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# Tour Notes

Pakistan – Into the Mighty North

Tour Duration – 19 Days



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Adventure ●●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●○○○

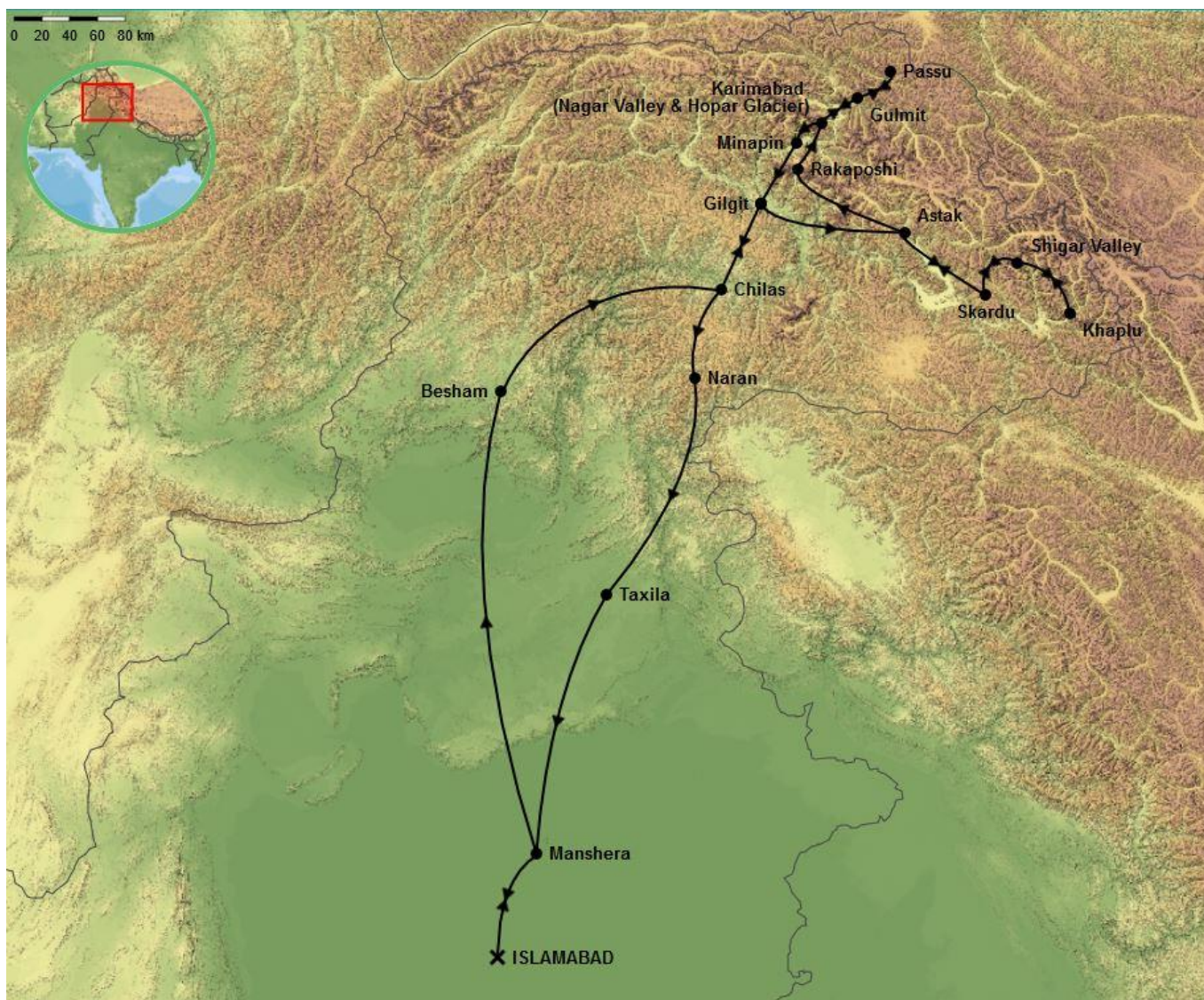
## Tour Highlights

- ✓ Travel the fabled Karakoram Highway and dramatic Babusar Pass
- ✓ Marvel at thrilling mountain scenery against the backdrop of some of the world's mightiest peaks
- ✓ Observe the cultures of a fascinating variety of local ethnic groups through frequent village visits
- ✓ Witness the magnificence of the Hunza Valley – the original 'Shangri-La'
- ✓ Explore the dramatic Silk Road forts and ancient historic sites
- ✓ Watch for elusive mountain birdlife
- ✓ Wander the compelling ruins of Taxila, a key trade hub of the ancient world



