

EXPEDITION TREK · KARAKORAM

# Great Karakoram Traverse Trek

DURATION  
**32 Days**  
31 nights

MAX ALTITUDE  
**5,150 m**  
high point

GRADE  
**Strenuous**  
mountaineering

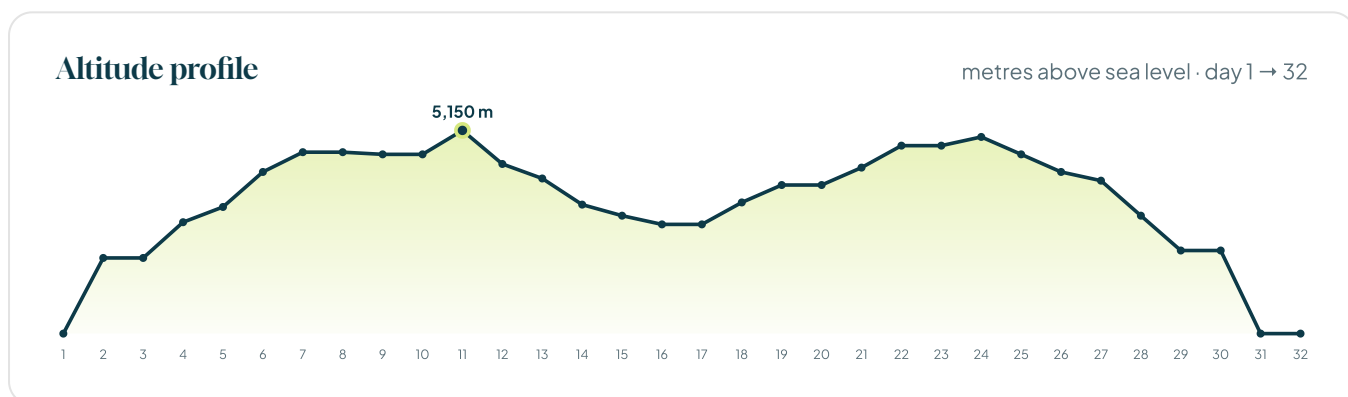
SEASON  
**Jun–Sep**  
best months

FROM  
**\$3,800**  
per person

## The Trek

The Great Karakoram Traverse Trek is the most ambitious trekking expedition in Pakistan — a 32-day end-to-end crossing of the entire Karakoram Range from Hushe Valley in the east to Hunza Valley in the west, combining the greatest elements of Pakistan's three finest treks into one continuous expedition. The Complete Route Hushe to Gondogoro La (5,585m): Begin with the technical Gondogoro La Pass crossing — the only point where four 8,000m peaks are visible simultaneously. Baltoro Glacier to K2 Base Camp: Descend onto the Baltoro and trek to Concordia and K2 Base Camp (5,150m). Biafo Glacier & Snow Lake (4,800m): Cross the vast glacial basin of Snow Lake — the world's largest non-polar

- ▲ Below the Pass
- ▲ Cross Gondogoro La
- ▲ K2 Base Camp
- ▲ Snow Lake
- ▲ Snow Lake Basin
- ▲ Hispar La Camp



## At a Glance

Duration	32 Days · 31 Nights	Grade	Strenuous
Max altitude	5,150 m	Group size	Private & small group
Route	Islamabad → Islamabad	Best season	Jun–Sep
Accommodation	Hotel · Camping	Visa	Trekking visa + permits
From	\$3,800 pp		

**Fitness & grade.** A strenuous trek with a high point of 5,150 m, repeated days at altitude and a high pass on snow and fixed rope. You should be a fit, regular hill-walker, comfortable with long days on rough ground and the real remoteness of the Karakoram. No previous Himalayan experience is required, but a good training base is essential.

# Training & Preparation

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This is a serious multi-day trek with repeated days at altitude and a high point well above 4,500 m. Your enjoyment depends heavily on arriving fit. Build your training over months, not weeks — the cumulative load of consecutive days on rough ground is the real challenge.

## Build endurance

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- Long hill walks, 5–7 hours, on consecutive days
- Carry a 6–8 kg pack in training
- Add stairs, hills and incline work weekly

## Strengthen

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- Legs, core and ankles for rough ground
- Downhill practice — descents are punishing
- Two trekking poles, used in training too

## Skills & mind

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- Practise crampons and harness if you can
- Break in your boots thoroughly before you fly
- Prepare mentally for cold, camp life and remoteness

# Day by Day



Porters on a Karakoram trail

1  
DAY

500 m Arrive

## Arrive Islamabad

Arrive in Islamabad for the expedition briefing with our team.

2  
DAY

2,230 m Trek

## To Skardu

Travel to Skardu (2,230m), our base before the great traverse.

