

Your passport to adventure

Indus Domes & Deserts

Country(ies): Pakistan

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C car/landcruiser

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 16

Days: 15 days

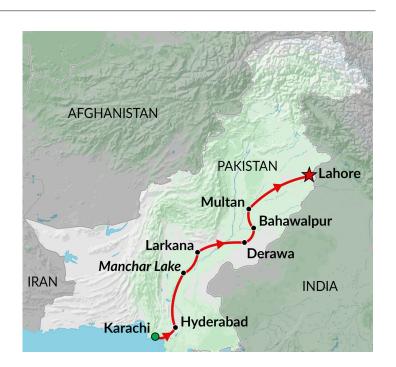
Start Location: Karachi, Pakistan

End Location: Lahore, Pakistan

Meals: Breakfasts - 14, Lunches - 13, Dinners - 13

Highlights:

Karachi, Manchar Lake, Hyderabad, Mohenjo-Daro, Sukkur, Cholistan Desert, Derawar Fort, Bahawalpur, Lahore



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Karachi. Afternoon city tour

Welcome in Pakistan at Karachi airport. Transfer to our hotel and take a rest before starting with our city tour.

Our tour begins on a high with a full day's sightseeing in and around Karachi. The National Museum gives us a complete vista of Pakistan's cultural heritage from Stone Age to the birth of the nation. After visiting the oldest Sufi shrine in Karachi, Mohamad Ali Jinnah Mausoleum, we can unwind at Clifton Beach or maybe take a soak in the Manghopir hot sulphur springs, that many believe to have curative powers (and just a few crocodiles!)

We are sure to enjoy some of the variety of restaurants in around the city.

OVERNIGHT: Karachi hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra night in Karachi - pre-tour (EXPAKS) Guide & Transport for extra day - Karachi (EXPAGK) Single room supplement (CADD17N)

Day 2: To Hyderabad via Chaukundi, Thatta, Makli Hills & Kinjhar Lake

Our destination today is Hyderabad, however we'll have a number of stops en-route to visit Chaukundi, Makli Hills and Thatta.

The Chaukundi Tombs are known for their elaborate and exquisite stone carvings and the style of architecture found here, is unique in that it can be found nowhere else in the Islamic world. Whilst in Thatta we'll visit the Shah Jahan Mosque, famous for its beautiful architecture, which was constructed during in the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan; better known as the visionary who created the Taj Mahal in Agra, India. Our final visit before heading to Hyderabad will be to the nearby Makli Hills. Makli Necropolis covers an area of around 10 kilometers and is thought to house up to 1 million tombs, built over a period of 400 years, it is perhaps the worlds largest necropolis

Before arriving in Hyderabad, we'll make a captivating stop at Kinjhar Lake, a wildlife haven and internationally recognized Ramsar site. This vast freshwater lake, the largest in Pakistan, teems with life. Lush reedbeds and vibrant underwater plants create a rich ecosystem that attracts a stunning array of birds.

Imagine flocks of ducks, geese, flamingos, and cormorants gracing the waters – a haven for both resident birds and those seeking a winter refuge. Kinjhar Lake is especially important for breeding birds like the Cotton Teal and the striking Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

Beyond its ecological significance, the lake supports a thriving fishing community of around 50,000 people, and even provides essential drinking water for Karachi. Since 1977, Keenjhar Lake has been protected as a Wildlife Sanctuary, ensuring this remarkable place remains a vibrant home for both nature and people.

OVERNIGHT: Hyderabad hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Learn about local industries in Hyderabad, Hala & Bhit Shah and join a pottery workshop

Today is all about the industries which the region around Hyderbad is famous for. In Hala and Bhit Shah, known as the hub of Sindhi handicrafts, we visit traditional craft workshops which are largely family-owned. Any purchases you choose to make here contribute to the local ecomony, with funds going directly into the hands of local artisans.

Amongst many handicrafts that Hala is known for, glazed ceramic, earthenware and terracotta are the most popular. These pots and tiles are available in various shapes and sizes and are famous for their exquisite hand painted designs. The artists use only signature colours which include: cobalt blue, turquoise, mustard, purple, brown and white; this form of art is known as 'Kashi Kari'.

After seeing these talented artists at work, you'll have the opportunity to release your inner potter, as we join a pottery workshop, learn time-honored skills, and let your creativity flow as you mold the clay into your own unique masterpiece.

