

Indus Domes & Deserts

Country(ies): Pakistan

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C car/landcruiser

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 16

Days: 15 Days

Start location: Karachi, Pakistan

End location: Lahore, Pakistan

Departs On:

Meals: Breakfasts - 14, Lunches - 13, Dinners - 13

Highlights:

Karachi, Manchar Lake, Hyderabad, Mohenjo-Daro, Sukkur, Cholistan Desert, Derawar Fort, Bahawalpur, Lahore

Places Visited: Karachi, Manchar Lake, Hyderabad, Mohenjo-Daro, Sukkur, Cholistan Desert, Derawar Fort, Bahawalpur, Lahore



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Karachi. Afternoon city tour

Welcome in Pakistan at Karachi airport. Transfer to our hotel and take a rest before starting with our city tour.

Our tour begins on a high with a full day's sightseeing in and around Karachi. The National Museum gives us a complete vista of Pakistan's cultural heritage from Stone Age to the birth of the nation. After visiting the oldest Sufi shrine in Karachi, Mohamad Ali Jinnah Mausoleum, we can unwind at Clifton Beach or maybe take a soak in the Manghopir hot sulphur springs, that many believe to have curative powers (and just a few crocodiles!)

We are sure to enjoy some of the variety of restaurants in around the city.

OVERNIGHT: Karachi hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra night in Karachi - pre-tour (EXPAKS) || Guide & Transport for extra day - Karachi (EXPAGK) || Single room supplement (CADD17N)

Day 2: To Hyderabad via Chaukundi, Thatta, Makli Hills & Kinjhar Lake

Our destination today is Hyderabad, however we'll have a number of stops en-route to visit Chaukundi, Makli Hills and Thatta.

The Chaukundi Tombs are known for their elaborate and exquisite stone carvings and the style of architecture found here, is unique in that it can be found nowhere else in the Islamic world. Whilst in Thatta we'll visit the Shah Jahan Mosque, famous for its beautiful architecture, which was constructed during in the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan; better known as the visionary who created the Taj Mahal in Agra, India. Our final visit before heading to Hyderabad will be to the nearby Makli Hills. Makli Necropolis covers an area of around 10 kilometers and is thought to house up to 1 million tombs, built over a period of 400 years, it is perhaps the worlds largest necropolis

Before arriving in Hyderabad, we'll make a captivating stop at Kinjhar Lake, a wildlife haven and internationally recognized Ramsar site. This vast freshwater lake, the largest in Pakistan, teems with life. Lush reedbeds and vibrant underwater plants create a rich ecosystem that attracts a stunning array of birds.

Imagine flocks of ducks, geese, flamingos, and cormorants gracing the waters – a haven for both resident birds and those seeking a winter refuge. Kinjhar Lake is especially important for breeding birds like the Cotton Teal and the striking Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

Beyond its ecological significance, the lake supports a thriving fishing community of around 50,000 people, and even provides essential drinking water for Karachi. Since 1977, Keenjhar Lake has been protected as a Wildlife Sanctuary, ensuring this remarkable place remains a vibrant home for both nature and people.

OVERNIGHT: Hyderabad hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 3: Learn about local industries in Hyderabad, Hala & Bhit Shah and join a pottery workshop

Today is all about the industries which the region around Hyderabad is famous for. In Hala and Bhit Shah, known as the hub of Sindhi handicrafts, we visit traditional craft workshops which are largely family-owned. Any purchases you choose to make here contribute to the local economy, with funds going directly into the hands of local artisans.

Amongst many handicrafts that Hala is known for, glazed ceramic, earthenware and terracotta are the most popular. These pots and tiles are available in various shapes and sizes and are famous for their exquisite hand painted designs. The artists use only signature colours which include: cobalt blue, turquoise, mustard, purple, brown and white; this form of art is known as 'Kashi Kari'.

After seeing these talented artists at work, you'll have the opportunity to release your inner potter, as we join a pottery workshop, learn time-honored skills, and let your creativity flow as you mold the clay into your own unique masterpiece.