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## Tour Map



## Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** A mixture of simple but comfortable small hotels and guesthouses with private bathrooms
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Minimum 2 and Maximum of 12
- Start Point:** Islamabad – you can arrive any time on day 1
- End Point:** Islamabad – you can depart any time on day 19
- Transport:** Minivan or minibus, depending on group size
- Country Visited:** Pakistan



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## Pakistan – Into the Mighty North – summer departures

*This encompassing adventure of Pakistan's spectacular northern regions takes travellers to a near mythical land, where traditions have changed little in centuries and the scenery is simply among the best on the planet. We begin by exploring the modern capital of Islamabad, before making our way towards Baltistan, travelling the fabled Karakoram Highway and the spectacular seasonal Babusar Pass. We explore the Hunza, an area of jaw-dropping magnificence blessed with idyllic villages and people of genuine warmth, a region that some purport to have inspired the legend of Shangri La. Along the way we will delve into the rich history – a chain of dramatic forts and watchtowers as well as other historical wonders such as ancient petroglyphs. We also join the locals in the heady blend of vivid, vibrant bazaars, feasting on sumptuous local dishes, marvelling at mighty glaciers and shimmering turquoise lakes carving through dramatic valleys, and of course pausing endlessly to drink in the inspiring panoramas of the snowclad summits of the Himalaya and Karakorum ranges.*

### Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

### Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not merely passing through these countries, but are locally born. Unlike some companies, it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK: we have every confidence in our locally appointed representatives who are responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. On this tour you will have an accompanying English-speaking guide from Day 2 until the end of Day 18. If the group size is only 2 then the tour will be operated by a driver and the services of local guides in different places.

## Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrive Islamabad

(Altitude: 540m)

Upon arrival, a member of our local team will be waiting to greet you at the airport and transfer to your hotel. Tomorrow morning at breakfast there will be a tour briefing with your local guide to outline the adventure ahead. Overnight Hotel de Papae, or similar. No meals are included today.

### Day 2: Islamabad

(Altitude: 540m)

After a breakfast tour-briefing with the guide, your journey starts with an exploration of the capital Islamabad and nearby Rawalpindi. Sites in the former will include, the Shah Faisal Mosque, once the largest example in the world and elegantly modelled on a vast Bedouin tent, the Government buildings on Constitution Avenue, Shakar Parian Park with its aromatic rose and jasmine garden, the Pakistan Monument, a fascinating beautiful modern petal-design structure and the Lok Virsa heritage museum. From there you will cross into Punjab to experience the sensory explosion of the Raja Bazaar area in neighbouring Rawalpindi where a chaos of colours urges you to buy anything from a salwar kameez to a copper saucepan, and from there to Daman-e-Koh, a peaceful hillside vantage point which gazes out over the emerald expanses toward the twin cities. Overnight Hotel de Papae or similar (BL)

### The Karakoram Highway





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Known affectionately as the KKH, this is the world's highest paved route and it connects China to Pakistan, winding its way doggedly through the Karakoram Mountain Range. Begun in 1959, it took a staggering 27 years to construct and 892 workers died as the 1,300km route triumphed over cliffs, floods, avalanches and landslides to provide one of earth's most memorable driving routes. The route is characterised by some astonishing hairpins as it winds its way up and over the vertiginous Khunjerab Pass (4,693m). The reward is a bombardment of magnificent views. Ornithologists also prize the route as 'International Flyway 4', a hugely significant migratory journey for a myriad of species from duck and cranes to bustards and raptors. You will be following too in the footsteps of ancient traders, since the KKH follows one of the celebrated routes of the Silk Road, bringing exchanges of goods between Europe and the Far-East and meaning that its course is simply strewn with enthralling evidence of cultures that have trodden these time-worn paths. This is truly a journey to remember and cherish.

