

Karakorum Highlights

Country(ies): Pakistan

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: 4x4 jeep

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 16

Days: 15 Days

Start location: Islamabad, Pakistan

End location: Islamabad, Pakistan

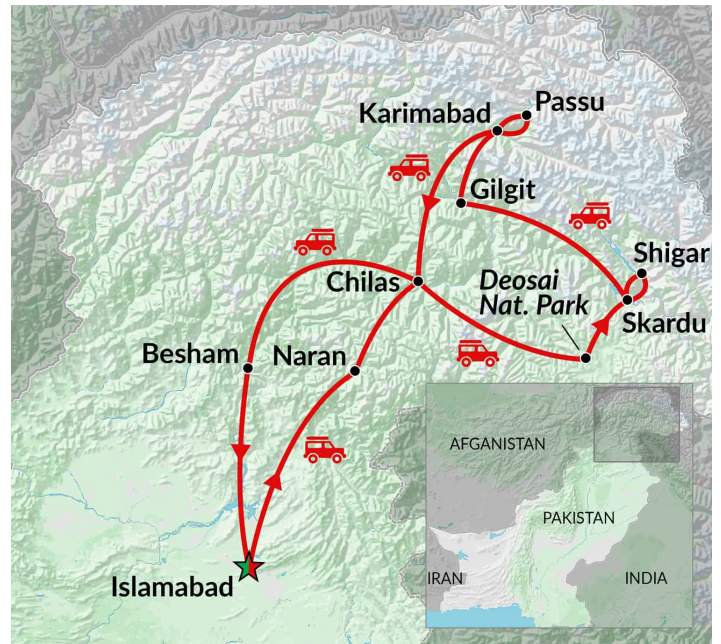
Departs On:

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

Highlights:

Karakorum Highway; Hikes to Fairy Meadows, Beyer Camp, Nanga Parbat BC (optional), Herlikoffer BC & Passu Glacier; Deosai Plains; Shigar Valley; Khorpocho, Baltit & Altit Forts; Borith Lake; Hussaini hanging bridge; Sunset at Duikar viewpoint.

Places Visited: Islamabad, Naran, Fairy Meadows, Skardu, Gilgit, Shigar Valley, Passu, Karimabad, Besham*, Taxila



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Islamabad, afternoon city tour

This morning we will welcome you to Pakistan at Islamabad airport and transfer you to your hotel. At 2pm your guide will meet you at the hotel and take you on an afternoon tour of Pakistan's modern capital. Our visits will include the huge Faisal Mosque, which is the 6th largest in the world and the biggest in South Asia. We'll also visit the Pakistan Monument which was constructed to symbolise the unity of the Pakistan people, and the impressive Heritage Museum which presents the history and living traditions of the people of Pakistan both from the main stream and the remotest regions of the country.

Extra nights are available in the hotel before the tour starts if morning arrival flights are not available or convenient.

OVERNIGHT: Islamabad hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra night in Islamabad - pre-tour (EXPAIS) || Single Room Supplement (PASGHK) || Guide & Transport for extra day - Islamabad (EXPAGI)

Day 2: Islamabad to Naran

We leave modern Islamabad this morning and start our drive up into the hills to the north. Our journey takes us along the photogenic, 160km-long Khagan valley, which is embraced by the forested peaks of the lesser Himalayan range. This is one of Pakistan's most popular summer holiday spots and is famous for its colourful panorama. Naran itself is situated on the banks of the Kunhar river, and we have some time to look around before spending the night here.

OVERNIGHT: Hotel in Naran

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 3: Cross the Babussar Pass. Hike to Fairy Meadows

Prepare for some serious hairpin bends today as the road climbs up to the Babussar Pass (4175m) and then descends again towards Chilas, situated on the banks of the mighty Indus River. En-route we'll stop for a break at Lulusar Lake. We continue up the Karakorum Highway to Raikot Bridge (2300m) and then follow a narrow jeep track to Tato village. The track clings to the side of the mountain with steep drops below and we'll be thankful for our experienced driver! We leave the vehicles at Jhel Village there and take a 2-3 hour/5km trek to Fairy Meadows (3300m). This is a strenuous uphill walk, which includes a gradual climb for most of the route, with one steep final section of around 30 minutes (total elevation gain around 650m). Horses can be hired locally for around 3000Rs per person (approx. GBP 13 / USD 18) if you don't want to walk up.

