

## **GONDOGORO PEAK & HUSHE VALLEY TREK**

Departure: June 2023

Itinerary:

### **Day 1: Meet at the group hotel in Islamabad - Islamabad Airport transfers are provided**

Meet at the group hotel in Islamabad. All clients will be picked up by our representative on arrival at Islamabad International Airport and taken to the group hotel. Land Only package services begin with this transfer to the group hotel. The majority of international flights arrive in the early morning and you may want to rest before lunch. The first group get-together will be at lunch, during which the tour leader will provide a pre-trip briefing. Depending on the time available to us there may be the option to do some sightseeing in Islamabad, a city purpose-built in 1961 as the new capital of Pakistan. Alternatively, we could visit the Twin City of Rawalpindi a town from the days of the British Raj. The two cities are very different in character; the older settlement is rather sprawling with enormous and complicated bazaars where you can easily get fascinatingly lost. Islamabad, by contrast, is much more open, a modern city with many parks and wide streets arranged on a grid system. There is not always the opportunity to include a sightseeing tour and, if there is, it is optional and there will be a charge payable locally.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

### **Day 2: Fly to Skardu (2500m) and after lunch drive to Khaplu (2600m)**

We take the early morning 1 hour flight from Islamabad to Skardu, skirting breathtakingly past the Rupal and Diamir faces of Nanga Parbat. It is even possible to catch a fleeting glimpse of K2 and the other high peaks of the Baltoro in the distance before landing at Skardu. After taking some refreshment, we continue our journey by jeep on a spectacular road beside the River Indus to the village of Khaplu. Here we check in at our hotel which is located above the village and offers magnificent views over the rock spires and towers which mark the entrance to the Hushe Valley.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **Day 3: Drive across the Shyok River and follow the Hushe River to Hushe Village (3050m)**

We make a reasonably early start from Khaplu, crossing the Shyok River to begin an exciting 4-hour jeep ride up to Hushe, through a number of small and picturesque villages in the lower Hushe Valley. En route we must cross a number of 'nullahs' or small tributary valleys. These nullahs are fed by meltwaters from the glaciers high above the valley and can become impassable by the afternoon as the hot sun goes to work. Our early start from Khaplu means that we should not have any problems in this respect. Hushe is the highest village in the area at 3050 metres and we set up our camp in a field just below the village with the huge bulk of Masherbrum (7821m) dominating the valley to the north.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 4: Acclimatisation day with the option to hike up into the Honboro Valley for possible K2 view. (6km) Approx 4 hours**

A day for acclimatisation and for exploring. One option for today is to trek up into the Honboro Valley on the west side of the Hushe Valley. There is a small summer settlement here where women of the village stay for 2 months of the year grazing goats and yaks and making cheese. En route, we will pass the source of the water supply pipeline, before this system was installed the villagers had to drink the silt laden waters of the Hushe River. Our path follows the route of the pipeline, with excellent views out over the Hushe Valley. High up on the south side of the valley is the viewpoint at Humbrok from where there is a sneaky glimpse of K2's summit rising above the rugged skyline. We return to spend a second night at Hushe.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 5: Trek to the mouth of the Gondogoro Valley at Saitcho (3350m) Approx 4 hours**

Today, we begin our approach to Gondogoro Peak, trekking up above the village on a rocky path through very impressive scenery. Immediately above the village is a farmed area with some bare grazing, fields of corn and turnips, flowering shrubs such as oleander and a few sparse trees. Towering rocky peaks line both sides of the valley. The valley opens out and splits, as we turn towards the north-east alongside the river that has its source in the Gondogoro Glacier. We cross the tributary Charakusa River on a wooden cantilever bridge to reach the idyllic campsite at Saitcho. This camp lies at the junction of the Charakusa and Gondokoro valleys and is sited on a sandy, tree-shaded area beside a swift-flowing river. There are excellent views of Namika (6325m), the rock spire of K7 and from the trail leading to the camp there is a sighting of the impressive Charakusa Spire. This is a short and easy day of trekking, good for acclimatization.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 6: Trek up above Saitcho on a moraine ridge to Gondogoro Village (3700m) Approx 3 hours**

We can have a leisurely breakfast this morning and a bit of free time at Saitcho, before setting off on what is just a short walk to our next camping place. It would be easy to go further today, but our itinerary is dictated by the need to acclimatize adequately. We head up alongside the Gondogoro Glacier now, taking a path on a wooded moraine ridge which climbs quite steeply to the seasonal goat-herder's settlement of crude stone huts and sheep pens at Gondogoro Village (3700m). Ahead of us, we have views of Masherbrum and one of its satellite peaks from a different perspective. This is another very comfortable camping place on an open, sandy outwash plain. Above the camp a steep tributary valley climbs away to the east towards jagged rock and snow peaks, whilst beyond the moraine ridge is the mighty, rubble strewn Gondogoro Glacier. We will have lunch at camp and take it easy in the afternoon. This is a great place to look out for ibex which are at home on the precipitous valley sides - take a pair of binoculars.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 7: Trek up beside the Gondogoro Glacier to the lovely camp at Dalsan (4150m) Approx 3 hours**

Today's short stage to Dalsan skirts the eastern side of the Gondogoro Glacier. We hike up above our camp for an hour with increasingly impressive views of the glacier and of Masherbrum beyond. At a point where the glacier cuts directly into the steep valley side, we are usually obliged to drop down almost onto the glacier itself and for a further hour we scramble

along its edge (there is a path above the moraine cliffs and this may be used instead, if it is in good condition). A final scramble up a rocky gully leads to the campsite at Dalsan (4150m) tucked into a grassy ablation valley with a couple of tiny lakes and staggering views of a range of rocky summits, culminating in the snow-plastered summit of Masherbrum. An impressive icefall sits below the peak and guards the access to the Masherbrum La which (theoretically) links Hushe with the Baltoro system to the north. Snow leopards still inhabit this rarely visited corner of the Karakoram but our groups have seen evidence of their presence here.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

