

Khunjerab National Park

Kirthar National Park or **Kirtha National Park** is the **largest** national park in Pakistan, located in the Makran coastal region. The park covers an area of about 6,100 square kilometers (2,400 sq mi) and is located 190 km from Karachi in the three districts of Gwadar, Lasbela and Awaran in Balochistan. Hingol was declared a national park in 1988.

The park is named after the southern part of the Hangul River which flows along the shores of the Arabian Sea and is home to large numbers of waterfowl and marine life. Hangul National Park contains six distinct ecosystems as well as both desert and plains regions, making it especially unique among the Pakistan's national parks.

The park is bordered by a dense forest to the north, a barren mountain range to the south, and the Hangul River tributary, which is home to thousands of migratory birds and swamp crocodiles. The Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea are also to the south.

Unique rock formations draw tourists from all over the country, especially since the completion of the Makran Coastal Highway in 2004.

Rock formations

The University of Geneva and the University of Tehran conducted a joint study on the attractive features of this coastal strip of Iran and Balochistan, in which 36 rock formations were observed. According to this research, the effective process of erosion and sedimentation has played an important role in the erosion of rocks here for centuries in which the waves of the sea carry with them a lot of soil and other substances to the shore. Layers of soil 1 to 10 meters and in many places even thicker were observed on these rocks of different heights, which gradually increased from the beach. The tidal waves of the sea and the strong stormy winds have scratched the Makrani coastal strip and the adjoining mountain cliffs in such a way that at first glance it looks like an archaeological complex of an ancient civilization. The most famous of these rocks are the Princess of Hope and the Sphinx.

Princess of Hope

One of the hallmarks of Hangul National Park is a rock called the Princess of Hope. Seen from afar, it looks like a statue of a tall woman looking for something in the distant horizon. When the famous Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie came to Pakistan on a UN goodwill mission in 2004, this rock became the center of her attention and she named her 'Princess of Hope' or Princess of Hope. It is said that it was not created by man but by ocean winds and erosion.

Balochistan Sphinx



Balochistan Sphinx.

The Balochistan Sphinx, also known as the "Lion of Balochistan" or Abul-Hol, is a natural rock structure that bears resemblance to a sphinx and is visible from the Buzi Pass section of the Makran Coastal Highway.

Mud volcanoes

Hingol mud volcano ranging in height from 800 to 1500 feet are abundant in Hangul National Park, mostly in the Mid-Hor area. According to Muhammad Hanif Bhatti, a well-known traveler from Karachi, when he first saw the Chandra Gupta mudflat in Hangul National Park in 2010, he was amazed by the beauty and uniqueness of this natural process. At the time, the volcano was difficult to reach, but since the completion of the highway visitors to the mud volcanoes have increased significantly.

Wildlife

Hangul National Park is a natural sanctuary for endangered wildlife in Pakistan. It is home to about 257 plant and 289 animal species, including 35 mammals, aquatic animals, amphibians, reptiles and migratory birds, including hundreds of rare species. Marsh crocodiles are regularly spotted on the coastline adjacent to Hangul National Park, and there are an estimated 60 crocodiles in various places.

The Hangul Bay is home to a large number of other aquatic life including Indo-Pacific dolphins and green & olive turtles, and various rare species of fish and turtles live in the coastal areas adjacent to Hangul National Park. These turtles come to the beach every night in August to lay their eggs at night. Increasing plastic pollution on the shores made it difficult for them to dig, so the female turtles left without laying eggs. Since then, the number of these turtles on the shores of Sindh and Balochistan has dropped significantly.

Hingol National Park is known to support at least 35 species of mammals, 65 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 185 species of birds. The park forms an excellent habitat to wild Sindh ibex, Baluchistan urial, and Chinkara. Ibex is found in all steep mountain ranges and are numerous in the Hinglaj and Rodani Kacho Mountain areas. The population is estimated over 3000.

Mammals

- Persian leopard
- Caracal
- Jungle cat
- Asiatic wildcat
- Indian wolf
- Golden jackal
- White-footed fox
- Bengal fox
- Striped hyena
- Honey badger

- Afghan hedgehog
- Indian pangolin
- Balochistan gerbil
- Indian gerbil
- Hotson's mouse-like hamster
- Central Asian boar
- Sindh ibex
- Urial
- Chinkara

Reptiles

- Marsh crocodile
- Olive ridley
- Green sea turtle
- Desert monitor
- Yellow monitor
- Indian fringe-fingered lizard
- Indian sand-swimmer
- Carrot-tail viper gecko
- *Melanophidium bilineatum*

Birds

- Houbara bustard
- Spot-billed pelican
- Dalmatian pelican
- Bonelli's eagle
- Imperial eagle
- Golden eagle
- Tawny eagle
- Griffon vulture
- Egyptian vulture
- Cinereous vulture
- Laggar falcon
- Red-necked falcon
- Kestrel
- Brown-necked raven
- Lichtenstein's sandgrouse
- Grey francolin
- See-see partridge
- Stone-curlew
- Crowned sandgrouse
- Lichtenstein's sandgrouse

- Painted sandgrouse
- Eurasian stone-curlew
- Indian eagle-owl
- Sind woodpecker
- Siberian stonechat
- Long-billed pipit
- Grey hypocolius
- Crested lark
- Hoopoe
- Shrike
- Black bittern
- Goliath heron
- Black ibis
- Variable wheatear

Amphibians

- Skittering frog
- Indus Valley toad

Fish

- Golden mahasheer
- Botchee