This is a legendary place, well named by German climbers, and has an unsurpassed view of Nanga Parbat (8125m).

OVERNIGHT: Fairy Meadows Huts

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: Treks in the mountains around Fairy Meadows

Fairy Meadows (3300m) is one of the most picturesque places in the world, and the start of some fantastic mountain trekking routes. There are two options today. The easier choice is a 2-3 hour trek through dense prime forest, and then through birch trees and along shallow streams up to Beyal Camp (3500m). This is a summer settlement for the

local shepherds and has stunning views of Nanga Parbat. An easy walk takes you back down to Fairy Meadows to enjoy a camp fire after dinner.

The other, tougher option is continue on from Beyal Camp for another 3 to 4 hours to reach Nanga Parbat Base Camp (3967m, 500m ascent). Suitable for fit, and experienced trekkers, this is an 8 to 9 hour round trip, but well worth it if you're up for it,

OVERNIGHT: Fairy Meadows huts

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Hike down to Tato, drive to Tarashing

We'll leave Fairy Meadows reluctantly this morning and after breakfast hike back down to Tato (approx. 1 1/2 to 2 hours), pick up our vehicles again, and then drive on to Tarashing, through the magnificent, pine forested Astore Valley which feels reminiscent of Austrian scenes (around 3 to 4 hours drive). The roads become smaller and narrower and eventually we reach the remote village of Tarashing, the last village at the head of the jeep road towards the Rupal face of Nanga Parbat. The village is watered by Tarashing Glacier which follows the route to the base camp. The fields around the village offer picturesque scenery and the flower blossom in summer is superb.

OVERNIGHT: Tarashing guest house

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Hike to Nanga Parbat-Herrligkoffer Base Camp

We have another stunning mountain trek today. We'll start by driving from Tarashing (2911m) into the the Rupal Valley, following the Tarashing (or Chhungphar) glacier's lateral moraine before crossing it and continuing to Rupal Village. From there we hike through small settlements and past herds of yaks and cattle to the Herrligkoffer Base Camp (3550m) at the foot of Nanga Parbat. The camp site is named after a German mountaineer, Karl Herrligkoffer, who led the first successful expedition to reach the peak of Nanga Parbat in 1953. The overall trek is around 8km, taking around 4 hours.

Back at Tarashing, there will be free time in the village to chat to friendly locals and see how life is lived in these remote areas where the glacial water supply is vital and ever decreasing.

OVERNIGHT: Tarashing guest house

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 7: To Skardu via Desosai National Park

Our route today takes us through the Deosai National Park. These plains are a contrast to the steep valleys we've traversed so far, and lie between the Indus River and the souther extension of the Himalayas. The altitude averages 3800m, and the undulating green, flower-filled meadows are surrounded by snow capped peaks. Fresh water lakes abound, helping to make this seldom disturbed area a haven for wildlife, including Brown Bear and Markhor. After driving across the plains, we continue to Skardu, the capital of the Baltistan region. Known as 'Little Tibet', this area has one of the highest clusters of mountains in the world, and has ancient ties with nearby Tibet.

We'll break the journey to Skardu at the beautiful Satpura Lake, another large lake at the foot of the plains, and visit the Manthal Buddha, a large granite rock into which a picture of Buddha has been engraved, probably sometime in the 8th century. This is one of the most important relics of Buddhism in the Skardu region.

OVERNIGHT: Skardu hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 8: Day trip to the Shigar Valley

We take a day trip from Skardu to the fertile Shigar Valley today. We'll cross the Indus River, and head up the Shigar River which is surrounded by wide flat sand banks, deposited when the water levels are high. The lush green valley is a great contrast, and is well known for its fruit orchards. Shigar is inhabited mostly by Balti people of Tibetan descent, and has many historical buildings of architectural significance associated with the Noorbakhshi Sufi community. We'll visit the Amborik Mosque, and have lunch at Shigar Fort.

After returning to Skardu we can take a late afternoon hike to Khorpocho Fort, built in the 8th century on a hill overlooking Skardu. The main fort was destroyed in 1840, though the impressive boundary walls remain.