3  
DAY

2,230 m Rest / Acclimatise

## Skardu Prep

Permits, NOC and final gear checks before we head to Hushe.

4  
DAY

3,050 m Jeep / Road

## Drive to Hushe

By jeep to Hushe (3,050m), the trailhead in the shadow of Masherbrum.

5  
DAY

3,400 m Trek

## Hushe to Shaicho

Trek up the valley to Shaicho camp (3,400m).

6  
DAY

4,200 m Trek

## Onto Gondogoro

Continue to Dalsampa (4,200m) as the Gondogoro Glacier opens out.

7  
DAY

4,650 m Trek

## Below the Pass

Climb to Khuspang (4,650m), high camp below the Gondogoro La.

8  
DAY

4,650 m Rest / Acclimatise

## Pass Prep

Rest and prepare for the pre-dawn crossing of the high pass.

9  
DAY

4,600 m Trek

## Cross Gondogoro La

Cross Gondogoro La (5,585m) at dawn and descend to Concordia.

10  
DAY

4,600 m Rest / Acclimatise

## Rest at Concordia

Acclimatise at Concordia (4,600m), surrounded by K2 and Broad Peak.

11  
DAY

5,150 m Trek

## K2 Base Camp

Trek to K2 Base Camp (5,150m) and return to Concordia.

12  
DAY

4,380 m Trek

## To Goro II

Begin the Baltoro descent to Goro II (4,380m).

13  
DAY

4,050 m Trek

## Goro II to Urdukas

Continue down the glacier to Urdukas (4,050m).

14  
DAY

3,450 m Trek

## Urdukas to Paiju

Leave the ice and return to Paiju (3,450m).

15  
DAY

3,200 m Trek

## Paiju to Jhola

Trek down the valley to Jhola (3,200m).

16  
DAY

3,000 m Trek

## Jhola to Askole

Reach Askole (3,000m), the trailhead village.

17  
DAY

3,000 m Rest / Acclimatise

## Rest at Askole

A resupply and rest day before the second glacier system.

18  
DAY

3,500 m Trek

## Onto the Biafo

Step onto the Biafo Glacier and camp at Namla (3,500m).

19  
DAY

3,900 m Trek

## Namla to Baintha

Trek up the Biafo to the Baintha oasis (3,900m).

20  
DAY

3,900 m Rest / Acclimatise

## Rest at Baintha

An acclimatisation day before pushing for Snow Lake.

21  
DAY

4,300 m Trek

## Baintha to Marpogo

Continue deeper to Marpogo (4,300m).

22  
DAY

4,800 m Trek

## Snow Lake

Reach Lukpe Lawo, the Snow Lake (4,800m).

23  
DAY

4,800 m Trek

## Snow Lake Basin

A day to explore and acclimatise in the great ice basin.

24  
DAY

5,000 m Trek

## Hispar La Camp

Climb to high camp below Hispar La (5,000m).

25  
DAY

4,600 m Trek

## Cross Hispar La

Cross Hispar La (5,151m) and descend to Khani Basa (4,600m).

26  
DAY

4,200 m Trek

## Khani Basa to Yutmaru

Trek down the Hispar Glacier to Yutmaru (4,200m).

27  
DAY

4,000 m Trek

## Yutmaru to Bitanmal

Continue along the glacier to Bitanmal (4,000m).

28  
DAY

3,200 m Trek

## Down to Hispar

Leave the ice for Hispar village (3,200m).

29  
DAY

2,400 m Trek

## Hispar to Hunza

Drive through Nagar to Hunza (2,400m).

30  
DAY

2,400 m Rest / Acclimatise

## Rest in Hunza

A recovery day in Hunza, held also as weather margin.



500 m Trek

## Toward Islamabad

Begin the long drive south toward Islamabad.



500 m Depart

## Departure

Final transfer to the airport for your flight home.

# What's Included

## Included

- Local Balti guides and porters, all camping and kitchen crew.
- All meals on trek, tents, mess and toilet tents, cooking gear.
- Skardu transfers by 4x4 jeep, hotel nights in town, permits and NOC fees.
- Satellite phone in camp and an emergency rescue plan with established helicopter contacts.

## Not Included

- International flights and Pakistan visa fees.
- Personal trekking gear (boots, sleeping bag, down jacket).
- Travel and rescue insurance.
- Tips for crew, and any cost arising from early descent, weather delays or evacuation.

# On the Trek

## ● 100% local Balti team

Our own guides, cooks and porters from the mountain valleys — not a brokered hand-off. People who have grown up under these peaks.

## ● Satellite phone in camp

A Thuraya sat phone on every trek for logistics, weather and emergency coordination where there is no mobile signal for days.

## ● Real rescue planning

Established helicopter-rescue contacts and clear evacuation procedures. Rescue is arranged on your behalf and billed to your insurance — never “free”.

