

Places in Chitral:

Chitral Gol National Park

- **Best Time to Visit:** May-June (Spring season for blooming flowers)
 - **Overview:** This park is a haven for nature lovers, featuring stunning landscapes, unique flora, and fauna. It is home to the famous Markhor (wild goat), snow leopards, and various bird species. It's a paradise for wildlife enthusiasts and trekkers.
 - **Accommodation:**
 - **Economy:** Chitral Serena Inn (offers basic amenities and is budget-friendly).
 - **Deluxe:** PTDC Motel Chitral (comfortable rooms with scenic views).
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Kalash Valleys (Bumburet, Rumbur, Birir)

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring (April-May) or Autumn (September-October) for pleasant weather.
 - **Overview:** Known for their unique culture and vibrant festivals, these valleys are home to the Kalash people, an indigenous community with a distinct way of life. Visitors can enjoy lush green landscapes, traditional wooden houses, and lively celebrations.
 - **Accommodation:**
 - **Economy:** Guesthouses and homestays within the valleys for an authentic experience.
 - **Deluxe:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town and day-tripping to the valleys.
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Shandur Pass

- **Best Time to Visit:** July-August for the Shandur Polo Festival, an exciting event showcasing traditional polo matches.
 - **Overview:** Known as the "Roof of the World," this high-altitude pass offers breathtaking views of surrounding peaks. It's a must-visit for adventure seekers and cultural enthusiasts during the festival.
 - **Accommodation:**
 - **Economy:** Camps and basic guesthouses available near the pass during the festival.
 - **Deluxe:** Limited options—camping is the most common accommodation.
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Chitral Fort

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.

- **Overview:** This historical fort offers a glimpse into Chitral's royal past. It features beautiful architecture and serves as a reminder of the region's rich history.
 - **Accommodation:** Nearby options include Chitral Serena Inn and PTDC Motel Chitral.
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Shahi Masjid

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.
 - **Overview:** This architectural marvel is a prominent landmark in Chitral, known for its white marble structure and intricate designs. It's a peaceful place to reflect and admire Islamic architecture.
 - **Accommodation:** Nearby options include Chitral Serena Inn and PTDC Motel Chitral.
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Garam Chashma

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.
 - **Overview:** Famous for its natural hot springs, Garam Chashma is a great spot for relaxation and therapeutic baths. It is also surrounded by scenic mountains.
 - **Accommodation:** Garam Chashma Resort (basic facilities with hot spring access).
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Tirich Mir

- **Best Time to Visit:** June-September.
 - **Overview:** This is the highest peak of the Hindu Kush mountain range and a dream destination for trekkers and mountaineers. It offers challenging routes and unparalleled views.
 - **Accommodation:** Base camps and mountain huts are available for trekkers.
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Ayun Valley

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring and Autumn.
 - **Overview:** Known for its scenic beauty, this valley is a gateway to the Kalash Valleys. It offers serene views of lush greenery and is ideal for trekking and relaxing.
 - **Accommodation:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town or nearby villages.
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Madaklasht Valley

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring and Autumn.
 - **Overview:** A lesser-known gem, this valley is perfect for trekking and exploring remote villages. Its untouched beauty and peaceful atmosphere make it a great escape.
 - **Accommodation:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town or nearby villages.
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Chitral Museum

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.
 - **Overview:** This museum showcases Chitral's history, culture, and traditions. It's an informative stop for anyone interested in learning more about the region's heritage.
 - **Accommodation:** Nearby options include Chitral Serena Inn and PTDC Motel Chitral.
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Shandur Polo Ground

- **Best Time to Visit:** July (during the Polo Festival).
 - **Overview:** This is the world's highest polo ground and the highlight of the Shandur Polo Festival, where local teams compete in thrilling matches amidst stunning landscapes.
 - **Accommodation:** Camping is the most common option during the festival.
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Chitral River

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring and Summer.
 - **Overview:** The river is ideal for fishing, scenic boat rides, and picnics. Its crystal-clear waters are surrounded by picturesque views.
 - **Accommodation:** Various options available in Chitral town.
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Qaqlasht Valley

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring and Autumn.
 - **Overview:** Known for its stunning landscapes and trekking opportunities, this valley is a haven for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers.
 - **Accommodation:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town or nearby villages.
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Yarkhun Valley

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring and Autumn.
 - **Overview:** A remote and scenic valley perfect for trekking, photography, and experiencing the local way of life.
 - **Accommodation:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town or nearby villages.
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Reshun Valley

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring and Autumn.
 - **Overview:** Famous for its natural beauty, this valley is great for trekking and capturing stunning views of the surrounding mountains.
 - **Accommodation:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town or nearby villages.
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Mastuj

