

Pakistan: The Great Mountain Ranges

Pakistan is a land of varied and unique landscape. While high mountain ranges dominate its North, series of low mountain ranges of Suleman, Pub, Kirthar and Mekran extend from North to Southwest and to South in a bone like manner. These low ranges dominate the plains and deserts to the East and warm and captivating beaches of the Arabian Sea to the South. It is, however, Northern Pakistan which is endowed with most unique geographical feature in the world. It is here that the three great, lofty and spectacular mountain ranges, Karakoram, Hindukush and Himalayas meet. In an area of about 500 sq.km in width and 350 sq.km in depth, is found the most dense collection of some of the highest and precipitous peaks in the world, boasting more than 700 peaks above 6000 meters, and more than 160 peaks above 7000 meters. These include five out of the total fourteen above eight thousand meter high peaks on earth, namely the second highest rock pyramid - the K-2 (8611 m), the killer mountain Nanga Parbat (8125 m), the Hidden Peak, Gasherbrum I (8068 m), the Broad Peak (8047 m) and the Gasherbrum II (8035 m). This enormous mountain wealth makes Pakistan an important mountain country offering great opportunities for mountaineering and mountain related adventure activities.

Besides high mountains, these ranges are inhabited by the longest glaciers outside polar regions, enchanting and captivating valleys like Hunza, Shigar, Khaplu, Ishkuman, Naltar, Gilgit, Skardu, Chitral, Dir, Kaghan, Swat and Kashmir and splendid passes like Shandur and Burzil, There are numerous glacial lakes which are famous for their scenic value, blue waters and trout fishing. Prominent among these are Phandar, Kachura, Sadpara, Lulusar and Saiful Muluk. The main population centers are along river valleys; main ethnic groups being Baltis, Wakhis, Khawar, Hunzukut, Kohistani, Shena, Yashkun and Pathans. These ranges have the rarest species of flora and fauna. The wildlife includes the Snow Leopard, Brown Bear, Morcopolo Sheep, etc. The gateway to these great mountains ranges is Islamabad.

Karakoram

Karakoram means black in Turkish. This splendid and magnificent collection of dark



شمال هوشه - جبال قره قورم
North of Hushe, Karakoram Range

brown and black metamorphic rocks is the most unique mountain range. It has the largest concentration of lofty pinnacles and mountains in the world, stretching for 400 sq.km with 250 sq.km depth. It is bounded by Shyok River in the East and Karamber, Ishkuman and Gilgit Rivers in the West. In the North East it is bounded by Shaksgam River and in the South West by Shyok and the Indus Rivers.

Four peaks above eight thousand meters i.e., K-2, Gasherbrum I and II and Broad Peak are situated in Karakoram in a radius of just twenty sq.km around the famous glacial junction-Concordia. The sub regions of the Karakoram are Boltoro, Soltoro, Lugghar, Ghunjerab, Panmah, Aghil, Masherbrum, Saser, Hispar, Siachen, Rimo, Batura, Rakaposhi/Bogrot, and Haramosh. The snow line in this range varies between 4200 to 4500 meters during the summers. The temperatures in the area are extreme and there is large difference between lowest and highest temperatures during a day. Monsoons do not penetrate this area; most suitable climbing season in Karakoram being from May till end September, each year.

For centuries travelers have been lured by the grandeur and massiveness of the Karakoram and Hindukush. The Chinese were the earliest known travellers on the famous Silk Route which passed through these magnificent ranges. Marco Polo's journey from Venice to the court of Kublia Khan in 13th century left its imprints here including the Marco Polo sheep. Ibn Batuta

of Tangiers travelled here in the 14th century. Later many European notables visited Karakoram for adventure.

Till 1947, a number of European mountaineers and explorers including British, Italian and American had visited the region. After independence, in 1947, number of expeditions to the area increased. In 1953 an American expedition made an unsuccessful attempt on K-2, where as in 1954 an Italian expedition led by Prof. Ardito Desio successfully made the first ascent of the savage mountain - K-2. Mr. Lino Leucedelli and Archille Compagnoni became the first men to reach K-2 summit, climbing through the Abruzzi ridge. A Pak-Japanese expedition successfully put the first Japanese mountaineer along with first Pakistani mountaineer Mr. Ashraf Aman on the K-2 summit in 1977.