OVERNIGHT: Skardu hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Skardu to Gilgit via Katchura Lake

After breakfast we'll drive back to the main Karakorum Highway and the town of Gilgit. The road hugs the banks of the Indus river all the way, and we can see various stretches of white water rapids. We'll make a stop on the way at the Katchura Lakes, and look out for the local wild apricot trees.

Gilgit is an important town, and was part of the Kushan Empire in the 1st to 3rd centuries. Buddhism persisted after the Kushan demise, though few traces remain - one being the Kargah Buddha, a rock wall carved in the 7th century.

Gilgit is surrounded by high peaks, the most impressive being Rakaposhi (7,788m). We'll arrive in time to visit the old British cemetery and the lively and eclectic bazaar. If we're lucky we may be able to see a Polo match; Polo is extremely popular through the region and matches between neighbouring towns happen throughout the summer.

OVERNIGHT: Gilgit Hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 10: Hunza Valley, Borith Lake, Passu Glacier View

We drive north again today on the newly reconstructed Karakorum Highway. Passing under the shadow of Rakaposhi, our two hour journey leads us to the former kingdom of Hunza, called "the epitome of mountain grandeur" by Eric Sipton. It is a fairy tale land surrounded by beautiful rugged & snow capped mountains; including Ultar (7,388m), Lady Finger (6000m), Diran (7,266m) and Rakaposhi (7,788m).

In the Upper Hunza Valley, we'll take a walk for around two hours from Borith Lake (2600m), up to a stunning viewpoint alongside the huge Passu Glacier. The saline waters are supposed to be good for the skin, and many people take a dip here in the summer months. The site is also an important sanctuary for migrating wildfowl. From the glacier, a path leads back down to the Karakorum Highway. We'll return to our hotel and there feast on some of the best food of the trip with both Indian and Chinese influences creating mouth watering dishes.

OVERNIGHT: Passu Hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 11: Passu to Karimabad

A short drive and walk after breakfast this morning brings us to the world famous Hussaini Suspension Bridge. Considered the second longest man made hanging bridge in the world, this stretches for several hundred metres across the Hunza River, with widely spaced wooden boards and a few wire ropes being all that is between you and the rushing river below. Take care if you want to cross it!

We'll then follow the river downstream and visit Gulmit village, Pamiri Musical School, a local museum and a ladies

weaving centre. In Karimabad, the main town of the Hunza Valley, we'll visit the Baltit Fort which was the old palace of the Mirs of Hunza. About 700 years old, the Baltit Fort sits on the edge of a cliff with a ravine below and the Ultar glacier in the distance.

OVERNIGHT: Karimabad hotel
MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
EXTRAS: None

Day 12: Altit Fort & Village, Duikar viewpoint

We'll take a walk around Karimabad this morning, following the main water channels. We can also visit the bazaar in Karimabad and if we're lucky, watch a polo match in the town. We'll also visit Altit Fort and Altit village. Like Baltit Fort, Tibetan architectural traditions are much in evidence. The fort is around 900 years old and has a splendid defensive position overlooking the Hunza river valley, and it also served as the home of the Mir of Hunza before the set of power moved to nearby Baltit (now Karimabad).

Late in the afternoon we'll drive up to the small village of Duikar (approx. 3000m) to enjoy a panoramic view of the Hunza Valley at sunset.

OVERNIGHT: Karimabad hotel
MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
EXTRAS: None

Day 13: Karakorum Highway to Besham or Naran

We have a long drive back down the Karakorum Highway today, enjoying a different perspective to the mountain views we saw on the way up. Heading to Gilgit, we'll see the junction of the three highest mountain ranges in the world, the Himalay, Karakorum and the Hindu Kush. Along the way, we'll make a stop near Chilas at Shatial to see the Petroglyphs there. An important historical crossroads, many Buddhist missionaries, pilgrims, Sogdian merchants and traders passed through Shatial and left inscriptions and graffiti on the rocks. Over 700 petroglyphs and 1000 inscriptions in more than ten languages can be found at the Shatial bridge across the Indus River.

Depending on the weather, road and local security conditions, we have the option of following the original Karakorum Highway and taking the Westerly route through the mighty Indus Valley to Besham where we spend the night. This road follows the Indus for most of the rest of the day and travels through steep gorges, beneath high rock walls with the river rushing below us. Alternatively we will return via Barbusar Pass route, travelling through the Kaghan Valley again to overnight in Naran.