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.
 - **Overview:** A gateway to other valleys, Mastuj is a small town with scenic views and friendly locals. It's a great stop for travelers heading to remote areas.
 - **Accommodation:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town or nearby villages.
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Drosh

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.
 - **Overview:** Another gateway town, Drosh is a peaceful spot for travelers exploring nearby valleys or heading to Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor.
 - **Accommodation:** Limited options—consider staying in Chitral town or nearby villages.
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Ayun Fort

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.
 - **Overview:** A historical site that offers beautiful views and a chance to learn about Chitral's royal heritage.
 - **Accommodation:** Ayun Fort Inn (basic facilities but a unique fort setting).
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Chitral Bazaar

- **Best Time to Visit:** Year-round.
- **Overview:** The bustling bazaar is perfect for shopping for local handicrafts, traditional garments, and souvenirs.
- **Accommodation:** Nearby options include Chitral Serena Inn and PTDC Motel Chitral.

Itinerary for 4 days:

Itinerary 1:

Day 0

We would leave from Lahore – Islamabad 11:00PM

Day 1

Breakfast at Dir 7:00 AM

Continue drive to Chitral via Lowari Tunnel

Arrival at Ayun 3:00 PM

Transfer to jeeps – local Hiace for Kalash (Bumbreet)

Arrival at Kalash 5:30 pm

Night Stay at Bumburet

Arrival at Kalash 5:30 pm

Day 2

Breakfast & Departure for Kalash Valley – Rambour

Visit to Kalash community

Dinner and overnight stay at Bamburat Valley

Day 3

Breakfast 8:00 AM

Visit museum and grave yard

Walk through the valley along the River

Visit the school, library and museum made with the help of the people of Greece

Get a chance to meet and interact with community members, teachers and local kids in their traditional dresses

Dinner and overnight stay at Bamburat Valley

Day 4

Breakfast 8:00 AM

Departure for Lahore / Islamabad

Lunch on way

Drop at Islamabad / Lahore

2 Days in Chitral: Quick Highlights

Day 1: Arrival and Chitral Town

- **Morning:**
 - Arrive in Chitral. Check-in at your hotel or guesthouse.
 - Have a traditional Chitrali breakfast (e.g., chapshoro or kebabs).
- **Late Morning:**
 - Visit **Chitral Fort** for panoramic views of the town and the surrounding mountains. It's a historic fort that dates back to the 14th century.
 - Explore the **Chitral Bazaar**, a bustling market where you can shop for local crafts and souvenirs.
- **Afternoon:**
 - Visit the **Shahi Mosque**, an architectural gem that dates back to the 16th century.
 - Have lunch at a local restaurant.
- **Evening:**
 - Relax at **Chitral Gol National Park**, a great spot for a peaceful walk or photography.
 - Enjoy dinner and rest for the night.

Day 2: Kalash Valley Day Trip

- **Morning:**
 - Depart early for **Kalash Valley** (around 2-3 hours' drive from Chitral).

- Visit **Bumburate**, one of the main Kalash valleys. Explore the beautiful valley and interact with the Kalash people, known for their distinct culture and pagan religion.
 - **Afternoon:**
 - Visit **Rumbur Valley** and enjoy its picturesque scenery.
 - Have lunch at a local guesthouse in the valley.
 - **Evening:**
 - Head back to Chitral.
 - Enjoy a traditional dinner before departure.
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3 Days in Chitral: Adding More Cultural Exploration

Day 1: Chitral Town Exploration (Same as Day 1 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 2: Kalash Valley Adventure** (Same as Day 2 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 3: Chitral to Garam Chashma**

- **Morning:**
 - After breakfast, head towards **Garam Chashma**, a hot spring area around 1.5-2 hours from Chitral.
 - Enjoy a relaxing dip in the natural hot springs.
 - **Afternoon:**
 - Visit **Garam Chashma Village** and its nearby lush green fields.
 - Have lunch at a local guesthouse or roadside restaurant.
 - **Evening:**
 - Return to Chitral and enjoy the serene views of the surrounding mountains.
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4 Days in Chitral: Nature and Adventure

Day 1: Chitral Town Exploration (Same as Day 1 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 2: Kalash Valley Adventure** (Same as Day 2 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 3: Garam Chashma Day Trip** (Same as Day 3 in the 3-day itinerary) **Day 4: Chitral Gol National Park**

- **Morning:**
 - Spend the morning at **Chitral Gol National Park**. Go for a hike in the park and enjoy bird watching or photography.
 - Visit **Chitral Museum** to learn about the region's history, culture, and wildlife.
- **Afternoon:**
 - Have lunch at a local restaurant.
 - Explore the **Kalash Culture Museum** in Chitral, which displays artifacts from the Kalash people.
- **Evening:**
 - Take a walk along the **Chitral River** to unwind and enjoy the tranquility of the area.
 - Enjoy a traditional dinner before heading back to your accommodation.

