**INTRODUCTION**

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Under the shadows of Tirichmir in the Hindukush mountain range, the valley of Chitral in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan is a fascinating combination of scenic beauty and cultural diversity. The land of apples, apricots, pears and pomegranates, Chitral stretches from 1,094m to 7778m above sea level (ASL) at Tirichmir Peak. With its collection of rugged mountains, gushing river, hot springs and fruit-laden orchards, Chitral truly is an enchanting part of Pakistan.

The area is bordered by Afghanistan in the north and west, with the narrow Afghan Wakhan corridor separating it from Tajikistan, Dir Kohistan in the south and Gilgit in the east. Chitral can be accessed via several mountain passes, the most famous being the Lowari Top (3,118m) approx. crossing the Hindu Raj (a spur of the higher Hindukush) in the south and the Shandur Pass (3,798m) forming the eastern gateway from Gilgit. Other passes include the Dorah Pass from Badakshan in Afghanistan and the Broghal (3,798m) from the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan. Although these two passes represented the main arteries of the ancient Silk Route to Yarkand and Kashgar in China and Badakhsan in Afghanistan, they are not much in use today.

HISTORICAL CHITRAL

Situated on the main Crossroad to Central Asia, Chitral has a long and fascinating history. In fact, it is this strategic location that compelled invaders to capture it before any other area in the region. The recorded history of Chitral begins with the Tibetans invading Yasin in early 8th century AD, followed by the Chinese I 750 AD and the Buddhists in 900 AD. Later, the Kalash also ruled Chitral for decades.

In the 14th century, Chitral became a unified independent kingdom under the rule of Shah Nasir Rais. In 1570, the Rais dynasty was replaced by the Katoor Dynasty. The famous mehtar of Chitral Aman-ul-Mulk ruled from 1857 to 1892. In 1895, the siege of Chitral Fort took place and lasted a month, after which Chitral remained an independent state under British rule. Finally, in 1969 it was merged into Pakistan.

Today, Chitral hosts ancient Chitrali Tribes as well as nomads who were invited by the mehtars to settle in the state. Chitral is also home to the ancient pagan tribe of the Kalash who are now confined to the three valleys of Bamburat, Rambur and Birir. The original state of Chitral covered a greater area, with its border reaching as for as Badakhshan and Bashqal in the north-west and Kunar Valley in the south (these areas are now part of Afghanistan). In addition, this extended to Sherqilla on its north-eatern front and which lies in Gilgit today.

**KALASH**

The Kalsh are an ancient pagn tribe living in three valleys of Chitral namely Bamburate, Birir and Rumbur. The Kalash religion is based on myths and superstitions that relate to the relationship between the human soul and the universe. The relationship between the human, soul and the universe. The relationship, according to Kalash mythology, needs its manifestation in music and dance, which also contribute to the pleasure of god and goddesses. The Kalash celebrate four major festivals commemorating seasonal change and significant events in agro-pastoral life by offering sacrifices on altars, cooking traditional meals and dancing to traditional music during the week-long events.

**KALASH FESTIVALS**

Joshi or Chilim Jusht: The spring festival is celebrated from May 13-16 every year. The festival seeks the blessings of gods and goddesses for the safety of the herds and crops of the Kalash community.

Utchal: The summer festival is celebrated from Aug. 18-21 every year. The festival commemorates the summer season and the abundance of dairy products in the summer pastures.

Phoo: The autumn festival is celebrated around mid October every year, depending each year on the ripening of the crops and fruits. The festival also celebrates the return of livestock herds from the summer pastures.

Chaumos or Chitirmas: The winter festival is celebrated from Dec. 8 -21 every year. This is the most important Kalash festival. New clothes are arranged for each family member on the eve of the festival. The grand Kalash god, Mahandeo, is offered sacrifices.

It takes one hour of jeep drive to access these valleys from Chitral Town.