### **Day 3: Islamabad – Hasan Abdal – Manshera – Besham (Approximate driving time today is 6 hours)**

*(Altitude: Islamabad 540m – highest around 1500m – Besham 613m / or if going via Naran 2409m)*

Today you will rise early to hit the fabled KKH at around 8am and drive steadily northwards towards your ultimate goal of Besham. Stopping at Hasan Abdal will provide you with some insight into the intricate skill of truck-art painting: the majority of HGVs that ply this route are colourfully adorned and you can't help but be entertained by the array of dazzling examples that trundle by as you head north. Later, a stop close to Manshera will reveal the intricately etched Asoka Rock Edicts, dating back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and written in the ancient Indic script of Gandhara culture. The site has been submitted for inclusion as a World Heritage Site and, whilst faded and battered, they offer a sense of the richness of the Maurya Empire. Thereafter you continue to Besham. Overnight Besham Hilton Hotel or similar (BL)

### **Day 4: Besham – Chilas (Approximate driving time today is 6 hours)**

*(Altitude: Besham 613m – Chilas 1265m or if going via Naran - Babusar Pass highest point is 4173m – Chilas 1265m)*

Beyond Besham the Karakoram highway hugs the steep sides of the famous Indus gorge and the great river remains a constant companion throughout the day, a broad ribbon of pale cyan offering striking views into the depths of its ravines and across to the rugged mountains in the near and far distance, while Great egrets and maybe even ultra-rare Siberian cranes pound their elegant path overhead. Along the way you will be compelled to pause and enjoy an invidious choice of scenic viewpoints, such as at Dassu, proposed site of a colossal H.E.P. dam scheme and it is impossible to pass by without pausing to examine the ubiquitous Buddhist petroglyphs left by various invaders, traders and pilgrims who passed along the trade route, as well as by local devotees. The earliest carvings date back to between 5000 and 1000 BC, depicting single animals, triangular men and hunting scenes in which the prey sometimes appear to ominously dwarf the hunters. Incredibly, the earliest of these carvings were engraved into the rocks with primitive stone tools and are covered with a thick patina that indicates their antiquity. Overnight Panorama Hotel or similar (BL)

### **Day 5: Chilas – Gilgit (Approximate driving time today is 3 hours)**

*(Altitude: Chilas 1265m – Gilgit 1500m)*

Leaving the irrigated green terraces of Chilas behind, the sun slowly steps into the narrow valleys. Occasionally the road sweeps past forests of deep jade which contrast exquisitely with the snowy upper reaches of some of the mountains. Heading towards Gilgit, your route crosses the impressive Raikot Bridge and heads sinuously through the crisp air until you break awhile at a viewpoint where, if the skies are clear, it should afford views of the majestic peak of Nanga Parbat mountain at 8216m. A little further north and the convergence of the Indus and Gilgit Rivers is attained, hard by Jaglot. A break is a must since it is here that three of the world's greatest mountain ranges converge: the Karakoram, Hindukush and the mighty Himalaya, a perfect storm of titanic proportions. Emerging into the unexpected irrigated emerald expanses that surround Gilgit, there will be time to explore several sites including the bustling Gilgit Bazaar area as well as the dramatic Kargah Buddha outside town; standing some 50 feet high and dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, it stands



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sentinel over the valley under a natural canopy of frowning rock. Overnight Gilgit Continental Hotel or similar (BL)

#### **Day 6: Gilgit – Skardu (Approximate driving time today is 3-4 hours)**

*(Altitude: Gilgit 1500m – Skardu 2230m)*

Our exploration of these high valleys sweeps east and away from the KKH for a few days immersing yourself in the less-populated and stunning scenery of the upper reaches of the Indus – the Baltistan region. As the road gradually rises, you will enjoy the constant changing scenery at every new turn and will visit various small villages along the way to get a feel for local life. In the afternoon we can explore the Skardu bazaar area. Overnight Summit Hotel, or similar, in Skardu (BL)

