

Barchidev (2610m) – Sarez Lake (3250m)

Distance: 19.5km

Ascent: 1580m

Descent: 940m

Trail: moderate/hard – variable trails

Accommodation

27 guest barracks Sarez Lake, monitoring station, capacity 16, languages Russian, Pamiri and Tajik

Camping

You can find a spot at the monitoring station, you may have to pay a small fee for using the facilities.

Important note! You need a permit for Lake Sarez. You can arrange this with one of the tour operators that are listed in the link above in the information about section 7 Rushan. The cost is roughly \$50pp

It's a pretty hard day, even when acclimatised. Across the village you cross the suspension bridge and start climbing on the true right bank. It keeps going up and down until you see a suspension bridge to the left bank. The trail stays close to the Murghab River, though it is going up and down a little bit. No major climbs until you reach a huge boulder. On the back of the boulder is a shelter. It's dubbed the tea house (11km from Barchidev), and it could be a good spot to pitch your tent or just roll out your mat for a night under the stars.

The trail continues along the river for 1km and climbs steeply in a south easterly direction. Make sure you fill up all your water bottles as there is no water between here and Sarez Lake. The trail is clear and you can't miss it. After a short flat section, it climbs again. Keep going until you reach the Usoy Pass at 3450m. The descent leads to a stretch of blocky terrain. Look carefully for the cairns / markers to navigate through this difficult section of this stage. The final descent to the lake is pretty steep but the monitoring station for the natural dam is visible by now, even in the dark. You can ask at the station if you can pitch your tent. There is very basic accommodation, but very expensive for what you get (\$30pp), especially compared to the lovely homestays in the villages. From the station you take the boat to Irkht, where the route continues.