SHANDUR POLO FESTIVAL (7th to 9th july)

The world famous Shandur pass is approx. 3738 meters above sea level and lies midway between Chitral and Gilgit. The distance from Chitral is 155 Km and from Gilgit is 235 Km approximately.

Shandur pass remains snow covered in winter and turns into green pastures during summer season. The Shandur lake adds to the colours of plateau surrounded by high mountains. The famous Shandur Polo Tournament which has attained almost legendary status, is played here between Chitral and Gilgit teams every year from 7th to 9th July.

During the three festival at Shandur, polo enthusiasts, mountain lovers, writers, photographers, mountains bikers, hikers (local and foreign tourists) converge to witness the spectacular polo matches between the finest teams of Gilgit and Chitral. Traditional dances and cultural music make the festival more attractive.

The supporters of both sides travel long distances to watch this thrilling game and thus this event provides fascinating insight into the life style of the people of this region. All this together makes Shandur Polo Festival one of the most entertaining events.

**CULTURE**

**The culture of Chitral bears traces of Greek, Iranian,Tatar and Tajik Turkeman influences due to its unique location and historical links with Central Asia and Europe.**

**The Chitrali people call the land of Chitral “Kho” and their language is Khowar. Persian is spoken only in Madaglasht Valley. Pashto and Urdu have also made their way into Chitral. Other languages spoken in Chitral include Kalash, Gujari, Nuristani, Dameli, Wakhi, Kirghiz, Yidgha, Gawar-Bati and Phalura.**

**The tradition of hospitality can be observed throughout northern Pakistan but in few places it is offered as generously as in Chitral. Chitralis also have a strong musical tradition. The Chitrali sitar, a string instrument, can often be heard at many places and family gatherings.**

**Polo is the most popular sport in Chitral which has attained legendary status. Matches are festive occasions, inviting many tourists. The world famous Shandur Polo Tournament is held between Gilgit and Chitral every year from 7th to 9th of July at Shandur Pass near Laspur Valley.**

**HOW TO SPOT WILDLIFE**

**The opportunity to observe wild animals and birds in their natural environment is a unique and rare experience which requires patience and a basic understanding of their behavior. Going with a trained local wildlife guide will give you the best chance of seeing wildlife but remember that the weather and season also play a significant role. It is useful to know that:**

**Winter is better that summer for viewing wildlife**

**Sunrise and sunset are the best time to see animals as they move down to drink at water points**

**Poor weather conditions such as rain and snow also make animals to move down to lower altitudes and thus become easier to spot**

**More information can be obtained from the office of the Divisional forest Officer (Wildlife) in Chitral Town and equipment such as binoculars and telescopes can be rented from the local conservation committees.**

**With its gushing rivers, fruit-laden orchards and flower-covered hillsides, Chitral Qashqar offers an ideal destination for holiday-makers and nature lovers alike who want to relax and enjoy the wonderful bounties of nature. There are many long and short treks within these valleys, as well as those leading to the Dir Kohistan Qashqar and Kalam Qashqar conservancies.**

**Madaglasht in an area of lush green terraced fields and high pastures with extensive meadows surrounded by pine and fir slopes. Koghozi is a narrow gorge with oak and pine trees. Goleen is a vast valley with high cliffs and is the limit of the forested slopes as it extends to the high barren and craggy peaks above. Laspur, with the vast inner dry valley of Beshqar in the south and the beautiful meadow of Shandur plateau, forms an area of attractive contrast.**

**HOW TO GET THERE**

**PIA operates daily flights from Peshawar and Islamabad to Chitral, with a flying time of around 50 minutes. From May to December, Chitral is also accessible via Lowari Pass, with a driving time of around 10 hours and from Gilgit via Shandur Pass, with a driving time of around 12 hours. These land routes are inaccessible and remain blocked due to heavy snowfall in winter during which time road access is noly possible from Peshawar through the Kunar Valley of Afghanistan. To provide all the year access to Chitral, a tunnel (8.7 km long) with railway facility through the Lawari Pass has been developed.**

