unsuspecting traveller. Bazaars are also notorious for pickpockets, who often operate in gangs. Beware.

### Money withdrawals

It is possible to withdraw cash from ATMs in Dushanbe at the following locations:

- Dushanbe Airport (arrival hall)
- Hotel Tajikistan (24 hours): Shotemur ave. 22
- Hotel Avesto: Rudaki ave. 195/1.
- Central Department Store (Tsum): Rudaki ave. 83
- Internet Café (opposite Rohat Tea House): Rudaki Ave. 84
- Agroinvest Bank Head Office: Sherosi ave. 21

You can withdraw up to USD \$200 per day using Visa or Mastercard. Charges are 2.5% if withdrawing US dollars and 1.5% if withdrawing Tajik Somoni. [Agroinvestbank](#) will also allow cash withdrawals over the counter with a credit card. They accept **Visa, Mastercard, Maestro, Cirrus and STB Card**. There are branches of Agroinvestbank in Dushanbe, Khujand and Qurghon-Teppa.

A (very) few local businesses accept payment by credit card. You should not rely on being able to pay with plastic.

## HEALTHCARE

Standards of health care are low. As the domestic health service is plagued by shortages of medicines and drugs, travellers are advised to take antibiotics and any prescription medicines, contact lens solutions and a first-aid kit containing basic medicines and water treatment tablets. Although fees for health services are low, health insurance is recommended.

### Vaccinations

	Special Precautions
Diphtheria	Yes
Hepatitis A	Yes
Malaria	Sometimes
Rabies	Sometimes
Tetanus	Yes

Typhoid	Yes
Yellow Fever	No

Inoculation regulations can change at short notice. Please take medical advice in the case of doubt. Where 'Sometimes' appears in the table above, precautions may be required, depending on the season and region visited.

### Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

There have been no reported cases of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) in Tajikistan during the current series of outbreaks. But the World Health Organisation (WHO) has confirmed cases elsewhere in the region.

### **Other Risks**

Vaccination sometimes required for tick-borne encephalitis.

### **Food and water precautions**

- Don't drink the water, even if local people say it is drinkable. Tap water should be boiled or filtered before consumption. Alternatively, stick to boiled water or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles.
- Avoid ice cubes.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food, or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself.
- Don't eat or drink dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurised.
- If you should succumb to the dreaded Travellers' Diarrhoea, make sure you stay well hydrated. For bouts lasting more than 24 hours or so take Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS).

#### **Emergency phone no.s**

Fire	01
Police	02
Ambulance	03

### **Treatment in other local hospitals or clinics**

The quality of treatment in local hospitals or clinics is variable. If you need urgent treatment and a local institution is the only option, at least be aware of the following:

- Injections introduce a risk of contracting Hepatitis B or HIV/AIDS.
- Injecting vitamins is a common practice in Tajikistan. However, there is almost no circumstance when an injection of vitamins is preferred over taking them orally. (Exception: Pernicious Anaemia).
- It is also common to inject antibiotics. However, oral antibiotics are just as effective in almost every situation. (Exceptions: when a child is vomiting or for Meningitis).
- If you do need to have an injection, make sure you use your own needles.

Most common medicines can be purchased in Dushanbe, but for travel outside the capital it is best to bring a supply of [basic medication](#). Pack all medication in your hand luggage, along with a copy of any prescriptions and a doctor's letter.

Pharmacy 1	Somoni ave. 6	24-03-90
Pharmacy 2	Ayni str. 29/9	27-04-72
		23-29-27
		21-50-76

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Internet Access Providers

Internet access has been steadily rolling out across Tajikistan since 1999, when the first Internet Service Provider opened in Dushanbe. Today there are four companies providing access to the Internet:

- [Babilon-T](#)
- [Eastera](#)
- [Intercom](#)
- [Telecomm Technology](#)

### Connecting to the Internet

There are several internet cafés on Rudaki Street, Dushanbe's main drag. Speeds were OK. Some will allow you to plug in your own computer. Cost is around \$1 per hour.

### Dial-up Internet Access

If you are bringing your own computer with you to Tajikistan, you may wish to connect to the Internet over a phone line. Tajikistan's phone plugs are the [Russian type](#), although [RJ-11 type](#) connectors are becoming increasingly common. Make sure you have the right adaptors with you. The simplest way to get online is to buy an Internet Access Card from one of the ISPs above. These give access telephone numbers and a username/password that you can use to connect. Some ISPs sell access cards for a particular length of connect time (e.g. five hours), and calls are charged at a flat rate per minute. Others sell cards with a fixed amount of calling credit (e.g. USD \$10), and call costs vary according to the time of day. The best solution for you will depend on how much you plan to connect to the Internet and at what times of day.