Nearby Bhit Shah is best known for being the home to a shrine dedicated to the Sindhi Sufi Poet, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, who also gave his name to the town. We'll take time to visit the shrine before moving on to learn about Ajrak; a traditional block printed cloth which was a hallmark of the Indus Civilisation.

OVERNIGHT: Hyderabad hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: 'The Great Wall of Sindh' - Ranikot Fort. Drive to Sehwan.

A real treat is in store this morning as we visit Ranikot Fort, also known as the Great Wall of Sindh, due to its huge 32km circumference, making it the world's largest fort. The ramparts of the fort have often been compared to those found along the Great Wall of China and we'll have time to explore and get some great photos of the walls straddling the nearby hillsides. Our day ends in Sehwan, a city famous for the shrine of the 13th century Sufi Saint, Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

OVERNIGHT: Sehwan hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Visit the Mohanas Tribe and incredible Mohenjo Daro

This morning we'll drive to Manchar Lake which is home to the Mohana Tribe who are thought to be descendants of the first inhabitants of the Indus Valley.

The Mohana are a fascinating people who live in houseboats at the heart of Lake Manchar. Their unique way of life centers around fishing, a skill they've honed for generations. They partner with trained cormorants and night herons, who help them catch an abundance of fish – enough to sustain both the birds and the Mohana families. Sadly, this traditional lifestyle is endangered. The Mohana lost their exclusive fishing rights, facing competition from larger contractors. Water shortages and dams further disrupt their livelihood.

To support the Mohana, we spend time with them, learning about their culture. We hire their boats to explore the lake (when water levels allow). This provides a crucial income source for the fishing community, which in turn helps to preserve their ancestral way of life.

After boating on the lake with the Mohanas, we'll visit their original settlement of Mohenjo Daro, be prepared to be impressed! Mohenjo Daro flourished as the centre of the Indus Civilisation for around 800 years, during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC. The city was one of the largest in the old world and was the first city in South Asia to demonstrate urbanisation. The site was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980, the first site in South Asia to be so designated.

OVERNIGHT: Larkana hotel
MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch
EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Exploring Larkana and Kot Diji Fort

Larkana is home to the famous Bhutto family, who have held the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) since its inception in 1967. Two members of the family have gone on to be Prime Ministers of Pakistan, including Benazir Bhutto, whose widower Asif Ali Zardari also went on to be President of Pakistan from 2008 to 2013. Whilst exploring Larkana we'll make a stop at the Bhutto Family Mausoleum, an impressive building which attracts large crowds on a yearly basis, to commemorate the death of Benazir Bhutto.

As we leave Larkana behind, we'll make our way to Sukkur, with a stop en-route to visit Kot Diji Fort, an important Harappa site (3000–2600 BC), which is situated at the foot of the Rohri Hills where the fort stands majestically above us.

OVERNIGHT: Sukkur hotel
MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
EXTRAS: None

Day 7: Sadhu Belo Temple, Visit the Indus Dolphin Conservation Centre

This morning we'll visit the island of Sadhu Belo which is famous for the highly revered Hindu Temples located here, including Teerath Asthan which is the largest Hindu Temple in Pakistan.

After our visit to the island, we'll enjoy a boat ride on the Sukkur River, keep your eyes peeled for sightings of dolphins. A local legend says that the Indus River Dolphin was once a woman who was cursed to be transformed into a dolphin, by a local holy man, who was angry that she forgot to prepare his food one day. The species was once thought to be extinct, however numbers are now on the rise, though they're not yet off of the endangered species list.

By taking our travellers to visit this area, our funds are helping to support the efforts being made by the Indus Dolphin Conservation Centre to:

- Inject funds and awareness to support vital conservation work for habitat protection, research, and anti-poaching efforts.
- Empower local communities by creating economic opportunities that foster a commitment to dolphin and habitat protection.
- Influence policy by highlighting the importance of Indus River dolphins, encouraging stricter regulations to safeguard their environment.

