

## — Afghanistan Travel Guidelines —



RJ Travel specializes in authentic, culturally immersive travel experiences in Afghanistan — a land of breathtaking landscapes, rich heritage, and deep complexity. What makes our Afghanistan tours unique is not just the destination, but the way we operate: through a true partnership model with our Afghan team.

Unlike traditional tour setups where services are simply contracted, our presence in Afghanistan is rooted in co-ownership and friendship. The people organizing and guiding your journey are not just hired providers — they are part of RJ Travel itself. This trusted collaboration ensures unparalleled safety, continuity, and quality of service.

We work directly with dedicated partners across Afghanistan, ensuring every tour is not only safe and legal, but also deeply connected to the country's soul. From hotel choices and transportation to local guides and logistics, our team is involved at every level — on the ground, in person, and in partnership.

Afghanistan, often misunderstood, is also one of the most rewarding destinations for those who seek authentic adventure, ancient history, and meaningful human connection. Our tours are crafted to reflect the best of the country while respecting local customs, ensuring safe access, and honoring the evolving political context.

This guide provides all the essential information you need to prepare, travel, and enjoy your journey to Afghanistan — with full transparency, professionalism, and genuine care from the RJ Travel family.

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## ✔ WHAT'S INCLUDED & ✗ NOT INCLUDED

To help you prepare for your journey, here's a clear overview of what is generally included — and what is not — in your RJ Travel Afghanistan tour package. Please note that some services may vary depending on your chosen itinerary and region visited. Each tour proposal will clearly indicate what is specifically included in your package:

### ✔ INCLUDED

- Airport meet & greet with assistance through formalities
- Letter of Invitation (LOI) for Afghanistan — valued at \$100 USD
- Travel permits and foreign registration clearance with authorities
- All airport–hotel–airport transfers
- Accommodation in 3★ and 4★ hotels (twin/triple shared rooms with private bathrooms)
- Domestic flights between Kabul, Herat, and Kandahar (when included)
- Full-time services of an English-speaking Afghan guide
- Local guides in regional cities (Herat, Kandahar, etc.)
- Private transportation with professional driver
- Entrance fees to all archaeological sites and monuments
- Band-e Amir National Park excursion in 4WD (when included)
- Daily breakfasts + lunches with soft drinks in local restaurants
- Government taxes and Taliban travel permits

### ✗ NOT INCLUDED

- International flights to and from Afghanistan
- Mandatory travel insurance
- Afghanistan visa service in Dubai with passport pickup, application, express processing, and return (\$300 USD - \$400 USD).
- Dinners (approx. \$2–4 per meal)
- Tips for guides, drivers, and staff
- Souvenirs and personal expenses
- Any service not explicitly listed under the “Included” section

## DESTINATIONS CURRENTLY OPEN TO TOURISM IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is now fully accessible to travelers, with all provinces open under the current administration. Our itineraries explore both the well-known cultural capitals and the hidden gems of the country — from bustling markets and shrines to serene valleys and ancient Buddhist cities. RJ Travel operates its Afghanistan tours in strategic partnership with trusted local providers, ensuring authentic cultural immersion and reliable, on-the-ground logistics.

### **Kabul & Central Afghanistan – Historical, Political & Spiritual Heart**

- **Kabul City:** One of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Central Asia, Kabul blends Islamic architecture with layers of modern history. Visit sacred sites like **Sakhi Shrine**, the iconic **Shah Do Shamshira Mosque**, the 18th-century **Timur Shah Mausoleum**, and the **Gardens of Babur**, where the first Mughal emperor is buried. The chaotic **Bird Market** and the **National Museum** reveal Afghanistan's living traditions and deep cultural roots.
- **Shewaki Stupa & Mes Aynak:** Just outside Kabul, the **Shewaki Stupa** stands as a reminder of the region's Buddhist past, while **Mes Aynak** offers a unique contrast — a major archaeological site and former Buddhist city layered over vast copper reserves.
- **Panjshir Valley (via Parwan):** Known as a valley of lush greenery and mountain villages like **Rukha** and **Mahalah** reflect Afghanistan's scenic beauty and resilient spirit.

### **Ghazni – Imperial Crossroads of the Islamic Golden Age**

- **Ghazni:** Once the capital of the powerful Ghaznavid Empire, Ghazni played a key role in spreading Persian-Islamic culture across Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Discover the **Minarets of Ghazni**, **Ghazni Citadel**, and the outdoor **Military Museum**, all bearing witness to its medieval legacy and strategic importance.