#### **Day 7: Skardu - Deosai plateau day trip (4114m) (Approximate driving time today is 6 hours)**

*(Altitude: Skardu 2230m– Deosai plateau highest point 4114m – Skardu 2230m)*

We make a day trip to the beautiful Deosai National Park, one of the highest plateaus in the world. The park protects an area of 3,000 square kilometres. It is well known for its rich flora and fauna of the Karakoram-West Tibetan Plateau alpine steppe Eco region. In the Spring season it is covered by sweeps of wildflowers and a wide variety of butterflies. When driving up to the plateau we will make a short stop at the Satpara Lake, today we have a good chance of seeing Himalyan marmots and we will also visit the Sheosar Lake which gives great reflections in its clear water of the incredible surroundings. Overnight Summit Hotel, or similar, in Skardu (BL)

(Deosai plateau is only possible in the summer months - outside of this period there will be too much snow, we will then arrange an alternative sightseeing program)

#### **Day 8: Shigar Valley (Approximate driving time today is 3 hours)**

*(Altitude: Skardu 2230m – Shigar Valley 2430m – Skardu 2230m)*

Heading out on a side-excursion of sightseeing in this simply breathtaking region, we explore the Shigar valley dotted with tiny and attractive villages; all held in the far-reaching gaze of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Skardu Fort which affords panoramic views of the wider valley and Karakoram Range and beyond. You may also visit the Katpana Desert, one of the world's highest cold deserts whose silky grey dunes seem incongruous amidst the gritty surroundings. Nearby, Shigar Fort, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and recently restored, is a delightfully elegant boulder and wooden construction atop a rock, alongside a rushing stream; you will enjoy lunch here in the gardens if weather conditions allow. Overnight Summit Hotel, or similar, in Skardu (BL)

#### **Day 9: Skardu – Khaplu (Approximate driving time is 3 hours)**

*(Altitude: Skardu 2230m – highest around 2700m – Khaplu 2601m)*

Further still into the dizzying delights of the Saltoro Range, as you follow the enigmatically braided Shyok River, choked with meltwater boulders and shingle. A magnificent 3-hour drive, marvelling at the raw jagged outlines of the peaks that shear brutally from the rooftop of the world, brings you to the sanctuary of Khaplu a village sheltered in the crook of the Karakoram Mountains. From this historic fortified settlement, you will enjoy a gentle walk to a viewpoint with incredible panoramic views and whose window on the rank after rank of high altitude ranges simply beggars belief. Enjoy lunch at wonderfully restored Khaplu Palace and thereafter take a tour of the palace complex and the 700-year-old Chaqchan Mosque, a cream washed and wooden-framed gem of architecture. You may be fortunate to catch sight of the majestic mountain icon that is Masherbrum (7,821 m) from here. Overnight Karakorum Lodge or similar (BL)

#### **Day 10: Khaplu – Gilgit (Approximate driving time today is 6 hours)**

*(Altitude: Khaplu 2601m – Gilgit 1500m)*

Leaving the heady delights of Baltistan behind, you will retrace your steps towards Skardu, this time with the sun on your left, illuminating the beige-coloured frowning crags and long scree slides against the deep cobalt of the skies. Watch out for flocks of snow pigeons in the valley and wandering ibex on the higher slopes. At





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lunchtime, a side road soldiers up to one of the regions most celebrated viewpoint – the idyllic glassy vantage point of Kachura Lake. Nicknamed 'Shangri-La Lake' owing to a resort named after a fabled Buddhist retreat, the name literally 'Heaven on Earth' and it is hard to argue, since the vista here at the opening up of the Indus valley is a photographer's nirvana. From here you descend into down to the Indus gorge to Gilgit for your accommodation. Overnight Gilgit Continental hotel, or similar (BL)

### **Day 11: Gilgit – Rakaposhi (Approximate driving time today is 1.5 – 2 hours)**

*(Altitude: Gilgit 1500m – Rakaposhi viewpoint 1995m)*

After breakfast we turn north and up the Hunza River to continue your Karakoram Highway ascent, flanked by the ever increasing elevations of the resplendent snow-clad Himalayan and Karakoram ranges. Near Chalt, at a seemingly insignificant buttress of rock, you will stop to find out why this is the epicentre of the colossal topographical feature of the highest massif in the world: here, 55 million years ago, the Indian Continental plate collided with the Eurasian plate and forced up the Himalayas which still rise about 1cm annually. Oddly, this is precisely the spot in which local bridal processions also used to pause to make sacrifices before the collision of two different cultures! As your route swings eastwards, the road is suddenly dominated by the great goliath of Rakaposhi Peak shimmering white, whose arêtes and tongues of glaciers almost seem to descend to the green valley bottom. Here you will come upon Thole Nagar, where there will be an opportunity to sample the local delicacy of chapshoro (a regional take on pizza). Arriving at Rakaposhi village, there will be time to relax and drink in the awesome beauty of Rakaposhi's 7,788m. Overnight local guesthouse or similar (BL)