### Internet Cafés in Dushanbe:

Internet cafe	Contacts
Plazma	84, Rudaki ave., Tel: 27-15-15
Golden place	75, Somoni str.
Nirvana	115, Titova str.
Jinn (in the Guldasta restaurant)	76, Somoni str., Tel.: 36-45-46
Karra	128, Rudaki ave, Tel: 24-53-41
Poligon	61. Sobirova str.
Imperator	92 Karabayeva str. , Next to "Garant "

### Telephone Exchanges

In Dushanbe, all telephone exchanges were upgraded to digital in November 2003. Most of the rest of the country's telephones are still on the old analogue system. If you are on a digital exchange, you will be able to tone-dial. Dialling through an analogue exchange uses pulse dialling and may require considerable persistence to connect outgoing calls. Analogue lines are also prone to crossed lines or other line noise, which sometimes makes them unusable for dial-up Internet.

### Telephone

Country code: 992 (followed by 372 for Dushanbe). International telephone calls can be made from telephone offices which are usually found attached to a post office (in Dushanbe, on Rudaki ave.). There are now also some new, private telephone offices in Dushanbe. International, operator-routed calls can also be ordered from some hotels. Direct-dial calls within the CIS are obtained by dialling 8 and waiting for another dial tone and then dialling the city code. Calls within the city limits are free of charge.

### Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is limited to urban areas.

There are currently five mobile phone networks in Tajikistan.

Company	Network Type	Network Code	Coverage
SomonCom	GSM 900	436 01	North Tajikistan, Khorog
Indigo	GSM 900	436 02	Dushanbe, Hissor, Tursonzoda
TT Mobile Lines of Tajikistan (MLT)	GSM 900 GSM 1800	436 03	Major cities in Tajikistan. Roaming agreements throughout CIS.
Babilon-M	GSM 900	436 04	Dushanbe, Khujand
Tajik Tel	GSM 900 D-AMPS	436 05	Dushanbe

Indigo and SomonCom are both owned by the Central Asian Telecommunications Development B.V., a holding company owned by MCT and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development. The two companies plan to merge, to become the largest mobile company in Tajikistan.

MLT/TT Mobile is a joint venture between North-West GSM (a Russian cellular operator) and Tajikistan's fixed-line operator Tajik Telecom. Their GSM exchange was supplied by Nokia and is one of the most advanced and reliable. MLT is the only company with SMS service and also the only company to offer roaming (within the C.I.S.) to its subscribers.

Babilon-M have digital equipment from ZTE (China), including advanced technology for noise suppression. Babilon-M are the only operator to use fibre-optic technology to connect to city telephone exchanges. Babilon-M have the cheapest tariffs, but coverage is the most limited (Dushanbe and Khujand only).

Tajik Tel was the first mobile operator in Tajikistan, with its D-AMPS (analogue) network. High prices led to low take-up of services, and a late adoption of GSM has meant that the company now lags behind its competitors.

### **Roaming**

Most major providers do have an agreement with one of the Tajik companies, usually SomonCom, Indigo or MLT. Depending on how long you are staying for and how much you use your phone, it may be cheaper to buy a Tajik SIM card rather than use international roaming, which is often very expensive. The only Tajik provider to offer roaming to their own customers is MLT, who have roaming agreements in Russia and throughout the C.I.S.

### **Local Calls**

Local calls can be direct dialled from any phone. If you wish to make a call from a city centre, many shops have a public telephone. The charge is usually around USD \$0.10 for a three-minute call, paid to the shop owner.

### **Long-distance Calls**

If long-distance direct dialling has been activated for your phone, dial 8 to get an inter-city line, wait for a dial tone, then dial the area code + number.

If direct dialling has not been activated, you can still make international calls by buying a pre-payment coupon or talon. Telephone coupons can be purchased from any Tajik Tel office. In Dushanbe this is beside the central Post Office on Rudaki, close to the Somoni monument. Coupons are valid for use during the current calendar month, and can be refunded if unused, provided you present them for refund within a few days of expiry.

To use a pre-payment coupon, call the inter-city operator (213942). The operator will ask for the number of your talon, the number you are calling, the city, the name which is on the talon, and the number from which you are calling. You must then hang up and wait anywhere from 30 seconds to one hour if you are calling from Dushanbe, or perhaps longer if from outside Dushanbe.

### **International Calls**

The procedures for calling internationally are the same as that for long-distance calls. If long-distance direct dialling has been enabled, dial 8 and wait for the long-distance dial tone. Then dial 10 + country code + area code + number.

In addition to Tajik Tel (the state telephone provider), there are several private companies who offer international phone calls at cheaper rates. Calls can be made from public call booths in major cities. These companies also sell pre-paid phone cards which can be used to make international calls from any touch-tone phone:

### **[Intercom](#)**

### **[Telecomm Technology](#)**

### **Sending and Receiving Faxes**

Faxes can be sent from Intercom or Telecomm Technology phone offices located in major cities. Some hotels also offer this service at a surcharge.

### **Useful Numbers**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Tel. No.</b>
Fire Brigade	01
Police	02
Ambulance	03
Operator	07
Telephone information	09
Directory Enquiries (Dushanbe)	212940
Inter-city Operator (Dushanbe)	213942 210827