



13D11N BEAUTY OF PAKISTAN

This is quite simply the one of the most amazing, original and wild trips we do. Run for the first time in 2006, our small group of intrepid travellers was the first to experience the Kalash winter solstice festival of Chawmos and probably one of the first to see the rare snow leopard in the wild. This is the most important time of year for the Kalash, when life, the gods and ancestors are celebrated in a weeklong party and joining them for their celebrations is a privilege to which very few Westerners are invited. We will also spend time viewing the Markhor population during the rutting season and the spectacular fights of the males, whilst watching out for the elusive and exquisite snow leopard. If we are lucky enough, we may get the chance to observe this beautiful animal in its natural environment. With the new Lowari Tunnel making access to these hidden valleys all the more accessible we can now offer this trip without the hassles of the past. So, if you are game enough to experience a true adventure you will witness events that will certainly stay with you forever. This is as close to real exploration as us mortals are ever likely to get.

Day 1 KLIA - Islamabad

(Dinner)

After an early arrival we will have a relaxed morning. In the afternoon will head out into Islamabad to see some of the Pakistani capital and take a visit to the **Heritage Museum** and the **Faisal Mosque**. We will have dinner in the Saidpur, a traditional local village area just outside the centre of Islamabad.



Day 2 Islamabad - Swat Valley

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Today we will start our journey north by driving through the Northwest Frontier and into the beautiful **Swat Valley**. Until quite recently this region was out of bounds to foreign tourists, but now it has opened up again offering us a great chance to explore the regions ancient Buddhist past. Once we have checked into our hotel we'll visit the local museum, packed with many fine Gandharan artefacts, and other Buddhist sites.



Day 3 Swat Valley - Chitral

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

After breakfast we will have a spectacular drive, passed **Chakdarra** – where a young Winston Churchill saw action back in the 1890s – before continuing through the **Lowari Tunnel** into the ancient kingdom of Chitral. Later this afternoon we will have time for some local sightseeing. The **Chitral Fort** was the location for the besieged British Garrison in 1895 and now houses the cannons dragged over the high passes of the Hindu Kush used to break the siege. Next to the Fort is the intricate Grand Mosque. However, our main focus will be wandering around the bazaar with its mixture of traditional and modern goods being sold by the predominantly Pashtun population. Dinner will be at our hotel.



Day 4 Chitral - Chitral Gol – Chitra

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

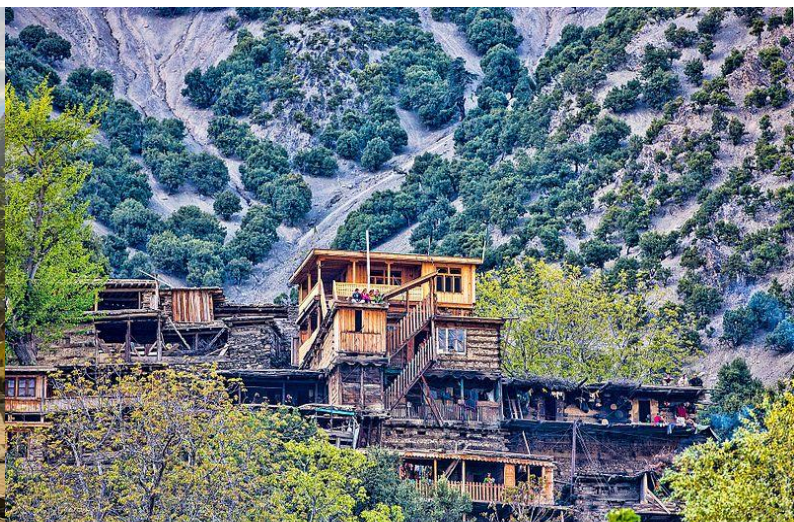
Today our wildlife adventure begins as we move up to the area around the old hunting lodge in **Chitral Gol**, the region's National Park. Roaming in the wild will give us great opportunity to observe the rutting season for the famous **Markhor wild goat** and we will see hundreds of them fighting and playing – indeed it is the young of the Markhor that interest the elusive snow leopard. If we are really lucky we may catch a glimpse of one of these exquisite animals. We will return to Chitral in the evening to the comfort of our hotel.



Day 5 Chitral – Balanguru

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Today after completing some registration formalities we head into the **Kalash Valley of Rumbor** and the **village of Balanguru**. Here we stay with our friend Saifullah Jan, the chief spokesperson for the Kalash. After checking into our guesthouse, we will go with our friends to visit their extended families and their houses in the valleys of Grum or Kalashagrum.



Days 6-8 Balanguru**(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

For the next three days we will enjoy this extraordinary festival that precious few Westerners have ever seen. As well as dancing, singing and feasting we will also witness the religious priests (or Qazis, as they are known) summon up the spirits and ask for their blessing. On one of the days the women of the valley – including those travelling with us – must cleanse their souls by performing certain purification rituals, but don't worry, it is nothing too drastic, just a bucket wash followed by offering up some pure chapattis at the **Temple of Jastak Khan**. On another day it is the turn of the men to cleanse themselves, this time with goats' blood at **the temple of Sagi Gor**. More than 40 goats will be sacrificed as an offering to the gods, wine will be drunk and preparations for the dancing will start. From here on men could wear the shalwar kameez. In the evening we will join the Kalash for a spectacular night of dancing in the village.

**Day 9 Kalash Festival – Ayun****(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Having observed the festivities we may take one last walk around the **Kalash Valley** and then head on to **Ayun** where we'll check into the wonderful home of Maqsood Ul Mulk, one of the princes of Chitral in the afternoon. Depending on the weather we may have time for a short walk around one of the local villages nearby.



Day 10 Ayun – Islamabad

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

This morning we'll start out early for our return journey towards **Islamabad**. Dependant on traffic this may take a good twelve hours. We will stop en route at Dir for lunch and then continue on this full day's scenic drive to the capital, now possible due to the **Lowari tunnel**. (NB Flight schedules to Islamabad are erratic and unreliable at best at this time of year, hence the reason we drive)



Day 11 Islamabad - Taxila – Islamabad

(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

We will spend our last full day exploring Taxila, a fascinating Buddhist university town, dating back to the Gandaharan era of Alexander the Great. We'll then return to Islamabad in the late afternoon where there may be time for some last minute shopping before our farewell dinner.



Day 12 Islamabad - KLIA Departure

(Breakfast)

Tour finishes today in Islamabad. After breakfast, check-out hotel as per standard hotel's policy. Free at own leisure till transfer provided to airport.

Day 13 Arrival back home



Departure Dates 2020/2021

- 11 Dec 2020
- 11 Dec 2021

Airline: BA/TK/QR/EK/EY

Estimated Price including flight: RM 15,999/PAX*

Please contact us for actual fare/availability as pricing subject to actual travel date

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