### **Day 12: Rakaposhi – Karimabad and the Hunza Valley (Approximate driving time is 1 hour)**

*(Altitude: Rakaposhi viewpoint 1995m – highest at Duikar sunset around 2850m - Karimabad 2500m)*

Today's short but spectacular drive to Karimabad clings to the steep sides of the mountain above the crumbling chasm of the Hunza River. Karimabad is the main town of the Hunza Valley region and a real cultural and historic hub. You will explore the area, meeting with local people and trying to gauge an understanding of the secrets of their longevity. After a lunch of traditional Hunza dishes, you visit some of the prominent historical sites such as Baltit Fort, former seat of the Mirs of Hunza and perched on wedding-cake-like tiers of cobbles, the ancient Silk Road village of Ganish – 'village of gold' – and its watch tower, and Altit Fort which gazes imperiously from its precipitous seat across the expanses of the valley. Later enjoy the kaleidoscopic shifts in colours on the soaring summits at sunset from the stunning viewpoint in Duikar. Overnight Hunza Embassy Lodge (BL)

### **Hunza Valley**

Celebrated for the longevity of its inhabitants, the people of the Hunza live an existence of simplicity, enjoy a natural diet, and thrive on the pristine mountain air. Tibetan traders referred to the beauty of this humble paradise as "Shangri-La", a phrase that is today replicated both around the valley and in lands far beyond wherever natural beauty seems to come to full fruition. Yet very few places in the world compare with this small mountainous region, a semi-autonomous state until very recently but now fully unified with Pakistan. The proud ruling dynasty of Hunza lasted for over 600 years, the Mir or 'Thum' claiming descent from Alexander the Great. Embroiled for a while in the machinations of 'The Great Game's' imperial territorial jostlings with Russia, the princes retained their autonomy until as late as 1974. The scenic beauty of this area, with its lush, valley-bottom greenery, alpine tundra and pristine snow-capped mountains, makes seem truly heavenly. The keen naturalists amongst you should be on the lookout for such treasures as huge Himalayan griffons that ply the skies and some of the more distinctive birds to watch for are the Pied wheatear and the stunning species of rosefinches. During the summer there is an abundance of apricots, peaches, pears and grapes, whilst the bounty of its mines is a steady flow of rubies. The close proximity to Kashagar in the Chinese province of Xinjiang makes it both a key trading post and also a melting pot of cultural influences.

### **Baltit Fort**



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A visit to Baltit Fort is of immense interest. For many years the fort served as palace and powerbase for the princely former Mirs (rulers) of Hunza who took the name 'Thum'. The porters who accompanied the Balti bride for one of the Mirs built it, probably more than 700 years ago. The architectural style is inspired by the buildings of Ladakh: a labyrinth of inter-connected rooms had multiple functions, from elegant living quarters to offices inhabited by the Mir's bureaucrats. Each new phase was skilfully added with intricately designated wooden frames and the current incarnation stands upon a series of complex stone-built terraces that snake mesmerisingly around it. Its location is peerless in the region, affording a lavish overview of the Hunza Valley and neighbouring offshoots. Today, rescued from decay and imminent collapse by the Aga Khan foundation, it has become a fascinating museum, showcasing not only the Mirs, but also the cultural richness of the region, from music to folklore.

### **Day 13: Nagar Valley and Hopar glacier (Approximate driving time is 3 – 4 hours)**

*(Altitude: Karimabad 2500m – Nagar Valley & Hopar glacier day trip 2820m)*

Today your base camp remains in Hunza: you take a day trip to the remote Nagar Valley, situated at an elevation of around 2500 metres above sea level to visit some of the idyllic and peaceful villages which cluster around the broad-bottomed glacial flats or cling to the steep slopes along zig-zagging tracks and meet with local people.

