
Lenin Statues In The Sughd Region

Referred to as the 'Father of the Bolshevik Revolution', Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, more famously referred to as Vladimir Lenin, was the original leader of the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1924. As Tajikistan and its border countries (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) were part of the USSR until their independence in 1991, there are still many reminders of the Soviet-era scattered throughout its towns and cities, particularly several controversial Lenin statues in the Sughd region.

During the height of Soviet reign, many Lenin statues, busts, and monuments were erected to symbolize communism in the Soviet-era – something that's met with either pride or disdain, depending on where you stand politically. As Tajikistan became a republic and stepped away from the Soviet-style in the early 1990s, they focused on taking down and removing many of these contentious Soviet symbols. Some still stand loud and proud in the outskirts of northern Tajikistan, while others have been destroyed or relocated to more remote locations as a mark of the country's newfound national identity.

The biggest and best known Lenin statue in Central Asia can be found in Khujand, Tajikistan's second-largest city, which was once known as Leninabad. Built in 1974 to mark the anniversary of Lenin's death, this 24-meter vertical statue (a 12-meter statue standing on a 12-meter base) once stood proudly over downtown Khujand. After the new millennium, it was relocated to a quiet cow-grazing field in Victory Park and replaced by a gigantic golden statue of Ismoil Somoni – dubbed the 'Father' of the Tajik nation.

There are other statues and busts dedicated to the former leader of the Soviet Union in Tajikistan. One of the largest Lenin busts in the world can be found in Istaravshan, one of Central Asia's most ancient cities. Perched on an isolated hilltop overlooking a reservoir and the Balgari village on the outskirts of the city, the enormous bust of Lenin in Istaravshan has an outstretched five-meter-long arm with fingers that measure over a meter themselves. The Vladimir Lenin bust can be reached by climbing a set of approximately 300 steep stairs to the top of the hill.

A third statue of the Russian revolutionary can be found in Isfara, one of Tajikistan's lesser-known provincial towns and a popular stopover town between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In a prominent location downtown, this golden statue of Lenin in the Sughd province is one of small-town Isfara's biggest tourist attractions.