Hindukush

The Hindukush rises South West of Pamirs. It is considered to extend from Wakhjir pass at the junction of the Pamirs and Karakoram to Khawak pass North of Kabul. Its first region extends from Wakhjir pass separating Hunza from Wakhan and up to Dorah pass (320 sq.km in length). Its second region lies beyond Dorah pass in Afghanistan. The third region which runs for 240 sq.km lies in Pakistan and extends into Swat and Kohistan. On the East it is separated from Karakoram by Indus River. Highest of Hindukush is Trich Mir (7708 m). Other peaks include Istre-o-Nal (7403 m), Saraghar (7349 m), Noshaq (7492 m), Darban Zom (7219 m) and Shingeik Zom. Few glaciers exit in the range but of lesser significance.

The area, due to geographic features had access from Afghanistan and was first explored by the Europeans in 1830, followed by the British survey teams. Trichmir was climbed in 1950 by a Norwegian expedition led by Mr. Arne Naess. Since then it has been climbed by numerous expeditions from different nationalities including Pakistanis.

Western Himalayas

The Western Himalayas is situated between Kashmir valley in the East to Indus River in the North and West, and is dominated by Nanga Parbat massif with highest peak ➤

City Tourism



Kachura Lake, Skardu



A View of Skardu Airport

مطار سكارڊو

rising at 8125 meters. The range comprise the regions of Kashmir, Kaghan, Kohistan, Deosai and Chilas. The range is also dominated by Deosai plains situated at the height of above 4500 m which is filled with flowers in the summer months, presenting the most rewarding scenic view. The monsoons penetrate the area; climbing season being in the summer. Of late, some winter climbing has also started.

Nanga Parbat complex has numerous routes but the prominent base camps are Rupal (Eastern face), Raikot / Fairy Meadows face

(North Western face), Diamer face (the Western face) and the long West Mazeno ridge. It was explored by Europeans in later part of nineteenth century. The Schlagintweert brothers from Germany visited Nanga Parbat region as early as 1854. Sher Khan, Rajab Shah, Mohammed-ullah and Atta-ul-Haq became the first Pakistanis to scale Nanga Parbat in 1989.

Access to the Area and Facilities

The Northern Areas, prior to Pakistan's independence were accessed from Srinagar in Kashmir Valley. The earlier explorers ➤



مصيف في ملام جوبا - وادي سوات
Malam Jabba, Ski-cum-Summer
Resort, Swat Valley

Come to ...