**All the valleys are connected with Chitral by road but unpredictable rains, snow and landslides are common, very often resulting in complete blockage of roads. Always inquire about the road situation from concerned DC or TIC before leaving for any valley.**

**Among the large mammals, the rare snow leopard inhabits an enormous area in search of prey. Markhor is also found in the area, in the far northern mountains there are ibex, lynx, black bear, brown bear, grey wolf, striped hyena and the endangered musk deer.**

**For bird watchers, Chitral offers a wide variety of species. The main valley and villages are inhabited by the Brahmini, Myna and Sparrow. Higher up in the valleys (alpine meadows and mountains cliffs) Monal, Koklass Pheasants, Chukor, Golden Eagles and the common Kestrel are sighted frequently. The mountain passes and valleys of Chitral also form part of the migration route for birds breeding in Eastern Europe and Central Asia that spend winters in the sub-continent.**

**MADAGLASHT VALLEY**

**Locations: South-east of Chitral Town**

**Main settlement: Obara, Mathive, Hussainabad and Bayband**

**Valley area: 152km2**

**Population: Approximately 3,000 people**

**Language: Khowar (Chitrali) and Persian**

**Tourist attractions: Mixed Chitrali and Persian culture; various handicrafts; Gocharsar Waterfall; treks to the Goleen and Laspur valleys of Chitral and to the Dir Kohistan valleys' sighting of varoious animals and birds.**

**How to get there: Daily transport (4x4) is available between Drosh and Madaglasht at specified timings. Travel time is three hours from Drosh to the main village of the valley. It is recommended that 4x4 vehicle be hired in Chitral and Drosh to access the valley.**

**Accommodation: Local family guest houses are available. For large tourist groups, it is advisable to carry tents and sleeping bags. There are few opportunities to purchase food in the valley but traditional cuisine may also be available, it is advisable to carry own bottled or boiled water for drinking.**

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he natural and cultural heritage of Chital offers great tourism and trekking adventure opportunities through rugged mountains, snow-clad peaks, lush green meadows and crystal clear stream. In addition, the valley and mountains in the area are home to many rare species of plants animals and birds.

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**Accommodation: Local family guest houses are available. For large tourist groups, it is advisable to carry tents and sleeping bags. There are few opportunities to purchase food in the valley but traditional cuisine may also be available, it is advisable to carry own bottled or boiled water for drinking.**

**GOLEEN VALLEY**

**Locations: North-east of Chitral Town**

**Main settlement: Goleen Payeen, Chashma, Bubaka, Izghor, Birmogh and Istoor**

**Valley area: 532m2**

**Population: Approximately 2,000 people**

**Language: Khowar (Chitrali)**

**Tourist attractions: Mixed Chitrali culture; Chattodok Lake, treks to the Laspur, Madaglasht and Koghozi valleys of Chitral; sightings of various animals and birds such as markhor, ibex, chukor and ram chukor.**

**How to get there: Daily transport (4x4) is available between Chitral and Goleen on specified timings. Travel time is two hours from Chitral to the first village of the valley. It is recommended that 4x4 vehicle be hired in Chitral.**

**Accommodation: A community-managed tourist hut is available in Izghor village with modest facilities for four to six persons. For large tourist groups, it is advisable to carry tents and sleeping bags. The best place for camping is the lower pasture at the end of the valley. Few opportunities exist to purchase food in the valley but traditional cuisine may also be available, it is advisable to carry own bottled or boiled water for drinking.**

**LASPUR VALLEY**

**Locations: North-east of Chitral Town**

**Main settlement: Shihidas, Onshot, Herchin, Phargram, Gasht, Raman, Broke, Baleem and Sur Laspur**

**Valley area: 929km2**

**Population: Approximately 7,500 people**

**Language: Khowar (Chitrali)**

**Tourist attractions: Chitrali culture; Shandur Lake; treks to Goleen Valley and Booni Zom; treks to the Ghizar Valley of the Gilgit-Baltistan; treks to the Kumrat Valley of Dir Kohistan and the Mohadand Gabral Valleys of Kalam; sightings of wildlife such as yaks, ibex, chukar and ram chukor.**