OVERNIGHT: Besham or Naran hotel
MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch
EXTRAS: None

Day 14: Return to Islamabad via Taxila

Our final descent out of the mountains today crosses low lying hills on twisting roads to reach the 'Grand Trunk Road', built originally by the British to link Peshawa in the West to Calcutta in the East.

We'll stop on the way at Taxila, once an important seat of Oriental culture. First mentioned as a satrapy of the Archemenian empire in the 6th century BC, Taxila was later invaded by Alexander the Great and passed through the hands of various different rulers before being controlled by Ashoka the Great who focussed the city into an important centre of learning. Taxila remained an important place for philosophy, art and learning through the creative Gandhara period and on until the 5th century C.E.

We will finish the day and our trip with a walking tour through the Raja Bazaar in Rawalpindi, which sits adjacent to Islamabad. This old bazaar bustles with life and a stop in the silver and gold bazaars will allow us to watch traditional craftsmen at work, as well as perhaps pick up a final souvenir of our time in Pakistan.

OVERNIGHT: Rawalpindi hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 15: Departure from Islamabad

Your time is free today until we transfer you back to Islamabad airport for your flight home.

Extra nights and additional guiding and transport are available in Islamabad or Rawalpindi if you would like to extend your stay, perhaps to add on a visit to Lahore to see the Fort, Mosque and Gardens. Please contact us for details.

OVERNIGHT:

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Included

- Accommodation in comfortable hotels, simple guesthouses and cabins
- Airport arrival and departure transfers
- Transport in rugged 4x4 vehicles
- Visa invitation letter
- Sightseeing tours in Islamabad & Rawalpindi
- Various guided mountain hikes throughout the route
- Pakistani clothes (Shalwaar Chemise)
- Meals - 3 meals per day
- Tea & Coffee morning & afternoon
- Local English speaking guide

Excluded

- International flights
- Visas
- Travel insurance (compulsory)
- Drinks, snacks & tips
- Other personal expenses (eg. laundry)
- Optional excursions

Notes

Note: Chilas-Besham-Mahsehra route

Our preferred route on our return from Karimabad to Islamabad is to follow the section of the classic Karakorum Highway on the N35 road from Chilas to Besham and on to Mansehra. However, subject to the current weather, road, and local security conditions, we may return from Chilas to Islamabad on the N15 road via the Barbusar Pass and Naran.

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 Islamabad - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra night in Islamabad 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 .

Price: \$50

Extra night in Islamabad - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra night in Islamabad 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.

Price: \$50

Guide & Transport for extra day - Islamabad

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 Islamabad 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.

Price: \$60

Single Room Supplement

Min numbers: 1

This tour is based on twin-share accommodation, with single bookers paired up with another traveller of the same sex in the group. If the final group make-up means that no room share is available, you do not need to pay this supplement. However, if you would like to guarantee yourself a single room throughout the tour, then please add this option to your booking. Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

Price: \$300

1. Accommodation

This tour stays in a mix of different accommodation, based partly on what is available in some of the remote areas we are visiting. In Islamabad and Rawalpindi we stay in a comfortable tourist class hotel (locally rated 3 or 4 star), while hotels and guesthouses are more simple and with less facilities further up the KKH. Bathrooms are en-suite in nearly all locations.

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

The transport for this tour is based on using rugged local 4x4 jeeps. While the majority of the Karakorum Highway (KKH) has been improved and re-surfaced, we will also be travelling on some rough gravel tracks and roads where this type of vehicle is needed. We only use drivers experienced in driving on the KKH and on remote roads like these. Seatbelts are provided and should be worn.

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 for 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 Islamabad 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 provides support to the local population and economy and also gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

6. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable. Details about our own policies cover levels are given [on our website](#).

7. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour. Our Pakistan tours start and finish at either Islamabad airport (ISB) or Karachi airport (KHI).

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines may be more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

8. Passports and Visas

Your passport expiry date must be at least 6 months after your time in India finishes. Do not bring a full or almost expired passport. We also recommend you have a machine-readable passport - if you have an old-style manually issued passport you should replace this with a new machine-readable passport before you travel.