Nearby Bhit Shah is best known for being the home to a shrine dedicated to the Sindhi Sufi Poet, Shah Abdul Latif-Bhittai, who also gave his name to the town. We'll take time to visit the shrine before moving on to learn about Ajrak; a traditional block printed cloth which was a hallmark of the Indus Civilisation.

OVERNIGHT: Hyderabad hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 4: 'The Great Wall of Sindh' - Ranikot Fort. Drive to Sehwan.

A real treat is in store this morning as we visit Ranikot Fort, also known as the Great Wall of Sindh, due to its huge 32km circumference, making it the worlds largest fort. The ramparts of the fort have often been compared to those found along the Great Wall of China and we'll have time to explore and get some great photos of the walls straddling the nearby hillsides. Our day ends in Sehwan, a city famous for the shrine of the 13th century Sufi Saint, Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

OVERNIGHT: Sehwan hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Visit the Mohanas Tribe and incredible Mohenjo Daro

This morning we'll drive to Manchar Lake which is home to the Mohana Tribe who are thought to be descendants of the first inhabitants of the Indus Valley.

The Mohana are a fascinating people who live in houseboats at the heart of Lake Manchar. Their unique way of life centers around fishing, a skill they've honed for generations. They partner with trained cormorants and night herons, who help them catch an abundance of fish — enough to sustain both the birds and the Mohana families. Sadly, this traditional lifestyle is endangered. The Mohana lost their exclusive fishing rights, facing competition from larger contractors. Water shortages and dams further disrupt their livelihood.

To support the Mohana, we spend time with them, learning about their culture. We hire their boats to explore the lake (when water levels allow). This provides a crucial income source for the fishing community, which in turn helps to preserve their ancestral way of life.

After boating on the lake with the Mohanas, we'll visit their original settlement of Mohenjo Daro, be prepared to be impressed! Mohenjo Daro flourised as the centre of the Indus Civilisation for around 800 years, during the 3rd

and 2nd millennia BC. The city was one of the largest in the old world and was the first city in South Asia to demonstrate urbanisation. The site was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980, the first site in South Asia to be so designated.

OVERNIGHT: Larkana hotel

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Exploring Larkana and Kot Diji Fort

Larkana is home to the famous Bhutto family, who have held the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) since it's inception in 1967. Two members of the family have gone on to be Prime Ministers of Pakistan, including Benazir Bhutto, who's widower Asif Ali Zardari also went on to be President of Pakistan from 2008 to 2013. Whilst exploring Larkana we'll make a stop at the Bhutto Family Mausoleum, an impressive building which attracts large crowds on a yearly basis, to commemorate the death of Benazir Bhutto.

As we leave Larkana behind, we'll make our way to Sukkur, with a stop en-route to visit Kot Diji Fort, an important Harappa site (3000–2600 BC), which is situated at the foot of the Rohri Hills where the fort stands majestically above us.

OVERNIGHT: Sukkur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Sadhu Belo Temple, Visit the Indus Dolphin Conservation Centre

This morning we'll visit the island of Sadhu Belo which is famous for the highly revered Hindu Temples located here, including Teerath Asthan which is the largest Hindu Temple in Pakistan.

After our visit to the island, we'll enjoy a boat ride on the Sukkur River, keep your eyes peeled for sightings of dolphins. A local legend says that the Indus River Dolphin was once a woman who was cursed to be transformed into a dolphin, by a local holy man, who was angry that she forgot to prepare his food one day. The species was once thought to be extinct, however numbers are now on the rise, though they're not yet off of the endangered species list.

By taking our travellers to visit this area, our funds are helping to support the efforts being made by the Indus Dolphin Conservation Centre to:

- Inject funds and awareness to support vital conservation work for habitat protection, research, and anti-poaching efforts.
- Empower local communities by creating economic opportunities that foster a commitment to dolphin and habitat protection.
- Influence policy by highlighting the importance of Indus River dolphins, encouraging stricter regulations to safeguard their environment.

Our final visit of the day takes us to the Masoon Shah Jo Minaro Tower, which was once the highest point in Sukkur, after ascending the 84 steps, you'll be rewarded with views of Sukkur where we'll be spending the night.

OVERNIGHT: Sukkur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Drive to Bahawalpur via Bhong Mosque

Our route today takes us to the city of Bahawalpur. The city of Bahawalpur was founded in 1748 and was the capital of the former princely state of Bahawalpur, which was ruled by the Abassi family. The state remained independant until the formation of Pakistan in 1947. En-route to Bahawalpur we'll visit the Bhong Mosque. With its unique design, taking stylistic elements from nearby Lahore as well as Iran, Spain and Turkey, the mosque won the Aga Khan award for architecture in 1986 after a construction period of around 50 years.