From here, we forge higher into the Hopar Valley which transitions from meltwater streams to the snout of one of the fastest moving glaciers in the world – the Hopar Glacier – a sobering sight which encapsulates the unimaginable power of nature as it grinds down the grooves in the mountain, creating the incredible landscape you see before you. Overnight Hunza Embassy Lodge or similar (BL)

**Note – Hopar Glacier Walk:** *For those that wish to walk from the vehicle to the glacier the walk takes around 1 hour each way and involves both ascent and descent on variable terrain. The walk should be undertaken by those with good footwear and who are of a reasonable trekking fitness. For those that do not wish to walk there are places to sit where refreshments are available whilst enjoying the photographic opportunities afforded by the views of the glacier and beyond.*

### **Day 14: Karimabad – Gulmit – Passu – Gulmit (Approximate driving time is 3 hours)**

*(Altitude: Karimabad 2500m – Gulmit – Passu highest around 2665m – Gulmit 2465m)*

Today you continue to eastwards towards Gulmit and the Upper Hunza via the newly constructed road. The road initially clings to the north-facing slopes of the valley, giving you superb vistas of the sunlit peaks in the Batura Muztagh range which rises to 7,795m. As the route starts to back northwards, you will stop and stretch your legs beside the superb scenery of Attabad Lake, which, bizarrely, has only existed a few years, created by a massive landslide blocking the flow of the Hunza River for months in 2010. The crisis that ensued as the valley's villages were displaced to the hillsides resulted in a \$275 million project to reinstate the KKH with a new tunnel, completed in 2015. On arrival at Gulmit, 'Valley of the Flowers', which clings to the northern slopes above the Hunza, you explore the town and surrounding area including the Passu glacier and the precarious Hussaini hanging bridge. In Gulmit village, visit the museum with its unique collection showcasing the rich fabric of Hunza history, its polo ground, and a local traditional music school (subject to permission). Either later today or early tomorrow there will also be an option for those that wish to undertake a hike to Kamaris village from which one can enjoy superb views on a clear day. The walk is around 1 hour each way and is of an easy grade, involving some up and downhill sections. A particular joy is the incredible outline of Topopdan Peak, with its array of secondary pinnacles which rise like spectacular royal icing from its snowy buttresses. Overnight Silk Route Lodge or similar (BL)

### **Day 15: Gulmit – Minapin (Approximate driving time is 2.5 hours)**

*(Altitude: Gulmit 2465m – Minapin 2200m)*

Having reached the northernmost point of your traversing the KKH, only 114km from the Khunjerab Pass and the gateway to China, you begin to head back south to Minapin, at the heart of the Nagar Valley, ascending the small hill-roads to reach this spot, sequestered far away from the well-trodden highway. This is climbers'



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country too: every season, this is the starting point for approaches to Rakaposhi and Diran base camps, and weather permitting you too will enjoy superb views of the mountains from here. On arrival, you spend the time exploring the village and learn how to cook a traditional Nagar meal which is prepared in a stone pot. Thereafter, there will be time to relax and imbibe the sublime scenery and overridingly peaceful ambience. Overnight at local guest house in Minapin (BL)

#### **Day 16: Minapin – Chilas (Approximate driving time is 4 hours)**

*(Altitude: Minapin 2200m – Chilas 1265m)*

From Minapin you descend the Karakoram Highway as far as Chilas, re-joining the Indus as your constant companion for the route south-west. You make a stop en route at a small village to sit front row at a local polo match, experiencing the raw thrills of this skilful and fast-paced horseback sport, a firm favourite activity in Pakistani culture. This afternoon you continue to the dusty town of Chilas for our overnight stay. Overnight Panorama Hotel or similar (BL)

#### **Day 17: Chilas – Naran (Approximate driving time is 3 hours)**

*(Altitude: Chilas 1265m– Babusar Pass highest point is 4173m - Naran 2409m or if via Besham 613m)*