Nature

History

Music

Culture

... Come to **Pakistan**

اهلاً وسهلاً
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City Tourism

وادي هندوس - قره قورم

Indus Valley,
descending from Thalle
La, Karakoram Range



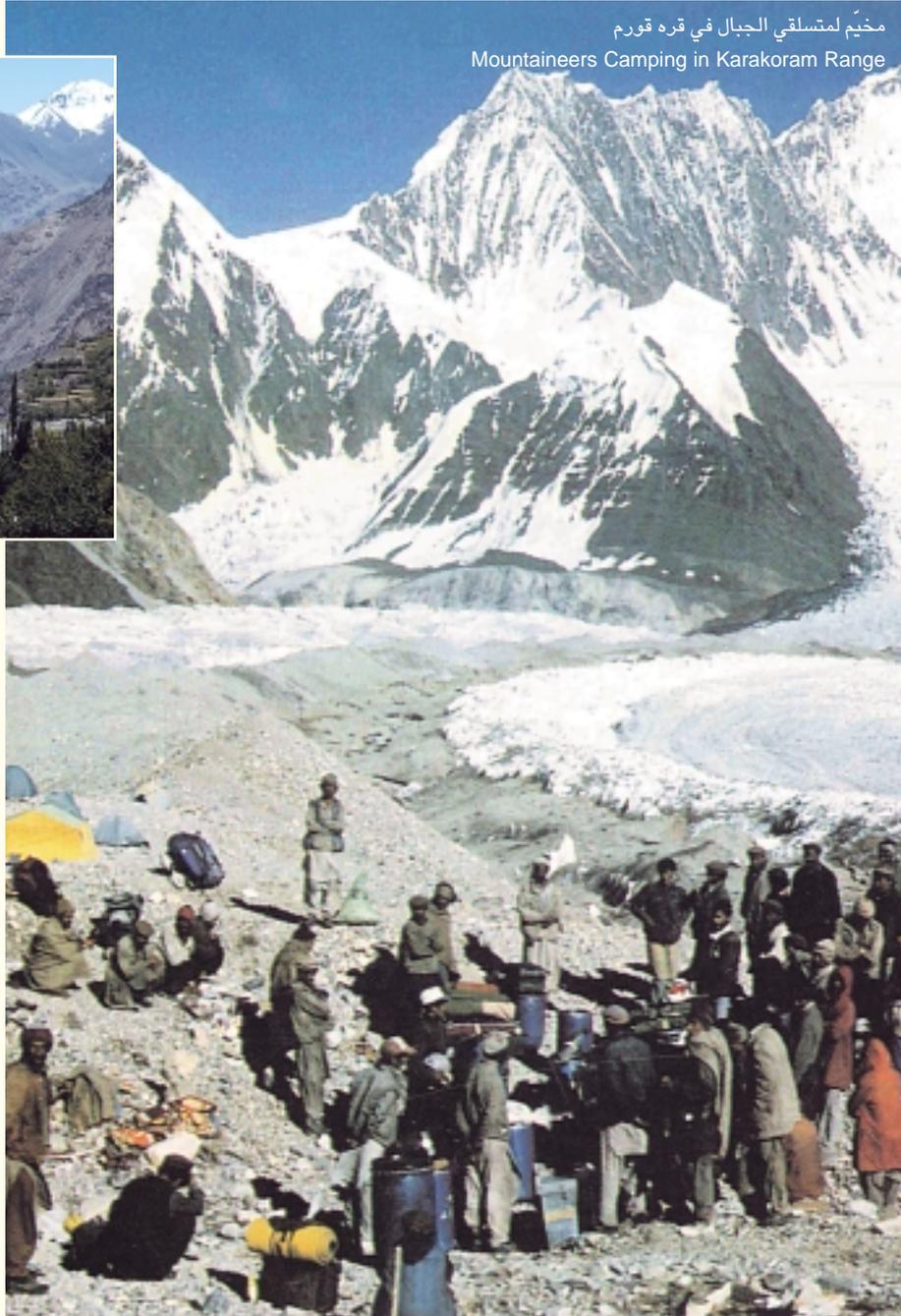
took several days journey from the Indian seaport of Bombay to reach Srinagar, from where it took them a minimum of 40 days to reach the upper portions of Boltoro glacier and other areas. After Pakistan's independence, the

accessibility was improved, at first an airport was established at Skardu and later a jeepable link with Rawalpindi was developed through Chilas and Kaghan Valley in the mid fifties. Construction of the great Karakoram Highway along the old Silk Route, completed with the help and co-operation of the friendly country of Peoples Republic of China in 1978, provides an all weather link between Islamabad and Gilgit.

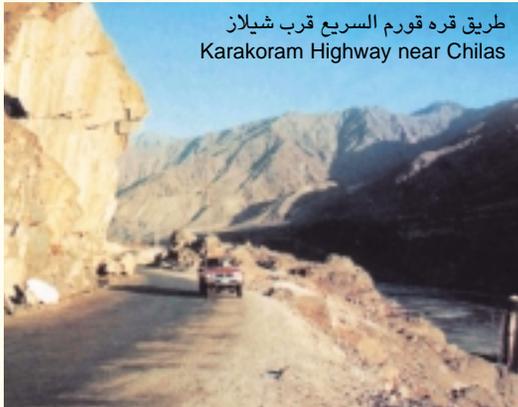
A jeepable track from Skardu to Shigar has further been extended to Askole reducing trekking time to K-2. Now it takes one day's jeep ride from Skardu to Askole - the last village and further 9 days up to the K-2 Base Camp. Islamabad serves as the hub for the Northern Areas, whereas Peshawar serves as the base for Chitral. Islamabad is also linked by daily Boeing flights with Skardu and Fokker flights with Gilgit.

Since opening up of the area to the general mountaineering and trekking in 1974 there has been a gradual increase in the number of tour operators which provide all types of services to the visitors ranging from handling of customs, the paperwork required by the Ministry of Tourism, administrative support to the visitors in way of providing transport, hotelling, guides / porter services, trekking equipment, food, and host of other facilities at nominal costs. The Information Centres of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation have the lists of the reputed tour operators who are ready to facilitate the visitors to the area. The Alpine Club of Pakistan, since its establishment in 1974, has trained a large number of its members in mountaineering, trekking and rock climbing which has given impetus to tour operation in the private sector. ■

مخيم لمتسلقي الجبال في قره قورم Mountaineers Camping in Karakoram Range



طريق قره قورم السريع قرب شيلان Karakoram Highway near Chilas



For more information and planning your trip to Pakistan, please write to:

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