### **Kandahar & the South – Cradle of Afghan Nationhood**

- **Kandahar City:** Regarded as the spiritual birthplace of modern Afghanistan, Kandahar was the capital of Ahmad Shah Durrani, the founder of the Afghan state. Visit his revered **mausoleum**, the **Red Mosque**, **Mirwais Hotak's shrine**, the **Chihil Zina viewpoint**, and explore the atmospheric **Old City Bazaar**.

### **Herat & the Western Regions – Persian Grandeur in Afghanistan**

- **Herat City:** A former Timurid capital and center of Persian art, Herat is one of the most beautiful cities in the Islamic world. Marvel at the **Herat Citadel**, the majestic **Friday Mosque** with its intricate tilework, and the **Malan Bridge**. Explore the **National Museum**, the tombs of **Khwaja Abdullah Ansari** and **Mirwais Sadiq Khan**, and enjoy the atmosphere of Herat's ancient bazaar.

### **Bamiyan & Band-e Amir – Buddhist Heritage & Mountain Majesty**

- **Bamiyan Valley:** Once a thriving Buddhist center on the Silk Road, Bamiyan is known for its dramatic **cliffside Buddha niches**. Explore the **Gholghola and Zuhak citadels**, **Kakrak Valley's** painted caves, and connect with locals through school visits, and a cave house tea.
- **Band-e Amir National Park:** Afghanistan's first national park is a natural wonder of deep blue lakes and travertine walls nestled in the highlands. A full-day 4WD adventure here offers stunning vistas and peaceful reflection.

### **Samangan – Buddhist Mysticism Beneath the Hills**

- **Takht-i Rustam:** Carved from solid rock, this domed Buddhist stupa sits atop a hill surrounded by cave sanctuaries and meditation cells. A hidden treasure on the route north, it offers a rare glimpse into Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past.

### **Mazar-e-Sharif & Balkh – Sacred Sites & Ancient Capitals**

- **Mazar-e-Sharif:** Centered around the stunning **Blue Mosque**, believed by some to house the remains of Ali ibn Abi Talib, this city is both a pilgrimage destination and a vibrant urban hub. Explore the **Baba Mazari Mausoleum** and colorful local bazaars.
- **Balkh:** Known as the "Mother of Cities," Balkh predates Islam and was once a great center of Buddhist learning. Visit the **No Gombad Mosque**, the oldest in Afghanistan, as well as **Khoja Parsa Mausoleum** and **Bala Hisar**, ancient fortifications that witnessed centuries of conquests and rebirth.

### **Kholm – Royal Gardens & Architectural Heritage**

- **Bagh-e Jahan Nama Palace:** Built during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, this peaceful estate is surrounded by cypress trees and offers a glimpse into 19th-century royal architecture. Located on the scenic route between Mazar and Kabul.

### **Jalalabad & Eastern Valleys – Subtropical Charm & History**

- **Jalalabad City:** Once the winter capital of the Mughals, Jalalabad is known for its warm climate and citrus orchards. Key sights include the **Mausoleum of King Amanullah Khan**, **Seraj-ul Emorat Gardens**, **Hada Museum**, and a lively bazaar.
- **Tang-e Gharu Gorge & Sorubi Valley:** Drive through tunnels and along riverside cliffs before reaching Jalalabad, offering a scenic and memorable overland adventure.

## LEGAL & SECURITY FRAMEWORK

Travel in Afghanistan is now possible with the proper permits, coordinated security, and strong local support. RJ Travel's Afghan operations team works in close collaboration with the **Government Tourism & Culture Department**, ensuring all routes are safe and updated in real time when needed. However, due to **government office closures every Friday**, no tourism-related paperwork — including essential travel permits — can be processed on that day.

## VISA PROCESS & GUARANTEED ISSUANCE IN DUBAI

At RJ Travel, we offer a **99% reliable visa service for Afghanistan** through our trusted local coordinator in **Dubai, United Arab Emirates**. This service has been carefully developed to ensure a fast, smooth, and stress-free experience — with **same-day turnaround** and full logistical support from start to finish.


### Who Can Apply?

We can obtain visas for citizens of: EU EU countries, US USA, GB UK, CA Canada, AU Australia, NZ New Zealand, JP Japan, KR South Korea, RU Russia, CN China, CH Switzerland and others. Basically, the whole world!