From Chilas, perhaps the most exciting element of your mountain drive awaits: leaving the KKH behind, the road turns decisively southwards and ploughs steadily upwards into the Babusar Pass. Known affectionately as Babur Top after a 16<sup>th</sup> century Mughal emperor who favoured this route, at 4,173m you are in rarefied territory: the views, as the vehicle snakes steadily up a series of hairpin bends to the surprisingly open summit, offer a real insight into the incomparable topography of this exquisitely beautiful area of the Lower Himalayas. The route is only open to cars in the spring and summer since the snouts of glaciers encroach across the road through the colder season. In summer, these open mountainsides are home to nomadic herds. Then, over the watershed, you gradually descend into the Kaghan Valley before reaching your destination of the small town of Naran. Here the turquoise waters of the river meet a narrowing, alpine-styled valley, where steep spurs are clad in coniferous trees above the settlement in the flat valley below. If time allows it, you will visit the legendary lake of Saif ul Muluk, lying at 3,200m, high above the town. The glassy waters are simply idyllic, set against the backdrop of Malika Parbat (5271m), the highest peak of the valley, which towers above, offering and the perfect opportunity for some truly memorable photographic opportunities. Overnight stay PTDC Motel (BL)

#### **Day 18: Naran – Taxila (UNESCO) - Islamabad (Approximate driving time today is 6 hours)**

*(Altitude: Naran 2409m – Taxila – Islamabad 540m or if via Besham 613m – highest point around 1500m – Islamabad 540m)*

After an early breakfast you start the last stage of your journey, descending first down the increasingly fertile green Kunhar River's banks. The temperature starts to rise as your route drops in altitude. Here the Kaghan valley, a verdant spread of small farming villages, attracts people from the cities to its lower reaches in the warmer months. This afternoon you will visit the important archaeological site of Taxila (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) where you will also have lunch. You then continue to the capital of Islamabad to complete this epic journey through Northern Pakistan. As a special goodbye, this evening you will enjoy a farewell dinner at Monal restaurant atop the Margalla Hills and eat great local food while gazing down towards Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Overnight Hotel de Papae or similar (BLD)

#### **Taxila**

The city of Taxila dates back to the Gandhara period, a time when its vast kingdom spanned northern Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some of the ruins are as old as the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., from the Achaemenid Empire era. Its strategic importance at the intersection of three major trade routes led to increasing wealth and influence. Firstly the uttarāpatha, also known as the Grand Trunk, a royal route connecting Gandhara in the west to the kingdom of Magadha in the Ganges valley to the east. Secondly, the north-western road through Bactria, Kāpiśa, and Puṣkalāvati, and finally the Sindu (Indus River) passage across the Khunjerab Pass to the Silk Road in the north and to the Indian Ocean in the south, the route of the modern Karakoram highway.





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When Alexander the Great arrived here in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. he also found what many scholars reckon to be one of the first ever universities and it continued for many years as a seat of sacred learning for both Buddhists and Hindus. In A.D. 46, local legend has it that Thomas, one of Christ's apostles, visited here on his mission to Asia. After being fought over for centuries, the Huns overran the region and razed 'Takṣaśilā' to the ground. The site fell into obscurity until the British archaeologist, Sir Alexander Cunningham excavated the site over 20 years in the mid-1800s. In 1980, Taxila was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site with multiple locations and is a complex and fascinating reminder of the political significance of the region.

### Day 19: Depart Islamabad

(Altitude: 540m)

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

## Tour Inclusions / Exclusions

#### Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers  
Transport throughout  
All accommodation  
Services of English-speaking guide – see guiding section for details  
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary  
Visa support documents

#### Excluded:

International flights  
Any airport taxes  
Travel Insurance  
Visas  
Drinks  
Items of a personal nature

## Important Information

#### Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present the FCDO advice against all but essential travel to some areas that we travel to on this tour of Pakistan. Upon booking the tour, you will be asked to complete a form to acknowledge that you are travelling to area subject to UK FCDO advice. We work very closely with our local team and are fully confident that we can operate tours safely in Pakistan. Should you have any concerns over safety please do not hesitate to contact us and we can address your concerns.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.





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## Accommodation and Meals

### Hotel Check-in Times

On this tour most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 1pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

### Accommodation Rating

The tours comprises of small hotels and guesthouses that are of a simple but comfortable standard in general but cannot be compared to western levels of service provision.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

### Food & Drinks

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; Breakfast (B), Lunch (L) and Dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

### Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

### Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### Food

Breakfast and lunches are included on tour. Breakfast will mostly consist of: chapatti (dry flat bread), paratha (oily flat bread), toast, butter, jam, eggs, coffee, tea, juice. Certain places might also serve yogurt and fresh fruits. Lunch will mostly consist of: rice, dahl (lentil curry), chapatti or naan (thicker flatbread), vegetable curry and a meat dish (mostly chicken, lamb or goat meat).