All nationalities will need to arrange their Pakistan tourist visa in advance. To apply for your visa, you will need to obtain a 'Letter of Invitation' (LOI) and show some other information about the local arrangements for your tour. Once you have received the LOI and this information you will be able to apply for the visa at your nearest Pakistan embassy or Consulate.

We will provide you with your Letter of Invitation and all the other information required as part of your tour price. Details for this process will be emailed to you several months before the trip departs. You should apply for your visa at least one month before you are due to arrive to allow for processing time and possible checks of your documentation. Costs will vary depending on your nationality and the embassy at which you apply for your visa.

The information below is to be used only as a guide and may change without prior notice. It is advisable to contact the relevant embassy in plenty of time before the trip departs to check the current visa requirements. It is **your responsibility** to ensure you have all the relevant visas you require.

9. Climate

With its geographical spread from the Arabian Sea to the heights of the Karakorum and Himalayan mountains, Pakistan has an extreme of weather conditions.

The areas we visit in the north are generally only passable during the summer months from June to October. Temperatures can be as high as 40 degrees during the day at lower altitudes, while cooler but with a powerful sun at altitude. At night, especially from September, temperatures can drop to sub zero. Flooding is possible and thunderstorms can be heavy during July and August, but this is still most definitely the best time of year to visit!

For our tours in the southern half of the country we prefer to travel between October and April, as it is the drier season and the temperature is a little cooler in the evenings. You should still expect high temperatures and some hot, humid days and nights.

10. Altitude Sickness

This is caused by thin air (due to lack of oxygen) and can affect anyone arriving at high altitude (above 3000mtrs). The symptoms are headaches, dizziness, shortage of breath and possibly nausea. To avoid this or alleviate the symptoms it is important to make a point to acclimatize by arriving into a high altitude destination a few days early and make sure you do not over exert yourself, rest for a few hours, avoid drinking alcohol, smoking, large meals and drink plenty of water.

As our tours in northern Pakistan travel by land (as opposed to flying into a high altitude location) we should acclimatise gradually, and so avoid the risks of mountain sickness. If you do have any symptoms you should discuss these with your guide who will be able to make adjustments to your itinerary if necessary.

11. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

Pakistan: Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Yellow fever rules for India are quite complicated and lengthy. Please read the [WHO guidance](#).

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting. In general Malaria is present throughout the year in all areas of Pakistan below 2000m except the Punjab and the city of Karachi. Risk is highest in rural areas from July to December. Areas of high risk include much of the south, and western part of the country including Chitral. Areas of low risk include the northern mountains and Eastern areas. Here malaria prophylactics are often not advised for short trips.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view this [US CDC information](#) about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

12. Money

The currency unit for Pakistan is the Pakistani Ruppe (Rs, or PKR).

As a general rule it is best to bring your spending money in a combination of cash US dollars, pre-paid travel currency cards and debit/credit cards. Make sure that all your notes are in good condition. Old, torn or marked notes are often refused by the banks and shops.

Spending Money

From past trips and traveller feedback we would recommend changing US\$100 to US\$150 (or GBP equivalent) to local currency while you are in Islamabad. This will pay for any extra drinks, snacks and a few souvenirs during the trip. Personal spending habits and budgets can vary greatly from person to person, but generally there isn't a lot to spend your money on during our Pakistan tours as most things are already included.

If you plan on buying more expensive souvenirs, such as a carpet, then budget for this separately. US Dollars would be the best currency for this.

Changing money

Change your money only at banks, hotels, airports or forex bureaus. It is illegal to change money on the street, and people offering this service may be opportunistic thieves or undercover police. Your guide will advise you where & when you can change money & with what means. It is also a good idea to have a small CASH emergency fund, to allow for the unexpected.

Credit & Debit Cards

If you are intending using your credit or debit card, we suggest taking more than one card with you as you may find that your card is not accepted in the first ATM you try. Visa or Mastercard are preferred rather than American Express. We recommend that you inform your bank that you will be using your card abroad to avoid it being blocked.