## ● Altitude managed

Built-in acclimatisation and reserve days, a portable altitude chamber (PAC/Gamow bag) and a comprehensive medical kit carried with the group.

## Temperatures by altitude

Best season: Summer ( June - September )

Valleys 2,000–3,500 m

**+5 °C nights**

up to +35 °C days

Mid camps 3,500–4,300 m

**around 0 °C**

+18 °C in sun

High camps 4,300–4,950 m

**down to -8 °C**

cold, bright days

High point 5,150 m

**sub-zero, wind**

early start



A high camp in the Karakoram

# Possible Risks

We do not hide the hazards of high mountains — being honest about them is how we keep people safe. Here is what you are taking on, and how we manage it.

## Altitude illness

The main hazard on any high trek. AMS is common; the dangerous forms (HACE and HAPE) are rare but serious. We manage it with a graded, acclimatisation-first schedule, reserve days, daily monitoring, a portable altitude chamber and the readiness to descend.

## High pass / snow ground

This route crosses steep snow and uses fixed rope and crampons. We cross early on frozen ground with experienced crew and will turn back if conditions or weather make it unsafe.

## Glacier & rivers

Crevasses, unstable moraine and glacier-fed rivers that run fast on hot afternoons. We choose lines and timings carefully and rope up where needed.

## Mountain roads

Jeep tracks and mountain highways can be long, narrow and exposed. We use experienced drivers and well-maintained vehicles.

## Weather & flights

Mountain flights cancel and weather can pin a group; buffer days are built in so a delay does not derail the trek.

## Food, water & remoteness

Stomach upsets are the most common complaint; we treat all water and cook hygienically. Above all this is remote country — you may be days from a hospital and evacuation depends on weather.

# Insurance

## Cover is mandatory

You cannot join this trek without travel insurance, and you must bring written proof. We check it before departure. Standard holiday insurance will not cover high-altitude trekking — you need specialist adventure cover.

## What your policy must include

Trekking to at least 5,500 m; helicopter search, rescue and evacuation; emergency medical treatment and repatriation; and ideally trip cancellation. Read the altitude limits and rescue clauses carefully before you buy.

## Where to look

Specialist providers such as Global Rescue, the Austrian Alpine Club / BMC schemes, or dedicated expedition insurers typically offer suitable cover. Confirm in writing that your altitude is included.

# Helicopter Rescue Procedure

There is no road and no quick way out of the high Karakoram. A serious illness or injury is evacuated by helicopter — a process that is neither automatic nor free, and which weather can delay for hours or days. Understanding how it works is part of trekking here responsibly.

## 1 • The call

The emergency is reported by our satellite phone to our operations base, which contacts the rescue authorities. This is why a sat phone travels with every trek.

## 2 • The guarantee

Military aviation — the only operator permitted to fly rescues in this region — is tasked once a financial guarantee is confirmed. This is exactly why proof of insurance must be in place before the trek begins.

## 3 • The flight

Helicopters fly in pairs for safety and can only operate in suitable weather and below their altitude ceiling. A casualty high up may first need to be moved to a lower, safer landing site by the team.

## 4 • The cost

All rescue and evacuation costs are charged to your insurance. Rescue is never free or included in your trek price — our role is to coordinate it quickly and keep you stabilised while help is arranged.

# Health & Medicine

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We carry a comprehensive group medical kit and a portable altitude chamber, and our leaders are trained in remote first aid. You should still bring your own small personal kit. This list is general guidance only — please discuss your medication, and especially altitude drugs, with a travel-medicine doctor before you travel.

## Altitude

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- Acetazolamide (Diamox) — aids acclimatisation
- Emergency altitude drugs only on a doctor's advice
- Know the symptoms of AMS, HACE and HAPE

## Stomach & gut

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- Oral rehydration salts (e.g. Dioralyte)
- Loperamide for diarrhoea
- A doctor-prescribed antibiotic for gut infections

## Pain & fever

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- Paracetamol and ibuprofen
- Aspirin
- Throat lozenges for the dry, cold air

## Wounds & skin

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- Blister care (Compeed) and zinc-oxide tape
- Antiseptic wipes and a range of plasters
- High-SPF sunscreen and lip balm

## Personal

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- All your regular prescription medicines, in carry-on
- A copy of prescriptions and any allergies
- Rehydration and electrolyte tabs

## Good to know

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- Tell your leader of any condition or allergy
- Diamox is a sulfa drug — check for allergy first
- Start personal medication advice early, not last-minute

# Kit List

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The recommended kit for this trek. Your leader checks gear before departure. A porter carries your duffel; you carry a light daypack.