**How to get there: Daily public transport (4x4) is available between Booni and Laspur on specified timings. It is recommended that 4x4 vehicle be hired in Chitral.**

**Accommodation: A Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation motel as well as a C&W rest-house are available in Mastuj Town and are of good quality, a part from the small hotels in the valley. For large tourist groups, it is advisable to carry tents and sleeping bags. The valley offers great camping sites all around. Wooden chalets at the old Mastuj fort can also be booked from Hindukush Heights (hotel and tour operating company specialising in trekking, paragliding, pony trekking in the Kindukush and Karakoram area)**

**GARAM CHASHMA (HOT SPRING)**

**Elevation: 1859 meters (6,100 feet)**

**Distance: 45 km (28 miles-from Chitral)**

**Language: Yidgha & Khowar**

**Tourist Attraction: At a distance of 2 hours’ drive (4x4) towards North-west of Chitral, there is located an ancient valley of Injigan, nowadays known as Garam Chashma (Hot Springs). The valley has a great value for its hot springs full of Sulphur and its water is perceived for centuries as a natural medication for the cure/ recovery of rheumatism, gout, chronic headache, skin disorders and maladies. Therefore the valley is often visited by local tourists as well as foreigners during the season. For the convenience of tourists, "hamams" (baths) have been constructed near the springs. Foreign tourists are requested to pay some amount for taking a hot bath in the hamams (Baths).**

**Garam Chashma is an un-spoilt enchanting valley of orchards, verdant fields and snow-clad peaks, the best place for rock climbing, mountaineering, fishing, trekking, hiking, hunting and camping.**

**Accommodation: There are several hotels & restaurants in Garam Chashma but it is recommended to stay at Hotel Injigan, with a nice hot swimming pool, and the prices are also affordable. The trout fish with Afghani rice and veggies is also offered by the Afghani restaurants present locally. A C&W Rest house is also present in the area**

**WHAT TO DO**

**N VILLAGES / ON PASTURES**

**Try to travel in small groups**

**Be considerate of local culture.**

**Wear appropriate clothing, locals usually love to see foreigners wearing the traditional clothes**

**Ask for permission before taking photographs, especially of women and religious sites**

**Be thankful when offered local food.**

**Support the local community by buying their products and handicrafts**

**WHILE TREKKING**

**Hire local guides and porters**

**Dispose your litter properly burn paper, collect plastic, flatten tins and take them back with you**

**Leave your campsite in clean condition**

**Use gas or kerosene for cooking**

**Choose toilet sites least 50m away from your campsite and away from any river or water source (dig a toilet pit for bigger groups)**

**Be an example to your guides and porters by explaining these guidelines and the rationale behind them**

**RUMBUR VALLEY KALASH**

**WHAT NOT TO DO**

**N VILLAGES / ON PASTURES**

**Females should avoid wearing shorts or tight-fitting clothing**

**Respect Local Culture**

**WHILE TREKKING**

**Don't disturb wildlife by making too much noise**

**Don't hunt/kill any animal or remove any plants**

**Never leave litter on the trails or in your campsites**

**Don't use wood for cooking, especially green wood**

**Don't carve or write on rocks or trees**

**Any Tourist is welcome to experience the daily life of the communities on the pastures and to enjoy nature's diversity in the valleys of Chitral. However as a courtesy to local women and respect of local tradition, please refrain from camping close to settlements.**

**TREKKING**

**Madaglasht to Goleen via Krui Utch**

**Trek: Moderate Duration: 3 days**

**Attractions: Green pastures; views of glaciers and snow-covered peaks on the Dir Kohistan side, Gocharsar Waterfall, Rohigal Pass; Chattodak Lake, juniper forest; sightings of various animals and birds, including brown bear, grey wolf, Himalayan ibex, Lynx, chukor and ram chukor.**