### What We Offer:


Our Dubai visa service includes:

- Passport collection from your hotel in Dubai
- Filling and submitting the visa application on your behalf
- Same-day express visa processing
- Returning your passport with the approved visa by 2:00 PM

 *Our team has never had a visa rejected through this method. As long as your passport is valid and your documents are in order, the visa is guaranteed.*


### Step-by-Step: How It Works

1. **Meet Our Coordinator:** At 08:00 AM, our Dubai-based colleague will meet you at your hotel (or airport) to collect your passport and visa fee (in new USD bills only — post-2009).
2. **Submission & Processing:** Your visa application is submitted to the Afghan consulate in Dubai the same morning.
3. **Same-Day Approval:** Your visa is processed and approved by approximately 2:00 PM.
4. **Passport Return:** Our colleague delivers your passport back to your hotel.
5. **Flight to Kabul:** You'll fly out that night (typically around 03:00 AM via Kam Air). We recommend arriving at the airport 3 hours before departure.

 **Please note:** While the visa process in Dubai is typically smooth and same-day, there have been **rare cases** (only twice out of hundreds of applications) where the Afghan consulate requested the passport to be returned later for additional verification. If this occurs, we kindly ask for your **flexibility** — our colleague will retrieve the passport again and return it to your hotel around **4:00–5:00 PM**. This is a rare situation but important to mention for full transparency.

### Visa Service Cost:

- **\$300 USD** for most nationalities (Indians pay \$250 USD)
- **\$400 USD** for U.S. passport holders.

 *The fee is paid in cash (USD), and includes all related processing and admin costs. The visa itself is not charged separately — it is part of this service.* This covers the **full visa assistance package**, including passport handling, application, coordination, express processing, and return.

### Important Notes:

- Visa processing is only possible **Monday to Friday** in Dubai.
- We cannot start tours on **Fridays or Saturdays**, as the **travel permit in Kabul is only issued after the visa is granted** — and Afghan offices are closed on Fridays.
- Please **plan your arrival in Dubai for a weekday**, with at least one night stay before your flight to Kabul.



## ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

We provide clean, secure 3★ and 4 hotels with private bathrooms. Rooms are twin or triple shared unless a single supplement is requested.

- **Single room supplement:** \$30 USD per night per room (subject to availability)
- Daily breakfast included
- Lunches at vetted local restaurants (included)
- Dinners are not included (\$2–4 per meal typical)

We also offer accommodation in **4-star and 5-star hotels** in most major cities. However, in **Bamiyan**, only a **superior 3-star hotel** is available.

If you prefer to stay alone, or if you're the **only participant on the tour**, or if **no one is available to share a room with you**, a **single room supplement** will apply.

✓ *Couples or friends traveling together will, of course, share the same room.*



## Accommodation Overview

**Kabul – Khyber Hotel:** A 3-star hotel offering air-conditioned rooms with modern amenities, including a flat-screen TV, minibar, and private bathroom. Guests appreciate its central location, friendly staff, and proximity to local attractions.

**Herat – Sadaf Hotel:** A 4-star hotel providing air-conditioned rooms with free Wi-Fi and private bathrooms. The property features a restaurant and offers room service. Its proximity to Herat International Airport makes it a convenient choice for travelers

**Kandahar – NFC Hotel:** A 3-star hotel offering organized accommodations with amenities like air conditioning, fridge, and western-style toilets. Guests have noted the availability of breakfast options and free bottled water.

**Bamiyan – Bamiyan Royal Hotel:** A superior 3-star hotel located near the historic Buddhas of Bamiyan, serving as an excellent base for exploring the region's ancient sites and natural beauty. Guests can enjoy stunning views of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

**Mazar-e-Sharif – Arsalan Guest House:** A 3-star guest house offering comfortable en-suite rooms with basic breakfast and free laundry services. Its location provides easy access to the city's main attractions.



## CONNECTIVITY & MONEY

- **Bring USD cash in \$50 or \$100 denominations, issued after 2009.** Torn, marked, or old bills will be refused by our staff, local banks and exchange offices.
- **ATMs in Afghanistan are unreliable** and may not accept international cards. Cash is essential.
- **SIM cards** (Roshan or MTN) can be purchased upon arrival at Kabul Airport.
- While **most hotels offer internet**, connections can be slow or intermittent — especially outside Kabul.
- In **Bamiyan**, electricity is occasionally cut off at night. If you need to charge your phone or camera overnight, it's strongly recommended to bring a **fully charged power bank** or portable charger.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURE – KABUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

- Proceed through immigration and receive an entry stamp.
- Register as a foreign visitor:
  - Fill out A4 form + small white card
  - Attach 2 passport-sized photos
  - Receive your registration card (carry it at all times)
- Exit airport, walk 400 meters to the left until you reach the white gate by the “I ❤️ Afghanistan” sign
- Your RJ Travel guide will be waiting with your name sign.