## Footwear & feet

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- B2-rated mountaineering boots (for the pass / snow)
- Broken-in waterproof trekking boots
- Trekking + thick mountaineering socks
- Down booties for camp

## Climbing kit — high pass

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- Climbing harness
- Two 60 cm slings + four screw-gate carabiners
- Belay/abseil device + 3 m of 5 mm cord
- Mountaineering crampons (B2 compatible)
- Ice axe
- Microspikes for icy descents

## Clothing layers

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- Base layers (top & bottom)
- Fleece or soft-shell mid layers
- Waterproof shell jacket & trousers
- Insulated down jacket
- Trekking trousers & shorts

## Head, hands & eyes

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- Warm hat + sun hat + buff
- Liner gloves + insulated mountaineering gloves
- Glacier sunglasses (side protection)
- Head torch + spare batteries

## Glacier & trail

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- Two trekking poles (mandatory)
- Knee-high gaiters
- 35–45 L daypack
- 100–120 L waterproof duffel (porter-carried)
- Water bottles x2 + purification

## Sleep & personal

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- 4-season sleeping bag (to -15 °C)
- Inflatable sleeping mat
- Personal first-aid kit (see medicine list)
- Toiletries & quick-dry towel
- Power bank / solar charger

# Cultural Considerations

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## You are a guest

You travel through Muslim mountain communities with their own languages and deep traditions of hospitality. Meet them with respect and you will be welcomed everywhere.

## Dress modestly

Both men and women should keep shoulders and knees covered in villages and towns. For women, loose clothing and a light scarf are appreciated.

## Photography

Always ask before photographing people — and never photograph women without clear permission. A smile and a gesture go a long way.

## Ramadan & prayer

During Ramadan, eat and drink discreetly out of respect for those fasting. Around mosques and prayer times, keep a low profile.

## Respect the crew

Our porters and cooks are skilled local people, not servants. Treat them as teammates and the whole trek is richer for it.

## A few words

“Assalam-o-Alaikum” (peace be upon you) is the universal greeting; “Shukria” means thank you. A little effort with language is always met with delight.

# Responsible Travel

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Trekking here should leave the mountains and the communities better, not worse. We run these trips to put income into local hands and keep the Karakoram clean.

## People

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- Local guides, cooks and porters, fairly paid
- Capped, fair porter loads and proper gear
- Spending that supports villages and the bazaar

## Place

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- Carry out all non-biodegradable waste
- Toilet tents and proper waste management in camp
- Stay on trails; protect fragile alpine ground and wildlife

# Communications & Money

## Connectivity

Phone signal and wifi exist in the towns, but there is no mobile coverage on trek — for the trekking days you are off-grid. We carry a Thuraya satellite phone for safety and logistics; personal calls are possible at cost. GPS tracking lets family follow your progress. Tell people at home about the communications gap before you go.

## Money & tipping

Bring your spending money as cash in USD, EUR or GBP — there are limited ATMs in the towns and none on trek. Tipping the crew is an expected custom: budget a fair amount into a shared group fund, divided among guides, cooks and porters. Keep some small cash for drinks, handicrafts and the bazaar.

# Visa & Permits

## Trekking visa & permits

Pakistan requires a visa for entry; restricted-zone treks additionally need a Trekking & Mountaineering visa — distinct from a standard tourist visa. We advise on the right category and provide an invitation letter and supporting documents.

## Permits & NOC

National-park entry, trekking permits and any No-Objection Certificate for restricted zones are arranged by us and included in your trek price where applicable.

## Passport & insurance

Passport valid 6+ months with blank pages. Travel insurance covering trekking to 5,500 m and helicopter evacuation is mandatory — bring written proof.

# Recommended Reading

## Throne Room of the Mountain Gods

Galen Rowell

A photographer-climber's classic on the Karakoram and its great glaciers.

## The Gilgit Game

John Keay

The history of exploration and intrigue across the Karakoram passes.

## Trekking in the Karakoram & Hindukush

Lonely Planet

The practical route reference for trekking northern Pakistan.

## Where the Indus is Young

Dervla Murphy

A travel classic: a winter journey through Baltistan with her young daughter.

## Karakoram: Mountains of Pakistan

Shiro Shirahata

A landmark photographic survey of the range's great peaks.

## Full Tilt / On a Shoestring to Coorg

Dervla Murphy

More from a writer who travelled this region with rare honesty.

# Pricing & Departures

Per-person price by group size — all-inclusive of the services listed. Private departures on your own dates; fixed group departures run in season. Discounts apply automatically as your group grows.

Solo 1 Person

**\$7,500**

per person

2–3 Persons

**\$5,400**

per person

4–6 Persons

**\$4,200**

per person

7–10 Persons

**\$3,800**

best value · per person

## Trek the Karakoram with a local team.

Local hands · Real safety · Fair price

WhatsApp / Call

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