Our final visit of the day takes us to the Masoon Shah Jo Minaro Tower, which was once the highest point in Sukkur, after ascending the 84 steps, you'll be rewarded with views of Sukkur where we'll be spending the night.

OVERNIGHT: Sukkur hotel
MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch
EXTRAS: None

Day 8: Drive to Bahawalpur via Bhong Mosque

Our route today takes us to the city of Bahawalpur. The city of Bahawalpur was founded in 1748 and was the capital of the former princely state of Bahawalpur, which was ruled by the Abassi family. The state remained independent until the formation of Pakistan in 1947. En-route to Bahawalpur we'll visit the Bhong Mosque. With its unique design, taking stylistic elements from nearby Lahore as well as Iran, Spain and Turkey, the mosque won the Aga Khan

award for architecture in 1986 after a construction period of around 50 years.

OVERNIGHT: Bahawalpur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Cholistan Desert, Derawar Fort and Tombs of the Nawabs of Bahawalpur

Today we drive into the Cholistan desert, where standing proudly we'll see the Derawar Fort, a famed hallmark of Bahawalpur. The Derawar Fort has around 40 bastions that stand 30 feet high and the walls have a circumference of approximately 1.5km. The Nawab of Bahawalpur, Sadeq Mohammad Khan I, captured the fort in 1733 and had it rebuilt into the design that you see today.

In front of the fort stands the Derawar mosque, which was constructed in 1844 AD. The mosque has three domes and two minarets built in the style of Moti Masjid at the Red Fort in Delhi.

We also visit the tombs of Nawabs of Bahawalpur, the royal graveyard of the Abbasi family. The Abbasi family was the ruling Nawab family of Bahawalpur and all of the previous Nawabs are buried here. The graveyard is still owned and controlled by the surviving family members of the Nawabs.

There is also an option to do camel safari in the Cholistan desert around Derawar Fort. Drive back to Bahawalpur, visiting Bibi Jaiwandi Tomb in Uch along the way.

OVERNIGHT: Bahawalpur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 10: Exploring the former Princely State of Bahawalpur. Drive to Multan

Founded in 1748 by Nawab Bahawal Khan, the former state of Bahawalpur remained independant until the formation of Pakistan in 1947. The Nawabs left behind a wealth of culture and beautiful architecture and today we'll visit Nur Mahal, Bahawalpur Mosque, the Museum and the Bazaar. Later, we'll leave the city behind and make our way to Multan.

OVERNIGHT: Multan hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 11: Multan, the city of saints, mystics and shrines

We have a full day of sightseeing ahead of us today, exploring the city of Multan. We'll start by exploring a number of shrines, dedicated to the great mystics Bahauddin Zakaria, Shah Rukn e Alam and Shams Tabrez which are decorated with beautiful glazed blue tiles. Later, we'll explore the old city of Multan, which has a bustling bazaar where you may see artisans making painted camel skin vases and lamp shades. We'll also visit the Eidgah Mosque which dates from the 16th to 17th century. Our evening will be spent in Multan.

OVERNIGHT: Multan hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 12: Visit Harappa en-route to Lahore

The archaeological site of Harappa provides us with an interesting stop off, on our way to Lahore. The town flourished as a centre of the Indus Valley Civilization and dates back to 3000 BC. Later in the day, we'll arrive in Lahore where we'll have a free evening to settle in.

OVERNIGHT: Lahore hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 13: Begin exploring the city of Lahore

We'll begin exploring Lahore today, making our first stop at Lahore Fort, a marvel of Moghul architecture which was constructed between the 11th and 16th centuries. Overlooking the Fort is the Badshahi Mosque (the Royal Mosque), the world's largest, and our next stop. The mosque was constructed during the reign of Emperor Aurengzeb. Pakistan's most famous poet-philosopher, Dr Mohamad Iqbal, lies buried outside the mosque.