#### **Day 8: Trek on the Gondogoro Glacier, passing beneath Laila Peak, to Huisprung (4600m) Approx 5 hours**

Just above our camp the valley turns more towards the east and we have great views up-valley to the Gondogoro La and to Gondogoro Peak itself, although the latter is tough to pick out against the headwall of the valley. Once again, we have to drop down onto the glacier and this time we head out into its center. At this point the angle of the glacier is not steep and we are walking on a mix of moraine and sometimes on snow or bare expanses of ice. This is a great glacier experience, walking between ice pinnacles, some of them capped with boulders, and easily avoiding any crevassed areas. This glacial traverse is not technically demanding and there is usually no need to rope-up. We pass beneath the striking spire of Laila Peak (6096m) and amongst a stunning array of mountain scenery. We gradually cut across to the north side of the glacier at the place called Huisprung (4600m), a grassy terrace beside a small meltwater lake.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

#### **Day 9: Acclimatisation day at Huisprung - Skills training**

Huisprung is a spectacular place at the heart of the Karakoram. The views of Laila Peak are breath-taking and the huge bulk of Trinity Peak is right across the glacier from camp. Seracs regularly break off high above the complex north-west face of this mountain, causing avalanches which can come right down to the glacier, though, thankfully, not this side of the glacier. This is a day for rest and acclimatization. We will also spend part of this day practicing the straightforward safety techniques required for ascending fixed ropes and walking roped-up on the approach to Gondogoro Peak.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

#### **Day 10: Climb Gondogoro Peak (5650m) return to Huisprung then trek to Dalsan Approx 10-12 hours**

We make a midnight start for the climb of Gondoro Peak. This early start is necessary to make the best of the conditions on the glacier before the sun softens the snow. The climb can be split into in 3 parts: we begin with a trek up the hill rising above our camp which will take us to the moraines of the glacier. We should arrive here around first light and now we put on our crampons and harnesses and rope up for the steady ascent of easy angled snow slopes as we follow the rise of the glacier to the summit pyramid of the peak. This then gives the 'third section' of the climb on steeper snow on a narrowing ridge. At the steepest sections (around 45 degrees) we will use fixed lines for safety. The final 100 meters to the summit is the steepest of all and once here the view is spectacular, looking down the Gondogoro Glacier towards the elegant Laila Peak and the spires and towers of a host of six and seven-thousand meter peaks. We make our descent is by the same route

and we should arrive back in camp by mid-morning. After lunch, we trek back down the Gondogoro Glacier to the delightful ablation valley camp at Dalsan.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 11: Trek down valley via Gondogoro Village to Saitcho (9km) Approx 4-5 hours**

A fairly easy day today, as we head down-valley, negotiating once again the tricky section on the edge of the Gondogoro Glacier to reach the tributary valley outwash plain at Gondogoro Village. We then continue descending, following the moraine ridge, with great views, to the pleasant camping place at Saitcho. We should reach camp in time for a late lunch and then have the afternoon free to chill out or to do some exploring. Above our camp at Saitcho, the Charakusa Valley, dominated by the peak of Namika, is pure Karakoram magic. A short walk up the valley on shepherds' trails leads to the snout of the Charakusa Glacier and to a viewpoint for dramatic granite spires including K7 (6934m). Overnight at Saitcho.

**Accommodation:** Camping

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 12: Trek to Hushe Village and drive to Skardu (10km) Approx 3 hours**

We have an early start ahead of a short and enjoyable final walk back to Hushe, where we are welcomed once again by villagers young and old. Our jeeps will be waiting for us in Hushe and we will set off on the drive down the valley to Khaplu. From Khaplu our journey becomes considerably smoother and much faster as we now drive on the tarmac road first following the Shyock to a confluence with the Indus, then along this major river back to Skardu. Arriving in the Balti capital, we check into our hotel and enjoy our first hot shower in over two weeks!

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 13: Drive to Skardu and fly to Islamabad**

After breakfast we drive on smooth tarmac for approximately 2 hours to Skardu Airport where we catch our flight back to Islamabad. Once again, if the weather is bad, we must travel overland. On arrival in Islamabad, we check in to the group hotel.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 14: Contingency day for possible delays**

Skardu is a 'weather dependent' airport which means the planes will only fly here if the visibility allows line of sight to the runway by the pilot on the approach. Fortunately, the weather is mostly clear in the Karakoram, but local weather conditions can bring cloud and rain from time to time. If we cannot fly, we will travel down to Islamabad by road along the spectacular Karakoram Highway. If we flew up to Skardu this will be an added bonus as it is a fantastic travel experience in

its own right. The drive down the Indus River to Islamabad takes two days so this is an important contingency day to allow for this. If we do fly back to Islamabad, this will be a further day for sightseeing in the capital and your leader will advise the group on the options available for today.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Day 15: Departure day - Islamabad Airport transfers are provided**

Transfer to Islamabad Airport after breakfast. Land Only package services end on arrival at the airport.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals:** Breakfast

**Important notice:**

The above schedule should be taken as a guide only. Inclement weather may cause delays in our journey, whether we are on foot or travelling by vehicle. Our schedule has been planned to allow for variations and where necessary, spare days will be used to compensate for these changes. Our guide reserves the right to make modifications or alterations to the trip schedule in the best interests and safety of all involved. A flexible approach will allow us to efficiently and effectively achieve trip objectives.