After receiving your immigration entry stamp, collecting your bags, getting your foreign registration card you can go out of the airport building. As you step outside, head towards the East (on your left) going around the building in your left, and continue walking for approximately 400 meters. Along the way, you will pass the domestic terminal and an “I Love Afghanistan” sign until you reach a white fenced gate on your right hand side. On the other side of the gate, you will notice a group of people eagerly waiting for friends and family members. Look for our guide, who will be holding up a welcoming sign with your name on it or a logo of RJ Travel. Finding him will be a straightforward and hassle-free process. Your designated guide will accompany you to your vehicle. Greet them with a friendly “hi” and shake hands if comfortable. Also, acknowledge your driver. Women should NOT shake hands with men.

## Domestic Flights & Regional Guiding System

For tours that include **Herat** and/or **Kandahar**, travel between cities is done via **domestic flights** (typically on Kam Air or Ariana Afghan Airlines). Here's how the process works:

-  In **Kabul**, your main guide will **escort you to the airport**, assist with check-in if needed, and ensure you are prepared to proceed through security.
-  You will **board the domestic flight independently** — it's a straightforward process, and we'll provide all required documents.  
 Upon arrival in **Herat** or **Kandahar**, a **dedicated local guide** — who is a native of that region and highly familiar with its history, culture, and logistics — will meet you at the airport holding a welcome sign.
-  All airport transfers (pick-up and drop-off) in these cities are **fully coordinated by our Kabul office**, which will also share an **emergency contact number** for immediate assistance at any time.

This operational setup allows us to:

-  Optimize costs (especially for solo travelers or small groups)
-  Provide **hyper-local knowledge** from guides who know the region intimately
-  Maintain the same high RJ Travel standards in every location

If you prefer to be **accompanied by the same guide throughout**, including during the domestic flights and airport process, this can be arranged **at an additional cost**.



## STEP-BY-STEP BOOKING PROCESS

To ensure a smooth and fully coordinated experience, please follow the steps below to confirm your tour:

### 1. Choose Your Itinerary & Confirm Availability

Contact our team by email to choose your preferred itinerary and travel dates. We will confirm availability of guides, domestic flights, and logistics for your selected tour.

### 2. Sign the Booking Agreement & Conditions

Carefully review and sign our official **Booking Conditions and Trip Agreement**:

 <https://www.rjtravelagency.com/booking-conditions/>

This is required to finalize your reservation.

### 3. Pay the Booking Deposit

Secure your spot by paying the **booking deposit** via our encrypted payment link. The exact deposit amount and link will be shared with you by email after confirmation.



### 4. Complete the Afghanistan Visa Application Form

Fill out the visa form with accurate passport details and travel information:

 <https://www.rjtravelagency.com/afghanistan-visa-application-form/>

### 5. Submit Required Travel Documents

After your visa is approved, send us the following:

-  Flight tickets (arrival and departure from Kabul)
-  Proof of travel insurance (*insurance must explicitly cover Afghanistan – Level 3/4 advisory countries*)

### 6. RJ Travel Finalizes All Logistics

Once we receive your documents, our team will coordinate:

- Airport meet & greet services
- Internal permits and registrations
- Domestic flights, transportation, and hotel arrangements
- Assigning your expert local guide


### 7. Receive Your Final Travel Documents


Approximately **one week before your departure**, you will receive your **Trip Voucher**, which includes:

- Emergency contacts
- Airport pickup details
- Summary of services included

### 8. Pay the Balance on Arrival

Upon arrival in Kabul, please deliver the **remaining tour balance in USD cash** to our local contact.

 Bring large-denomination notes (\$50 or \$100), issued after 2009, in good condition.



 *We cannot accept old, damaged, torn, or painted banknotes — even if the damage is minor.* Afghan banks and exchange offices will refuse them, so please **prepare your cash in advance**.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Travel insurance is **mandatory**. For destinations classified as Level 3 ("Reconsider Travel") or Level 4 ("Do Not Travel") by the US State Department, your insurance must explicitly state that it **covers travel to Afghanistan**.