From here we move to Jahangir's Tomb. The Tomb was built by his son Shah Jahan (who is best known for constructed the Taj Mahal) in 1627. After making a stop at the Lahore Museum, we will enjoy the city's love of food by visiting the 'food street' in the old town, where we can find many different dishes and flavours.

OVERNIGHT: Lahore hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 14: Old Walled City of Lahore and the Wagah Border Ceremony

The Old Walled City is our next stop with its narrow and dimly lit alleys leading from Sarafa Bazaar to Kashmiri Bazaar. Brass inlay work, as well as local handicrafts can be found in abundance here. We visit Shahi Hamam (Royal Bath) and the Wazir Khan Mosque before heading to the Wagah border with India to watch the flag lowering ceremony. Each day there is an elaborate military drill which symbolizes the 2 countries' rivalry over the last 60 years.

OVERNIGHT: Lahore hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 15: Transfer to Lahore Airport for departure

You'll have some free time in Lahore today until you are transferred to the airport for departure.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra night in Lahore - post-tour || Guide & Transport for extra day - Lahore

Included

- Accommodation - 3 to 5-star hotels & guesthouses
- Karachi city and surroundings tour (1 full day)
- Manghopir Sufi Shrine and hot sulphur springs
- Ajrak factory visit (traditional block printed cloth)

- Boating with the Mohanas tribe on Manchar Lake
- Boat safari to Sukkur island
- Sadu Bela - Hindu Temple
- Derawar Fort
- Multan city tour
- Harappa archaeological site
- Rohtas Fort
- Lahore city tour (2 full days)
- Letter of Invitation and general visa advice
- Pakistani clothes (Shalwaar Chemise)
- Airport transfers
- Meals - 3 meals per day
- Tea & Coffee morning & afternoon
- All transport
- English speaking guide

Excluded

- Visas
- Optional Excursions as listed in the Pre-Departure Information
- Flights
- Airport Taxes & Transfers
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks
- Tips

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Guide & Transport for extra day - Islamabad

Min numbers: 1

If you will be adding extra nights to either end of your tour in Pakistan with us, then you may also wish to book a guide and vehicle for your extra day. This option provides that guide and vehicle for you in Islamabad. The guide will also accompany you on your arrival or departure airport transfer. Solo traveller supplements apply.

Price: Starting from - \$60

Extra night in Islamabad - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra night in Islamabad to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing. Single room supplements apply.

Price: Starting from - \$50

Guide & Transport for extra day - Karachi

Min numbers: 1

If you will be adding extra nights to either end of your tour in Pakistan with us, then our policy is that we will also always provide you with a guide and vehicle for the extra day. This option provides that guide and vehicle for you in Karachi and is required for each extra night you may add, unless you have a flight arrival time after 3pm or flight departure time before midday. The guide will also accompany you on your arrival or departure airport transfer. Solo traveller supplements apply.

Price: Starting from - \$75

Extra night in Karachi - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra night in Karachi to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing. Single room supplements apply. Note - if you book extra nights with us, you will also need to add the option to book a guide and vehicle for your extra day. If you don't want to include this, then unfortunately we are not able to arrange your extra night hotel or arrival transfer. Instead you would make these arrangements yourself, and make your own way to the start hotel on Day 1.

Price: Starting from - \$60

Guide & Transport for extra day - Lahore

Min numbers: 1

If you will be adding extra nights to the end of your tour in Pakistan with us, then our policy is that we will also always provide you with a guide and vehicle for the extra day. This option provides that guide and vehicle for you in Lahore and is required for each extra night you may add, unless you have a flight arrival time after 3pm or flight departure time before midday. The guide will also accompany you on your arrival or departure airport transfer. Solo traveller supplements apply.

Price: Starting from - \$75

Extra night in Lahore - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra night in Lahore to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing. Single room supplements apply. Note - if you book extra nights with us, you will also need to add the option to book a guide and vehicle for your extra day. If you don't want to include this, then unfortunately we are not able to arrange your extra night hotel or departure transfer. Instead you would make these arrangements yourself.