**Goleen to Laspur via Phargram Pass**

**Trek: hard Duration: 4 days**

**Attractions: Darkhtan, Dangrikro, Reshungol and Dookadaki pastures; Jonali polo ground, Phargram Pass, bird's eye view of Laspur Valley; sightings of various animals and birds, including Himalayan ibex, snow leopard, grew old and ram chukor.**

**Laspur to Mahodand via Katchi Khani Pass**

**Trek: Moderate**

**Duration: 4-5 days**

**Attractions: Birch forest; Mahodand and Nelser lakes sightings of various animals and birds, including Himalyan ibex, snow leopard, brown bear, grey wolf, Indian civet, Iynx, musk deer, monal pheasant, Himalayan snow cock and chukor.**

**Laspur to Kumrat via Beshqar Gol**

**Trek: Moderate**

**Duration: 4-5 days**

**Attractions: Birch forest; Beshqar and Zego Lakes; sightings of various animals and birds, including Himalyan ibex, snow leopard, brown bear, grey wolf, Indian civet, Iynx, musk deer, monal pheasant, Himalayan snow cock and chukor.**

**MORE TREKS**

**Trek: hard**

**Duration: 4-5 days**

**Madaglasht to Goleen via Roghili Gol**

**Trek: moderate**

**Duration: 2-3 days**

**Madaglasht to Goleen via Dok Ann**

**Trek: moderate**

**Duration: 3-4 days**

**Goleen to Laspur via Sochiokuh and Ishpurili**

**Trek: hard**

**Duration: 3-4 days**

**Laspur to Gabral via Beshqar Gol**

**Trek: moderate**

**Duration: 4-5 days**

**Madaglasht to Kumrat**

**Trek: moderate**

**Duration: 4-5 days**

**SHANDUR LAKE**

**ECO-TOURISM IN CHITRAL VALLEY**

**Eco-tourism has, in recent years, become a popular slogan of environmentalists and tour operators the world over. But what exactly in eco-tourism? In a nutshell, eco-tourism can be defined as environmentally and socially responsible tourism. It aims to protect nature through providing the means to do so (awareness raising and financial support) by directly supporting local communities. Other aspects such as the sustainability of local culture and history are also included. Looking at the negative impact mass tourism can have on native culture and environment, eco-tourism is a sensible alternative. Rather than travelling in large groups, consider taking the trip with a small group of like-minded people. This approach can have many benefits from communities being better able to accommodate fewer people, better access to local porters and guides and improved chances of sighting wildlife. As an eco-tourist, you are no longer simply a visitor, instead, you are able to play an active role in helping conserve nature and forming a better understanding between people of different cultures.**

**CHECK LIST FOR TREKKING AND CAMPING TRIP**

**personal use item clothing**

**Large size rucksack to carry all required trekking gear.**

**Day pack to carry camera, snack pack and rain jacket etc.**

**Sleeping bag of good quality to face cold temperature at night.**

**Close cell foam matters.**

**Trekking boots, durable with strong rubber soles.**

**Camp sandals to use while in camp and walking around.**

**Water/wing proof jacket and trousers.**

**Two to three pairs extra clothing (preferable full length trouser and full sleeve shirts).**

**Three to four pairs of socks (woolen and nylon stuff).**

**Sun Hat for shade and to avoid sunburns.**

**Woolen cap to keep head warm during cold nights.**

**Pair of Gloves (Woolen and water proof).**

**Sun Glasses to protect eyes from snow blindness.**

**Water stick.**

**Water bottle.**

**Head lamp or Torch with extra battery cells.**

**Pocket knife.**

**First aid kit including sun block cream**

**COMMUNAL USE ITEMS FOR WHOLE GROUP**

**Large size rucksack to carry all required trekking gear.**

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**DISTANCE CHART AND ESTIMATED TRAVEL TIME**



**IMPORTANT NUMBERS OF CHITRAL**