OVERNIGHT: Bahawalpur hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Cholistan Desert, Derawar Fort and Tombs of the Nawabs of Bahawalpur

Today we drive into the Cholistan desert, where standing proudly we'll see the Derawar Fort, a famed hallmark of Bahawalpur. The Derawar Fort has around 40 bastions that stand 30 feet high and the walls have a circumference of approximately 1.5km. The Nawab of Bahawalpur, Sadeq Mohammad Khan I, captured the fort in 1733 and had it rebuilt into the design that you see today.

In front of the fort stands the Derawar mosque, which was constructed in 1844 AD. The mosque has three domes and two minarets built in the style of Moti Masjid at the Red Fort in Delhi.

We also visit the tombs of Nawabs of Bahawalpur, the royal graveyard of the Abbasi family. The Abbasi family was the ruling Nawab family of Bahawalpur and all of the previous Nawabs are buried here. The graveyard is still owned and controlled by the surviving family members of the Nawabs.

There is also an option to do camel safari in the Cholistan desert around Derawar Fort. Drive back to Bahawalpur, visiting Bibi Jaiwandi Tomb in Ucch along the way.

OVERNIGHT: Bahawalpur hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 10: Exploring the former Princely State of Bahawalpur. Drive to Multan

Founded in 1748 by Nawab Bahawal Khan, the former state of Bahawalpur remained independant until the formation of Pakistan in 1947. The Nawabs left behind a wealth of culture and beautiful architecture and today we'll visit Nur Mahal, Bahawalpur Mosque, the Museum and the Bazaar. Later, we'll leave the city behind and make our way to Multan.

OVERNIGHT: Multan hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 11: Multan, the city of saints, mystics and shrines

We have a full day of sightseeing ahead of us today, exploring the city of Multan. We'll start by exploring a number of shrines, dedicated to the great mystics Bahauddin Zakaria, Shah Rukn e Alam and Shams Tabrez which are decorated with beautiful glazed blue tiles. Later, we'll explore the old city of Multan, which has a bustling bazaar where you may see artisans making painted camel skin vases and lamp shades. We'll also visit the Eidgah Mosque which dates from the 16th to 17th century. Our evening will be spent in Multan.

OVERNIGHT: Multan hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 12: Visit Harappa en-route to Lahore

The archaeological site of Harappa provides us with an interesting stop off, on our way to Lahore. The town flourished as a centre of the Indus Valley Civilization and dates back to 3000 BC. Later in the day, we'll arrive in Lahore where we'll have a free evening to settle in.

OVERNIGHT: Lahore hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 13: Begin exploring the city of Lahore

We'll begin exploring Lahore today, making our first stop at Lahore Fort, a marvel of Moghul architecture which was constructed between the 11th and 16th centuries. Overlooking the Fort is the Badshahi Mosque (the Royal Mosque). the world's largest, and our next stop. The mosque was constructed during the reign of Emperor Aurengzeb. Pakistan's most famous poet-philosopher, Dr Mohamad Iqbal, lies buried outside the mosque.

From here we move to Jahangir's Tomb. The Tomb was built by his son Shah Jahan (who is best known for constructed the Taj Mahal) in 1627. After making a stop at the Lahore Museum, we will enjoy the city's love of food by visiting the 'food street' in the old town, where we can find many different dishes and flavours.

OVERNIGHT: Lahore hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 14: Old Walled City of Lahore and the Wagah Border Ceremony

The Old Walled City is our next stop with its narrow and dimly lit alleys leading from Sarafa Bazaar to Kashmiri Bazaar. Brass inlay work, as well as local handicrafts can be found in abundance here. We visit Shahi Hamam (Royal Bath) and the Wazir Khan Mosque before heading to the Wagah border with India to watch the flag lowering ceremony. Each day there is an elaborate military drill which symbolizes the 2 countries' rivalry over the last 60 years.

OVERNIGHT: Lahore hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 15: Transfer to Lahore Airport for departure

You'll have some free time in Lahore today until you are transferred to the airport for departure.