Your policy must include:

- Medical expenses and hospitalization
- Emergency medical evacuation
- Trip cancellation or interruption
- Baggage loss or delay
- Repatriation of remains

 [Buy IATI Travel Insurance \(Afghanistan-approved\)](#) with 5% discount through this link  [Insurance Policy Info](#)

## REFUND & CANCELLATION POLICY

While visa denials are extremely rare with our Dubai-based process, RJ Travel maintains a transparent policy to cover all possible outcomes:

### 1. If the visa is denied

- **\$100 USD** for the **Letter of Invitation (LOI)**, which is part of your tour package and non-refundable
- **\$150 USD** to cover **administrative and coordination costs** (permit requests, logistics planning, local team mobilization)
- **PLUS any domestic flight tickets** already purchased on your behalf for the tour, which are non-refundable and will be deducted from the refundable portion of your deposit
- The remaining balance of the deposit will be refunded to the client. Please note that a **standard deduction of \$50 USD** will be applied to cover **transaction fees, currency exchange costs, banking charges, and administrative processing** associated with issuing the refund.
- **Deposits under \$250 USD are non-refundable**, as they do not cover the minimum administrative and coordination costs already incurred.

### 2. If the client cancels before applying for the visa

- Our **standard cancellation policy applies**, based on the number of days before the tour start date:
  - **More than 31 days before** → 100% refund
  - **22 to 30 days before** → 70% refund
  - **11 to 21 days before** → 50% refund
  - **1 to 10 days before** → Non-refundable

### 3. If the client is approved for a visa but cancels voluntarily

- The deposit becomes **non-refundable**, as it covers services already arranged and paid for (LOI, internal permits, guide blocking, etc.).
- Remaining unpaid balances are not due.



## ✓ GENERAL CONDUCT & BEST PRACTICES

- **Dress conservatively** — long pants and sleeves for men, hijab and loose clothing for women
- **Always follow your guide's advice**, especially at checkpoints or official meetings
- **Keep personal opinions to yourself** — especially regarding religion, politics, or gender
- **Do not engage in debates with locals** — smile politely and change the topic
- **Ask before taking photos**, especially of people, mosques, or military-related scenes
- **Respect hospitality** — if someone offers you tea or food, accept it with a smile

## 🕌 Religious Identity & Respect

Religion is a central part of Afghan society, but **your personal religion is not questioned** by locals or Taliban officials. Whether you are **Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, or of another faith**, you will be treated with respect — as long as you show respect in return.

However, **we strongly advise against discussing atheism** or making any statements about not believing in God. Afghanistan is a deeply religious country, and expressing **atheism or agnosticism can be misunderstood as offensive or disrespectful**.

✓ *If asked, simply say you are Christian or from a Christian-majority country — this is understood and respected universally across Afghanistan.*

## ✗ CULTURAL CONDUCT & WHAT NOT TO DO IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a deeply conservative and tradition-oriented country. Respect for Islamic customs, traditional gender norms, and local etiquette is essential for a safe and respectful travel experience. While most cultural misunderstandings are met with patience, certain actions can cause discomfort — or even serious consequences. To help travelers navigate this, we've grouped potential missteps into four categories:

### 🟡 Minor Faux Pas – You'll Look Out of Place

These won't get you into trouble, but may cause awkwardness or draw unwanted attention:

- **Wearing shorts or tight/revealing clothes**
- **Pointing with your finger** instead of using your full hand
- **Crossing your legs in front of elders**
- **Speaking loudly in public or marketplaces**
- **Refusing a cup of tea** — even if you don't plan to drink it
- **Public displays of affection**, even between married couples
- **Overly aggressive bargaining** — it's better to smile and let go

### 🟠 Cultural Missteps – May Offend Locals

These can lead to uncomfortable or offended reactions:

- **Using your left hand** to give or receive items or food
- **Staring at women**, even unintentionally
- **Not removing shoes** before entering homes, mosques, or sacred spaces
- **Offering to shake hands with someone of the opposite sex**
- **Criticizing Afghan culture or religion**, even in jest
- **Refusing hospitality** — even a symbolic acceptance is expected
- **Giving money directly to beggars**, especially near mosques or shrines

## ● Serious Offenses – Could Escalate or Cause Confrontation

These actions show disrespect for sacred beliefs and should be strictly avoided:

- **Photographing women** or children without permission
- **Discussing politics or religion**, especially Taliban-related topics
- **Taking photos of military checkpoints, Taliban guards without consent, or government buildings**
- **Entering mosques without proper attire or behavior**
- **Losing your temper or shouting** in public
- **Eating or drinking in public during Ramadan**, especially during daylight hours

## ● Dangerous Mistakes – Legal or Security Risk

These actions could put your safety at risk or result in detention:

- **Blasphemy or religious disrespect**, including casual comments
- **Possession or use of alcohol or drugs** (strictly illegal)
- **Entering restricted areas** without your guide
- **Disrespecting Taliban officials** or ignoring checkpoint instructions
- **Attempting to bypass registration or permits**