The costs for evening meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more. As a guide allow for between £7 - £15.

### Drinks



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The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket restaurant may be more expensive.

Soft drinks £0.80 - £1.20

Later mineral water - £0.30 - £0.80

Tea/Coffee - £0.50 and £1

### **Tipping – Guide and Drivers**

Tipping is common practice in Pakistan. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you. When tipping a driver, a guide or hotel staff a few dollars will always be gratefully received.

### **Foreign Exchange**

**ATM Availability:** Available in Islamabad but we cannot be sure of the reliability

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Credit and debit cards not widely accepted for payments, even in larger towns and cities, and they are not accepted at the accommodation on tour so please carry cash (USD recommended)

**Local Currency:** Pakistani Rupee

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** US Dollars

**Where to Exchange:** Islamabad – Our local team will assist

### **Joining your Tour**

#### **Flight Information**

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Joining Your Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an included airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

### **Travel Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your insurance should also cover you to travel at altitude. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

### **Visa Information**

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Pakistan. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below.

British Nationals - [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - [www.smartraveller.gov.au/](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/)



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Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

### Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of South Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations.

For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. The use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended, and we recommend that you take professional advice about malaria prophylactics.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

## Preparing for your tour

### Local conditions

When travelling to some of the destinations we offer, we respectfully ask you to bear in mind that things won't always work here as we're used to them working at home. Travelling in underdeveloped destinations requires both patience and a sense of humour. There may be problems with infrastructure, attitudes may be different, service may be slow and maintenance may not be as high a standard as we would always like, but this is very



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much part and parcel of travelling in such a place. We aim to resolve any issues as quickly as possible, and thank you for your patience.

### **Journey times and road conditions**

Unlike some operators, to assist in ensuring that the trip is right for you, we provide the approximate daily driving times. We must stress that when travelling countries such as Pakistan it is not possible to accurately predict journey timings, so the approximate daily driving times provided should only be used as a guide. The daily driving times are total and do not take into account stops. So for example on day where the driving time is a total of 6 hours, this does not mean you will be driving for 6 hours non-stop. On this tour we will come across varying standards of road conditions. In some places the roads are in good condition, but conversely in some areas you need to be prepared for some poor road conditions.

### **Internal flights**

We do not take internal flights within Pakistan, due to frequent lengthy delays and often complete cancellation of internal flights without notice. We feel that the best way to really enjoy the tour is by travelling overland.

### **Climate**

Northern Pakistan enjoys defined seasons and the middle of the winter is harsh. The ideal time to travel is from April – October. Travelling in spring or autumn will require a range of layers as whilst it can be very pleasant temperatures by day, it can still be cold at night. Travelling in the summer is most pleasant in the mountains although rainfall can be heavy.

### **Clothing and local customs**

Pakistan is an Islamic country and it is therefore advisable for women not to wear short skirts / tops or short trousers in public. A head-scarf will come in handy for women when they visit a mosque or sometimes it can be a custom in more remote areas. Dress codes for men are more lenient, though shorts are not advised – feel free to ask your guide if you are not sure. Men should never shake hands with or touch a woman they don't know very well. All clients are advised to ask for permission before taking photographs.

As with most countries of South Asia, you should use your right hand for eating, shaking hands and giving or receiving everything (including money), and reserve your left hand for handling shoes and assisting in toilet duties.

### **Equipment**

Suncream/sunblock is a must as well as sunglasses – please ensure you bring enough sun protection as it may not be available locally. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. You should also bring binoculars for the spectacular mountain views and if you are interested in local birdlife.

### **Footwear**

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. During visits and on walks it is advisable to wear comfortable walking shoes with good grips. When travelling, sandals or lighter shoes are fine.

### **Luggage on tour**

There is no restriction on luggage but of course the airline you fly to Pakistan may have restrictions. We prefer it if you can travel as light as possible and use soft bags to avoid damage.

### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

Pakistan uses several types of plug socket so please take an international adaptor.

### **Tour Itinerary Versions**



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Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 22 December 2022.

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