Pre-Paid Travel Currency Cards

These cards are similar to normal Credit and Debit cards but they can be pre loaded with cash before you travel with a set amount allowing you to withdraw this cash using the card at normal ATMs. It is a more secure way to access cash on your trip, but again do not rely on these as your sole means of funds on a trip. Several banks and companies now offer these cards, but be sure to look into the rates for withdrawing cash when making your decision. When using these cards abroad you will use them to withdraw the local currency from an ATM and not the currency that you loaded onto the card.

13. Tipping

Tipping is often expected and relied upon. It is often more than a reward for services well done, but, as wages are extremely low, it is an accepted means of supplementing an income. If you would like to leave a tip for any activity/individual, you could organise this as a group and give a tip at the end. Your guide will be able to advise and will sometimes leave tips for your local restaurant meals, as part of your trip price.

Because it can be difficult to know what to tip, and because it has such importance in some areas both economically and culturally, there may be times and activities for which your guide will make it clear what level of tipping is 'customary/expected'. This is motivated by the knowledge of how important tipping can be, and the offence or confusion that can be caused when local people are tipped poorly. In the end, tipping remains at the discretion of the individual and their budget, but our guides will continue to advise on normal or average rates, and we would ask you to carefully consider the economic or personal impact of being seen as 'under tipping'. We know that many who travel with us are on a tight budget, but ask you to consider that many local people face financial hardship, and also work very hard to try to give you unrivalled service/experiences.

In the past we have been asked by travellers about tipping your guide. If you choose to do this, it would be budgeted separately from the above. Our guides work very hard at making your trip a great travel experience. Working overseas can often be challenging and they are pretty much on call for you 24 hours a day, so it's appreciated as a thank you for hard work and good service, but of course not mandatory or expected. Our suggestion is to budget around US\$3 to US\$6 per person per day, again subject to your budget and your satisfaction with the service provided.

14. Voltage

In Pakistan, sockets are mainly two or three round pronged and 230 volts / 50Hz (Type C,D). Type C plugs with 2 round pins should fit in nearly all sockets.

Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard UK-European adaptors will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are sometimes available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already but cannot be guaranteed.

If you have US appliances (110 volts) you may need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

15. Time

Pakistan Standard Time is GMT/UTC + 5. Daylight saving time is not applied.

16. What to take

Luggage: Whatever you're doing in Pakistan, you'll find that large rigid wheeled suitcases are cumbersome - you may be able to wheel them inside the airport and your hotel, but due to the condition of roads and pavements that's often about it. As many of our tours involve a degree of adventurous activity, we strongly advise you to bring a more practical bag for these i.e. a rucksack or holdall. These are also much easier to fit into vehicles like jeeps than rigid suitcases. If you are trekking, or doing a lot of travel throughout the country, then as little as possible is the basic message. A rucksack or holdall (50-70 liter approx.) for your main luggage, and a daypack for you to use during the day should be plenty. The trekking included on our standard tours in Pakistan is all done as single day treks, so your main luggage will be left behind in the hotel or in the vehicle. So, you'll just need to take a daypack with things you'll need during the day. Do bring one big enough to carry waterproofs and extra clothing as the weather can change quickly in the mountains.

Luggage limits: Most international airlines allow 20-23kg per person of hold luggage. Domestic flights often have smaller allowances around 15kg. As airline rules vary we recommend that you take no more than 20kg of luggage if your tour just includes international flights, and no more than 15kg if there are any domestic flights included in your itinerary. Please ask us for details if you are unsure. Any excess baggage fees will be your responsibility to cover. Most airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage so we suggest that you take no more than 5kg unless you have confirmed that your airline(s) will allow more than this.

If you are doing any overnight treks with us, we ask that you keep the weight of your main bag that the porter will carry to a maximum of 12.5kg. This then allows the porter to carry up to 2 bags, and a maximum of 25kg.

Clothing & Climate: Pakistan has a climate that ranges widely depending on when you visit, and where you are visiting.

June to August - monsoon season - please make sure you bring waterproof clothing. While the rains are not as persistent in the mountains, there may well be heavy showers and thunderstorms.

September - If you are travelling in northern Pakistan in September, ensure you pack extra warm clothing as it can get very cold at night.

At the start of the tour you will be given 2 x Shalwaar Chemise, which are worn by the local people. You don't have to wear these, but we find they are very comfortable and you will blend in more and be appreciated and accepted more freely by the locals. There is room to wear trousers or shorts / T shirts / shirts / blouses underneath when the weather gets cold. Moderate and modest dress is the order of the day wherever we go.