Price: Starting from - \$50

Single room supplement

Min numbers: 1

This tour is based on twin-share accommodation, with single bookers paired up with another traveller of the same sex in the group. If the final group make-up means that no room share is available, you do not need to pay this supplement. However, if you would like to guarantee yourself a single room throughout the tour, then please add this option to your booking.

Price: Starting from - \$480

1. Accommodation

This tour uses comfortable 3 to 4-star hotel and guesthouse accommodation. Please check the accommodations tab for examples of the properties normally used on this tour.

Accommodation is based on a twin-share basis, with single room supplements available if you would like to guarantee yourself a single room throughout the tour.

2. Transport

In Southern Pakistan we normally use a car or 4x4 (Land Cruiser or similar) with air conditioning, though the exact vehicle used will be determined by the final size of the group.

3. Transfers

This tour includes your arrival and departure airport transfers and all other transfers throughout the itinerary. You will be provided with detailed information of where to meet our representative in the airport, as well as a local contact telephone number and our own 24-hour emergency phone number, when we send you your final tour voucher approximately two weeks before your departure.

If your flight arrives in the early hours of the morning, you may like to book an extra night in the hotel so a bed is available for you to get some rest and sleep before the tour starts. Subject to your arrival time, you may be able to rest in the reception area of the hotel until your room is available (we will aim to help you check in early, but this will be subject to the hotel's occupancy - standard check in times are 2-3pm).

4. Joining on Day 1

This trip starts with an afternoon tour of Karachi on Day 1. We normally meet in the hotel at 1.30pm and leave at 2pm - this will be confirmed by our representative if we pick you up from the airport, or by a notice in the hotel reception if you are making your own arrangements to get to the hotel. If your flight arrives after around 11am on Day 1 you will miss this afternoon tour. Extra nights are available in the same tour hotel if morning arrival flights are not convenient for your dates or departure airport. During this first meeting with the guide, we will also collect a photocopy of your passport information page and your travel insurance policy details.

5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we set our Pakistan small-group departures to have a maximum of 16 travellers. The minimum group size is 2.

In Pakistan we provide a fully trained, local English-speaking tour leader/driver to accompany our groups. Additional specialist local guides may be used for some of the sightseeing tours and activities included in the tour.

At Encounters Travel we have a policy of aiming to use only local Pakistani guides and reps wherever possible. We feel this provides support to the local population and economy and also gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

6. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take

account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour. Our Pakistan tours start and finish at either Islamabad airport (ISB) or Karachi airport (KHI).

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines may be more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

Flight CO2 Emissions:

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint.

When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

7. Passports and Visas

Your passport expiry date must be at least 6 months after your time in India finishes. Do not bring a full or almost expired passport. We also recommend you have a machine-readable passport - if you have an old-style manually issued passport you should replace this with a new machine-readable passport before you travel.

All nationalities will need to arrange their Pakistan tourist visa in advance. To apply for your visa, you will need to obtain a 'Letter of Invitation' (LOI) and show some other information about the local arrangements for your tour. Once you have received the LOI and this information you will be able to apply for the visa at your nearest Pakistan embassy or Consulate.

We will provide you with your Letter of Invitation and all the other information required as part of your tour price. Details for this process will be emailed to you several months before the trip departs. You should apply for your visa at least one month before you are due to arrive to allow for processing time and possible checks of your documentation. Costs will vary depending on your nationality and the embassy at which you apply for your visa.

The information below is to be used only as a guide and may change without prior notice. It is advisable to contact the relevant embassy in plenty of time before the trip departs to check the current visa requirements. It is **your responsibility** to ensure you have all the relevant visas you require.

8. Time

Pakistan Standard Time is GMT/UTC + 5. Daylight saving time is not applied.

9. Voltage

In Pakistan, sockets are mainly two or three round pronged and 230 volts / 50Hz (Type C,D). Type C plugs with 2 round pins should fit in nearly all sockets.

Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard UK-European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are sometimes available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already but cannot be guaranteed.

If you have US appliances (110 volts) you may need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

10. Money

The currency unit for Pakistan is the Pakistani Rupee (Rs, or PKR).

As a general rule it is best to bring your spending money in a combination of cash US dollars, pre-paid travel currency cards and debit/credit cards. Make sure that all your notes are in good condition. Old, torn or marked notes are often refused by the banks and shops.

Spending Money

From past trips and traveller feedback we would recommend changing US\$100 to US\$150 (or GBP equivalent) to local currency while you are in Islamabad. This will pay for any extra drinks, snacks and a few souvenirs during the trip. Personal spending habits and budgets can vary greatly from person to person, but generally there isn't a lot to spend your money on during our Pakistan tours as most things are already included.

If you plan on buying more expensive souvenirs, such as a carpet, then budget for this separately. US Dollars would be the best currency for this.

Changing money

Change your money only at banks, hotels, airports or forex bureaus. It is illegal to change money on the street, and people offering this service may be opportunistic thieves or undercover police. Your guide will advise you where & when you can change money & with what means. It is also a good idea to have a small CASH emergency fund, to allow for the unexpected.

Credit & Debit Cards

If you are intending using your credit or debit card, we suggest taking more than one card with you as you may find that your card is not accepted in the first ATM you try. Visa or Mastercard are preferred rather than American Express. We recommend that you inform your bank that you will be using your card abroad to avoid it being blocked.

Pre-Paid Travel Currency Cards

These cards are similar to normal Credit and Debit cards but they can be pre loaded with cash before you travel with a set amount allowing you to withdraw this cash using the card at normal ATMs. It is a more secure way to access cash on your trip, but again do not rely on these as your sole means of funds on a trip. Several banks and companies now offer these cards, but be sure to look into the rates for withdrawing cash when making your decision. When using these cards abroad you will use them to withdraw the local currency from an ATM and not the currency that you loaded onto the card.

11. Tipping

Tipping is often expected and relied upon. It is often more than a reward for services well done, but, as wages are extremely low, it is an accepted means of supplementing an income. If you would like to leave a tip for any activity/individual, you could organise this as a group and give a tip at the end. Your guide will be able to advise and will sometimes leave tips for your local restaurant meals, as part of your trip price.

Because it can be difficult to know what to tip, and because it has such importance in some areas both economically and culturally, there may be times and activities for which your guide will make it clear what level of tipping is 'customary/expected'. This is motivated by the knowledge of how important tipping can be, and the offence or confusion that can be caused when local people are tipped poorly. In the end, tipping remains at the discretion of the individual and their budget, but our guides will continue to advise on normal or average rates, and we would ask you to carefully consider the economic or personal impact of being seen as 'under tipping'. We know that many who travel with us are on a tight budget, but ask you to consider that many local people face financial hardship, and also work very hard to try to give you unrivalled service/experiences.

In the past we have been asked by travellers about tipping your guide. If you choose to do this, it would be budgeted separately from the above. Our guides work very hard at making your trip a great travel experience. Working overseas can often be challenging and they are pretty much on call for you 24 hours a day, so it's appreciated as a thank you for hard work and good service, but of course not mandatory or expected. Our suggestion is to budget around US\$3 to US\$6 per person per day, again subject to your budget and your satisfaction with the service provided.

12. Climate

With its geographical spread from the Arabian Sea to the heights of the Karakorum and Himalayan mountains, Pakistan has an extreme of weather conditions.

The areas we visit in the north are generally only passable during the summer months from June to October. Temperatures can be as high as 40 degrees during the day at lower altitudes, while cooler but with a powerful sun at altitude. At night, especially from September, temperatures can drop to sub zero. Flooding is possible and thunderstorms can be heavy during July and August, but this is still most definitely the best time of year to visit!

For our tours in the southern half of the country we prefer to travel between October and April, as it is the drier season and the temperature is a little cooler in the evenings. You should still expect high temperatures and some hot, humid days and nights.

