

THE KARAKORAM EXPLORER

Departure:

Itinerary:

Day 1: ISLAMABAD

On arrival in Islamabad we will be transferred to our guesthouse to check in and have a rest. We will then head off on some local sightseeing which might include the Loc Versa cultural museum, the Faizal Mosque, a possible trip to Rawalpindi, and dinner in the Margalla Hills.

Days 2 & 3: ISLAMABAD - CHITRAL – AYUN

Day 2: This morning we will take an early flight* from the capital to arrive in the sleepy mountain town of Chitral. After a cup of local chai relaxing in the garden of our accommodation, we will wander through the streets and markets of Chitral, absorbing the friendly local atmosphere, meeting the shopkeepers and sampling their wares and most probably catch a game of polo. After that we will travel on to beautiful valley of Ayun.

**Should the flight be cancelled due to bad weather we will drive this route stopping for lunch in Dir.*

***During Ramadan please note it is unlikely we will be able to see a game of polo.*

Day 3: Today we will have all day to relax enjoy and take one of the many wonderful village walks nearby or just stay put in this heavenly spot.

Days 4 & 5: AYUN – KALASH

Day 4: After breakfast we will drive in to the Kalash Valley of Rumbor and the village of Balanguru where we will stay in local guest house. After lunch we can go for walks around the village, or further afield to visit some of our friends in Grum or Kalashagrum.

Day 5: Spending all day in the valley, we can take a special walk up towards the Afghan frontier to visit the Nuristani community in Shakanande, the last village in the valley. Returning for a late lunch, will leave plenty of time for more short walks or simply relaxing in the village and chatting to the Kalash.

Day 6: KALASH - CHITRAL TOWN

Having returned from the mountain hideaway, we will drive back to Ayun and from here to Chitral Town, where we will check into our accommodation in the gorgeous setting. After lunch we will have time to wander the sleepy bazaar, visit the local fort, witness another game of frontier polo, or go to see the Markhor - wild goats - in Chitral Gul.

Day 7: CHITRAL – MASTUJ

After breakfast drive to Mastuj. This is one of the most beautiful and dramatic drives we are ever likely to take as we wind our way up the Mastuj Valley, passing Tirich Mir and Boni Zong, before finally entering the Yarkund Valley at the top of which lies Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor. Here we can have a walk before settling into our accommodation. (B)

Day 8: MASTUJ – GILGIT

After breakfast drive on over the spectacular 3,800 metre Shandur Pass. Here we can stop, have a cup of tea, and go for a walk before driving on to Gilgit. On our way into town we might like to stop to see the town's famous cliff-top carving of Buddha or if time allows catch a game of frontier polo. (B)

Days 9, 10 & 11: GILGIT – HUNZA

Day 9: After breakfast stop off in town to visit the Christian cemetery before yet another amazing drive, past the titanic form of Mount Rakaposhi, takes us on to Hunza. We will take lunch on the way - at the Rakaposhi View Restaurant - before continuing on to Karimabad.

Day 10: Today we can take the water channel walk down into Karimabad where we can have lunch on one of the rooftop restaurants. After this we will have time to relax, shop and wander, before taking a sightseeing trip to the famous Baltit fort, recently restored by UNESCO to a fantastic standard. In the late afternoon we'll return to our accommodation.

Day 11: All day at leisure in one of the most beautiful places on earth, before returning to Gilgit in the late afternoon.

Days 12 & 13: GILGIT – SKARDU

Day 12: After breakfast drive back down the Karakoram Highway before branching off to follow the Indus river east to the valley of Skardu. Although a long drive this is a spectacular route, along one of Asia's most magnificent and important rivers and through the heart of the Karakorums.

Day 13: Today we will have the chance to explore the fertile Shigar valley that was one of the 5 major kingdoms of Baltistan. Majestic views of Haramosh range surround us, and we shall see the gigantic sand dunes on the other side of the Indus. If we like we can also come back to Skardu to take a walk (one hour each way) to the "organic village" via an old trail at the foot of Kharpocho Fort and visit the Buddha of Skardu.

Days 14, 15 & 16: SKARDU – ISLAMABAD

Day 14: This morning we will take the spectacular flight back to Islamabad. In the afternoon we will take a wander around the city, sightseeing and shopping, before having dinner in the Margella hills overlooking the city and returning to our hotel. *Should the internal flight unexpectedly be postponed due to bad weather we will take the next couple of days to drive the Karakoram Highway back to Islamabad.

Day 15: After a relaxing morning and any last-minute shopping, we will travel out to Taxila, taking a look at the museum and some of the amazing sites from the Gandhara period. Return to hotel to freshen up before taking our final trip dinner.

Day 16: Transfer to the airport where our tour will end.

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.