5 Days in Chitral: A Deeper Dive into Chitral's Beauty

Day 1: Chitral Town Exploration (Same as Day 1 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 2: Kalash Valley Adventure** (Same as Day 2 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 3: Garam Chashma Day Trip** (Same as Day 3 in the 3-day itinerary) **Day 4: Visit to Mastuj and Shandur Pass**

- **Morning:**
 - Depart early for **Mastuj**, a scenic town around 3-4 hours from Chitral.
 - Visit **Shandur Pass** (if the road is open; best in summer), also known as the "Roof of the World." It's famous for the **Shandur Polo Festival**.
- **Afternoon:**
 - Have lunch in **Mastuj** or along the way.
 - Explore the beauty of **Shandur Lake** and enjoy its pristine surroundings.
- **Evening:**
 - Return to Chitral by evening.
 - Relax and enjoy dinner.

Day 5: Relax and Explore More of Chitral

- **Morning:**
 - Visit the **Chitral Museum** to get a glimpse of the cultural and historical background of the area.
- **Afternoon:**
 - Explore **Chitral Gol National Park** further or visit the nearby **Bumburate Valley** for a peaceful afternoon.
- **Evening:**
 - Have a farewell dinner in Chitral, featuring traditional dishes like chapshoro, kebabs, or a local stew.

6 Days in Chitral: A Complete Chitral Adventure

Day 1: Chitral Town Exploration (Same as Day 1 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 2: Kalash Valley Adventure** (Same as Day 2 in the 2-day itinerary) **Day 3: Garam Chashma Day Trip** (Same as Day 3 in the 3-day itinerary) **Day 4: Visit to Mastuj and Shandur Pass** (Same as Day 4 in the 5-day itinerary) **Day 5: Chitral Gol National Park and Museum Tour** (Same as Day 4 in the 4-day itinerary) **Day 6: Explore Chitral's Surroundings and Departure**

- **Morning:**
 - Take a scenic drive to **Torkhow Valley** (around 2 hours from Chitral), which is known for its natural beauty and picturesque villages.
 - Have a short hike or explore the valley on foot.
- **Afternoon:**
 - Head back to Chitral town.
 - Stop by **Kunar River** to enjoy the serene waters and beautiful landscapes.
- **Evening:**

- Enjoy your final dinner in Chitral before departing for your next destination.

Day-1

- Depart for Chitral Valley from Islamabad via Swat Motorway at 5:00 Am
- Stop at Swat Motorway Rest Area (Estimated TOA 8 am)
- Travel to Upper and Lower Dir Valley N-45 (Estimated TOA 11 AM)
- Stop for Lunch on the way (Tehzeeb Hotel Dir – Estimated time 1:00 PM)
- Travel to Chitral Valley from Dir via Lowari Tunnel (Estimated time 2:00 PM)
- Tea break in between Lowari Pass and Chitral Valley (Break of 20-30 mins)
- Estimated arrival at Chitral Inn Hotel 7 PM

Day-2

- Breakfast at Chitral Inn at 9 AM
- Visit to Chitral Museum
- Visit to Shahi Masjid, Chitral
- Lunch Break at a Local Traditional Eatery in Chitral City
- Visit to Shahi Qila and Trich Mir viewpoint
- Exploring of Chitral Bazaar
- Reporting back to Chitral Inn Hotel for Bonfire and Dinner

Day-3

- Breakfast at 8 AM
- Gathering and Departure from Hotel at 9:00 AM for Kalash Valley
- Travel to Bumburet Valley hosted by a Local Guide
- Witness the rituals of Local Kalasha Festival, Explore Traditional Kalash Homes
- Graveyard Walk
- Lunch and Refreshments in a Local Restaurant
- Retreat back to Chitral Inn Hotel for Dinner

Day-4

- Breakfast at 8:30 AM
- Departure for Garam Chashma
- Sightseeing of Chitral Gol National Park
- Departure for Chitral Inn after Lunch
- Time for Rest and exploration of Chitral City in the evening for souvenir shopping.

Day-5

- Breakfast at 8:30 AM
- Departure for Islamabad via Swat Motorway

The Kalash or the Kalasha are the only pagan minority residing in the Chitral district of the province of Khyber. The Kalashas live in three valleys of Chitral namely, Rumbur, Brumbret and Birir. The Rumbur and Brumbret form a single culture due to their very similar cultural practices, while Birir being the most traditional one forms a separate culture. The number of Kalash has decreased so much so that only around 4000 people are residing in the valleys. The Kalashas are polytheistic and according to a renowned linguist Richard Strand, is of the view that the people of Kalash practice an ancient form of Hinduism which gradually developed locally and got influenced by the neighboring areas of pre Islamic Nuristan.