Women will be required to wear head scarves, long sleeves and either loose fitting ankle length skirts or pants. Your guide can advice more on which areas you are travelling through which may be more strict or relaxed about dress codes for women. Men should also be conservatively dressed and will need long trousers and long sleeved shirts. Both men and women will need to wear covered shoes in certain areas. Shorts are generally not considered acceptable for males or females throughout Pakistan and we have only included them on the list for use underneath your Shalwaar Chemise.

All tours: We recommend that you bring a refillable water bottle, sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries (including tampons if required as these can be hard to find in the country), money belt, small torch, camera & charger, plug adaptor.

Whilst trekking:

Suggested Clothing and equipment: Strong hiking boots or walking shoes that you have broken in; lightweight waterproof and windproof jacket; (waterproof gaiters, waterproof over trousers - these are only necessary on some treks in some seasons - contact us for further info if required); 3 or 4 t-shirts; several pairs of light socks; 2 pairs of heavier woollen socks; underwear including thermals; warm hat and gloves; swimwear; pair of lightweight trousers;

pair of shorts; 1 fleece or warm jumper and 1 sweatshirt. Also, sunglasses, torch and batteries, toiletries (include a lighter to burn toilet paper), bring biodegradable shampoo & soap, towel, blister kit, money belt and any personal medication you might require. Remember, Lots of layers are the key to staying warm and comfortable. Also, keeping your feet comfortable and healthy makes a huge difference to how you enjoy your trek. So, bring waterproof boots/walking shoes and plenty of pairs of socks so you can change them regularly.

Day Packs and Main luggage: You will want a sturdy and comfortable daypack to carry your day-to-day items with you while you are walking (waterproofs, clothes you may change in and out of regularly, drinks, snacks, camera). On any multi-day treks you will also need a sturdy holdall or backpack for your main luggage. Your porters or ponies will carry this for you, so suitcases are not appropriate. They may leave earlier than you, and may not walk with you throughout the entire day, so bear in mind that you won't have access to this luggage all the time - you need to ensure you are carrying everything you require during the days walk in your daypack. You can leave luggage behind in storage at your hotel so you don't need to take everything with you on the trek.

17. Security

Generally Pakistani people are some of the friendliest on earth, but all major cities have their share of petty crime (just like our cities!) and sensible precautions need to be taken. Wearing expensive looking jewellery, watches and carrying cameras, will draw unnecessary attention to you. Leave valuables such as passports, excess money etc in your hotel safe (we recommend carrying a copy of your passport details page at all times). You may find a simple money belt is more discrete than a bag. Always be aware of your surroundings and when approached by people you do not know, use your common sense. At night in cities it's best to use a taxi, rather than walking around the streets. Single women in particular need to be careful & we would suggest that it is safer to be in a group.

FCDO Advice - The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) offer [country-specific advice](#), regarding not only security but also entry regulations, local laws and customs and health. We strongly recommend all travellers visit the FCO website, or the equivalent in their home country, to familiarise themselves with local conditions and potential issues in the countries they plan to visit before committing to a trip with us.

As an adventure tour operator, some of our trips will travel to areas that are rarely-visited and occasionally attract negative publicity. We are not in the business of taking our travellers or indeed staff to regions that we consider dangerous and the safety of all who travel with us is always our main priority. However, as a discerning customer we understand you will want to be aware of any risks before travelling. We liaise with the FCDO on specific regions or areas as necessary, as well as monitoring open media outlets and political risk resources, and speaking to our contacts on the ground.

In some rare cases, our trips may have to travel through areas against which the FCDO either 'advise against all but essential travel' or 'advise against all travel'. When our trips travel through these areas we will carry out all due diligence and notify you in advance. This advice can change without notice. In these instances you will need to ensure you have full and comprehensive travel insurance that includes cover for these areas – some policies will exclude them. We are able to recommend additional cover, if required. It may also be required that you read and sign a short information sheet confirming you have been advised of the risks and agree to travel contrary to the FCDO advice.

If you have any questions at all about the safety or security of your trip, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to discuss your trip in more detail.

18. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

19. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

20. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

21. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

22. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.



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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