13. Security

Generally Pakistani people are some of the friendliest on earth, but all major cities have their share of petty crime (just like our cities!) and sensible precautions need to be taken. Wearing expensive looking jewellery, watches and carrying cameras, will draw unnecessary attention to you. Leave valuables such as passports, excess money etc in your hotel safe (we recommend carrying a copy of your passport details page at all times). You may find a simple money belt is more discrete than a bag. Always be aware of your surroundings and when approached by people you do not know, use your common sense. At night in cities it's best to use a taxi, rather than walking around the streets. Single women in particular need to be careful & we would suggest that it is safer to be in a group.

FCDO Advice - The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) offer [country-specific advice](#), regarding not only security but also entry regulations, local laws and customs and health. We strongly recommend all travellers visit the FCO website, or the equivalent in their home country, to familiarise themselves with local conditions and potential issues in the countries they plan to visit before committing to a trip with us.

As an adventure tour operator, some of our trips will travel to areas that are rarely-visited and occasionally attract negative publicity. We are not in the business of taking our travellers or indeed staff to regions that we consider dangerous and the safety of all who travel with us is always our main priority. However, as a discerning customer we understand you will want to be aware of any risks before travelling. We liaise with the FCDO on specific regions or areas as necessary, as well as monitoring open media outlets and political risk resources, and speaking to our contacts on the ground.

In some rare cases, our trips may have to travel through areas against which the FCDO either 'advise against all but essential travel' or 'advise against all travel'. When our trips travel through these areas we will carry out all due

diligence and notify you in advance. This advice can change without notice. In these instances you will need to ensure you have full and comprehensive travel insurance that includes cover for these areas – some policies will exclude them. We are able to recommend additional cover, if required. It may also be required that you read and sign a short information sheet confirming you have been advised of the risks and agree to travel contrary to the FCDO advice.

If you have any questions at all about the safety or security of your trip, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to discuss your trip in more detail.

14. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

Pakistan: Additional vaccinations: Diptheria, Hepatitis A, Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Yellow fever rules for India are quite complicated and lengthy. Please read the [WHO guidance](#).

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting. In general Malaria is present throughout the year in all areas of Pakistan below 2000m except the Punjab and the city of Karachi. Risk is highest in rural areas from July to December. Areas of high risk include much of the south, and western part of the country including Chitral. Areas of low risk include the northern mountains and Eastern areas. Here malaria prophylactics are often not advised for short trips.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view this [US CDC information](#) about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

15. Altitude Sickness

This is caused by thin air (due to lack of oxygen) and can affect anyone arriving at high altitude (above 3000mtrs). The symptoms are headaches, dizziness, shortage of breath and possibly nausea. To avoid this or alleviate the symptoms it is important to make a point to acclimatize by arriving into a high altitude destination a few days early and make sure you do not over exert yourself, rest for a few hours, avoid drinking alcohol, smoking, large meals and drink plenty of water.

As our tours in northern Pakistan travel by land (as opposed to flying into a high altitude location) we should acclimatise gradually, and so avoid the risks of mountain sickness. If you do have any symptoms you should discuss these with your guide who will be able to make adjustments to your itinerary if necessary.

16. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

17. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

18. What to take

Luggage: Whatever you're doing in Pakistan, you'll find that large rigid wheeled suitcases are cumbersome - you may be able to wheel them inside the airport and your hotel, but due to the condition of roads and pavements that's often about it. As many of our tours involve a degree of adventurous activity, we strongly advise you to bring a more practical bag for these i.e. a rucksack or holdall. These are also much easier to fit into vehicles like jeeps than rigid suitcases. If you are trekking, or doing a lot of travel throughout the country, then as little as possible is the basic message. A rucksack or holdall (50-70 liter approx.) for your main luggage, and a daypack for you to use during the day should be plenty. The trekking included on our standard tours in Pakistan is all done as single day treks, so your main luggage will be left behind in the hotel or in the vehicle. So, you'll just need to take a daypack with things you'll need during the day. Do bring one big enough to carry waterproofs and extra clothing as the weather can change quickly in the mountains.