The inhabitants of the Kalash valley celebrate a number of festivals all year round. The three predominant festivals are as follows:

1) Joshi Spring Festival (May 13-16)

Joshi festival marks the arrival of spring. People wear new clothes and women accessorize heavily, girls are sent to the hill side for dancing and singing. Women decorate their houses and collect milk from the cattle. Moreover, one year old babies and their mothers are also purified in this festival.

2) Uchal Festival (August 20-21)

The people of Kalash valley celebrate the famous annual harvesting festival Uchal with singing, dancing and paying homage to the nature for blessing them with barley and wheat harvest season. Special foods, cheese, buttermilk and corn bread, are prepared for the event. Women in traditional dresses perform dances.

3) Phool Festival (Mid-October)

The Phool / Autumn Festival is an annual colorful two-day festival in Birir Valley celebrated with high spirit and zeal. The festival marks the reaping of grapes & walnuts harvests. The people sing songs in the local language and perform traditional dances throughout the two-day festival.

4) Chaumas Festival (December)

The most important Kalash festival is the Chawmos (cawmōs, ghona chawmos yat, Khowar “chitrimas” from *cāturmāsyā, CDIAL 4742), which is celebrated for two weeks at winter solstice (c. Dec. 7-22), at the beginning of the month chawmos mastruk. It marks the end of the year’s fieldwork and harvest. It involves much music, dancing, and the sacrifice of many goats. It is dedicated to the god Balimain who is believed to visit from the mythical homeland of the Kalash, Tsyam (Tsiyam, tsíam), for the duration of the feast. Food sacrifices are offered at the clans’ Jeshtak shrines, dedicated to the ancestors.

At Chaumos, impure persons are not admitted; they must be purified by a waving fire brand over women and children and by a special fire ritual for men, involving a shaman waving juniper brands over the men. The 'old rules' of the gods (Devalog, dewalōk) are no longer in force, as is typical for year-end and carnival-like rituals. The main Chaumos ritual takes place at a Tok tree, a place called Indra's place, "indrunkot". Indrunkot is sometimes believed to belong to Balumain's brother, In(dr), lord of cattle. Ancestors, impersonated by young boys (ōnjeṣṭa 'pure') are worshipped and offered bread; they hold on to each other and form a chain and snake through the village.

Shandur Top (el. 12,200 feet (3,700 m)) located in Chitral District, Pakistan. Shandur is often called the 'Roof of the World'. The top is flat, a plateau and can be crossed between late April and early November. The grade is very gradual, and the area is crossed by plentiful small streams during summer. The boundary line between Ghizer District (GB) and Chitral District is also situated in Shandur Top in Punji-Lasht as per the international boundary law division by watershed initially demarcated by Lt. Col AG Durand(also known as Durand boundary line).

In 1935 UK Administrator for Gilgit-Baltistan E. H. Cobb ordered Niat Qabool Hayat Kakakhel nambardar of Ghizer to make a huge polo ground in Shandur. The polo ground was named "Mas Junali", because in the Khowar language 'mas' is the word for 'moon' and 'junali' is the word for 'pologround', and Cobb was fond of playing polo in the moonlight. Cobb was impressed by Kakakhail's resourcefulness and efficiency and wished to reward him for his service, but Kakakhail refused to accept any reward for his work. Instead, for the common benefit, Kakakhail asked Cobb to bring trout to stock the local streams. Cobb ordered live trout from England and dropped them into the River Ghizer. Due to this little service, Directorate of Fisheries had been established and hundreds of people got employed. Now the weight of those fishes in Hundarap Lake cross 24 kg and in Baha Lake Khukush Nallah, their weight crossed 40 kg.

So Mas Junali became a source of relation between the people of Chitral District and Ghizer District. The Shandur Polo Festival opens a door step to the people of the world to enjoy their selves. Many of the people from entire world come here to watch polo match.

Shandur invites visitors to experience a traditional polo tournament, which since 1936 has been held annually in the first week of July/Aug between the local teams of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. The tournament is held on Shandur Top, the highest polo ground in the world at 3,700 meters (the pass itself is at 3,800 meters). The festival also includes Folk music, dancing and a camping village is set up.

Various teams of Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan have always played the game of polo closest to its original form. During the early 20th century, the British in neighboring India were the patrons of the game. Free-styled mountain polo is arguably polo in its purest form. This version of the game played at Shandur-Top has attained legendary status and is of great interest to international and domestic adventure tourists alike. There are no umpires and there are no holds barred. The rules are: There are no rules!

Historically, polo being the king of games was played between small kingdoms, villages and rival groups. From 1936 onwards polo tournaments were held annually at Shandur at the patronage of the British. The three-day Shandur Polo Festival has developed steadily in recent years into the massive celebration of mountain polo that it is today.