OVERNIGHT: N/A **MEALS:** Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra night in Lahore - post-tour Guide & Transport for extra day - Lahore

Included:

- Accommodation 3 to 5-star hotels & guesthouses
- Karachi city and surroundings tour (1 full day)
- Manghopir Sufi Shrine and hot sulphur springs
- Ajrak factory visit (traditional block printed cloth)
- Boating with the Mohanas tribe on Manchar Lake
- · Boat safari to Sukkur island
- Sadu Bela Hindu Temple
- Derawar Fort
- Multan city tour
- Harappa archaeological site
- Rohtas Fort
- Lahore city tour (2 full days)
- Letter of Invitation and general visa advice
- Pakistani clothes (Shalwaar Chemise)
- Airport transfers
- Meals 3 meals per day
- Tea & Coffee morning & afternoon
- All transport
- English speaking guide

Excluded:

- Visas
- Optional Excursions as listed in the Pre-Departure Information
- Flights
- Airport Taxes & Transfers
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks
- Tips

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Extra night in Karachi - pre-tour (EXPAKS)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra night in Karachi to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing. Single room supplements apply.

Note - if you book extra nights with us, you will also need to add the option to book a guide and vehicle for your extra day. If you don't want to include this, then unfortunately we are not able to arrange your extra night hotel or arrival transfer. Instead you would make these arrangements yourself, and make your own way to the start hotel on Day 1.

Guide & Transport for extra day - Karachi (EXPAGK)

Min numbers: 1

If you will be adding extra nights to either end of your tour in Pakistan with us, then our policy is that we will also always provide you with a guide and vehicle for the extra day.

This option provides that guide and vehicle for you in Karachi and is required for each extra night you may add, unless you have a flight arrival time after 3pm or flight departure time before midday. The guide will also accompany you on your arrival or departure airport transfer.

Solo traveller supplements apply.

Extra night in Lahore - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra night in Lahore to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing. Single room supplements apply.

Note - if you book extra nights with us, you will also need to add the option to book a guide and vehicle for your extra day. If you don't want to include this, then unfortunately we are not able to arrange your extra night hotel or departure transfer. Instead you would make these arrangements yourself.

Guide & Transport for extra day - Lahore

Min numbers: 1

If you will be adding extra nights to the end of your tour in Pakistan with us, then our policy is that we will also always provide you with a guide and vehicle for the extra day.

This option provides that guide and vehicle for you in Lahore and is required for each extra night you may add, unless you have a flight arrival time after 3pm or flight departure time before midday. The guide will also accompany you on your arrival or departure airport transfer.

Solo traveller supplements apply.

Single room supplement (CADD15N)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

1. Accommodation

This tour uses comfortable 3 to 4-star hotel and guesthouse accommodation. Please check the accommodations tab for examples of the properties normally used on this tour.

Accommodation is based on a twin-share basis, with single room supplements available if you would like to guarantee yourself a single room throughout the tour.

2. Transport

In Southern Pakistan we normally use a car or 4x4 (Land Cruiser or similar) with air conditioning, though the exact vehicle used will be determined by the final size of the group.

3. Transfers

This tour includes your arrival and departure airport transfers and all other transfers throughout the itinerary. You will be provided with detailed information fo where to meet our representative in the airport, as well as a local contact telephone number and our own 24-hour emergency phone number, when we send you your final tour voucher approximately two weeks before your departure.

If your flight arrives in the early hours of the morning, you may like to book an extra night in the hotel so a bed is available for you to get some rest and sleep before the tour starts. Subject to your arrival time, you may be able to rest in the reception area of the hotel until your room is available (we will aim to help you check in early, but this will be subject to the hotel's occupancy - standard check in times are 2-3pm).

4. Joining on Day 1

This trip starts with an afternoon tour of Karachi on Day 1. We normally meet in the hotel at 1.30pm and leave at 2pm - this will be confirmed by our representative if we pick you up from the airport, or by a notice in the hotel reception if you are making your own arrangements to get to the hotel. If your flight arrives after around 11am on Day 1 you will miss this afternoon tour. Extra nights are available in the same tour hotel if morning arrival flights are not convenient for your dates or departure airport. During this first meeting with the guide, we will also collect a photocopy of your passport information page and your travel insurance policy details.

5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we set our Pakistan small-group departures to have a maximum of 16 travellers. The minimum group size is 2.

In Pakistan we provide a fully trained, local English-speaking tour leader/driver to accompany our groups.

Additional specialist local guides may be used for some of the sightseeing tours and activities included in the tour.

At Encounters Travel we have a policy of aiming to use only local Pakistani guides and reps wherever possible. We feel this provide support to the local population and economy and also gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

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Note: Please $\underline{\text{download an up-to-date copy}}$ of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.