Luggage limits: Most international airlines allow 20-23kg per person of hold luggage. Domestic flights often have smaller allowances around 15kg. As airline rules vary we recommend that you take no more than 20kg of luggage if your tour just includes international flights, and no more than 15kg if there are any domestic flights included in your itinerary. Please ask us for details if you are unsure. Any excess baggage fees will be your responsibility to cover. Most airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage so we suggest that you take no more than 5kg unless you have confirmed that your airline(s) will allow more than this.

If you are doing any overnight treks with us, we ask that you keep the weight of your main bag that the porter will carry to a maximum of 12.5kg. This then allows the porter to carry up to 2 bags, and a maximum of 25kg.

Clothing & Climate: Pakistan has a climate that ranges widely depending on when you visit, and where you are visiting.

June to August - monsoon season - please make sure you bring waterproof clothing. While the rains are not as persistent in the mountains, there may well be heavy showers and thunderstorms.

September - If you are travelling in northern Pakistan in September, ensure you pack extra warm clothing as it can

get very cold at night.

At the start of the tour you will be given 2 x Shalwaar Chemise, which are worn by the local people. You don't have to wear these, but we find they are very comfortable and you will blend in more and be appreciated and accepted more freely by the locals. There is room to wear trousers or shorts / T shirts / shirts / blouses underneath when the weather gets cold. Moderate and modest dress is the order of the day wherever we go.

Women will be required to wear head scarves, long sleeves and either loose fitting ankle length skirts or pants. Your guide can advise more on which areas you are travelling through which may be more strict or relaxed about dress codes for women. Men should also be conservatively dressed and will need long trousers and long sleeved shirts. Both men and women will need to wear covered shoes in certain areas. Shorts are generally not considered acceptable for males or females throughout Pakistan and we have only included them on the list for use underneath your Shalwaar Chemise.

All tours: We recommend that you bring a refillable water bottle, sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries (including tampons if required as these can be hard to find in the country), money belt, small torch, camera & charger, plug adaptor.

Whilst trekking:

Suggested Clothing and equipment: Strong hiking boots or walking shoes that you have broken in; lightweight waterproof and windproof jacket; (waterproof gaiters, waterproof over trousers - these are only necessary on some treks in some seasons - contact us for further info if required); 3 or 4 t-shirts; several pairs of light socks; 2 pairs of heavier woollen socks; underwear including thermals; warm hat and gloves; swimwear; pair of lightweight trousers; pair of shorts; 1 fleece or warm jumper and 1 sweatshirt. Also, sunglasses, torch and batteries, toiletries (include a lighter to burn toilet paper), bring biodegradable shampoo & soap, towel, blister kit, money belt and any personal medication you might require. Remember, Lots of layers are the key to staying warm and comfortable. Also, keeping your feet comfortable and healthy makes a huge difference to how you enjoy your trek. So, bring waterproof boots/walking shoes and plenty of pairs of socks so you can change them regularly.

Day Packs and Main luggage: You will want a sturdy and comfortable daypack to carry your day-to-day items with you while you are walking (waterproofs, clothes you may change in and out of regularly, drinks, snacks, camera). On any multi-day treks you will also need a sturdy holdall or backpack for your main luggage. Your porters or ponies will carry this for you, so suitcases are not appropriate. They may leave earlier than you, and may not walk with you throughout the entire day, so bear in mind that you won't have access to this luggage all the time - you need to ensure you are carrying everything you require during the days walk in your daypack. You can leave luggage behind in storage at your hotel so you don't need to take everything with you on the trek.

19. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudice: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.

- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

20. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

21. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable. Details about our own policies cover levels are given [on our website](#).

22. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign which provides further useful and invaluable information.

23. Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

travel
aware
gov.uk/travelaware

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can't fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.

- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
