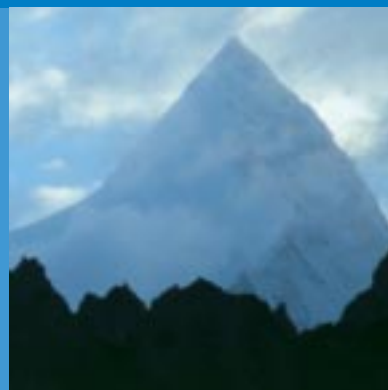




NWFP Wildlife Department
Government of NWFP

NA Forestry, Parks and Wildlife Department
NA Administration



PAPASSU

Magnificent Glaciers & Mighty Peaks



Rock flutes near Fatima Hill © all photographs Matthieu Paley



AFGHANISTAN
Wakhan Corridor

MAP OF GOJAL NORTHERN PAKISTAN

CHINA
Xinjiang



all maps by Mareile Paley. Created with the help of WWF GIS-Lab, ESRI and ERDAS imagine



PASSU IS MAGNIFICENTLY SITUATED, IN A COUNTRY WHERE NATURE HAS
DESIGNED EVERYTHING ON A NOBLE AND LAVISH SCALE



Col. R. C. F. Schomberg, "Between the Oxus and the Indus"

PASSU FACTS

location Gojal, Upper Hunza, on the Karakoram Highway

main settlements Passu, Janabad

public transport any transport on Karakoram Highway going between Aliabad and Sost

accommodation several small guesthouses in Passu, guesthouses and hotels in Janabad

supplies best to buy all your trekking food in Sost, Aliabad or Gilgit

population 98 households, 880 people

indigenous language Wakhi

indigenous wildlife snow leopard, Himalayan ibex, red fox, wolf, Himalayan snow cock, rock partridge

common plant species juniper, willow, poplar, wild roses, seabuckthorn



View of Passu from Avdegar

INTRODUCTION

The sun-drenched summits opposite Passu are commonly known as the Cathedral Peaks. Their striking presence has made them a popular icon for the Passu area.

With the completion of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) in 1978, the previously inaccessible maze of high mountains, glaciers and hidden valleys which make up the Karakoram Range, suddenly opened its doors to the world. An area of unspoiled mountain beauty with rugged glaciers, unclimbed peaks and pristine wildlife, Gojal, the region north of Hunza, has since become a popular spot for ecotourism.

Passu village with its small rural Wakhi community lays in the heart of Gojal. Passu's idyllic location near the winding Hunza River, with a backdrop of mighty glaciers and some of Gojal's highest peaks, makes the village an ideal base to explore the spectacular landscape. From Passu one can visit an eclectic range of natural and cultural sights in all directions. The adventurer will be fascinated to see the Batura Glacier's impressive ice floes up close, while

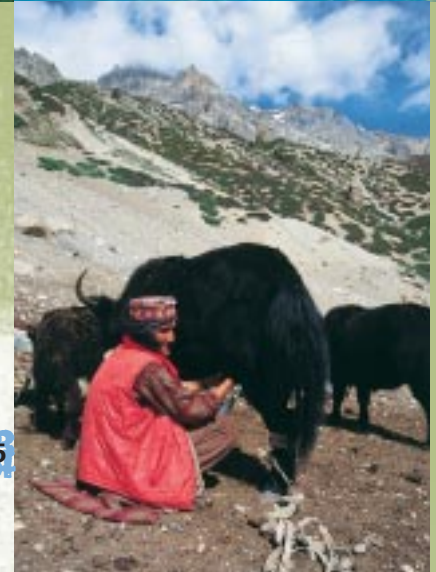


Despite its popularity as a trekking destination, Passu has remained a small rural community. Most people's life still revolves around farming and livestock herding.



the researcher can spend months at a time studying the rare alpine flora and fauna of the area. A mountaineer can attempt to scale the majestic peaks of the great Batura Wall, while the leisurely traveler can relax in one of Passu's comfortable guesthouses and enjoy the view across the valley.

In short, Passu has something to offer for everybody and through their well-organized system of local guides and porters the people of Passu are eager to show you their culture and to share their passion for the mountains surrounding them.



Tracing back a true history of a number of clans and tribes in these areas where written records do not exist is a daunting task. Maybe, with our logic-demanding minds, we should be less obstructed by the lack of facts and the contradiction of stories heard, but open our hearts and ears to the beauty of old legends and allow ourselves to be mesmerized by the stories and oral accounts of the elders...

HISTORICAL PASSU

As it is the case with so many of Gojal's villages, Passu's location is a fragile one. Wedged on the bit of tillable land between the icy tongues of

two big glaciers and the lapping waters of the Hunza River, the area is prone to landslides and erosion, even today. According to Passu's elders, the early settlement was once home to some 300 households before most of the prosperous village was submerged, forcing the population to leave and to migrate back to their places of origin in Central Asia. Later, Passu was resettled by a man named Quli, who is today generally recognized as the great ancestor of the majority of Passu's population.

One can still see parts of "old Passu" in two areas today. One is on the small island in the Hunza River, where a few broken walls can be found. The other is an elevated piece of land in the middle of lower fields — an impressive example of the power of destruction of landslides in this region.

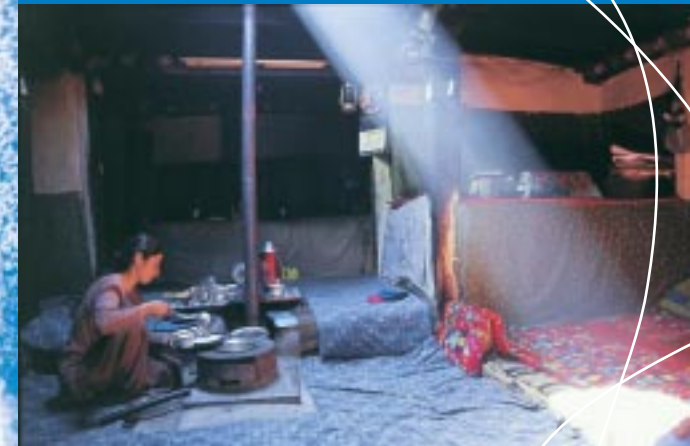
The elevated area shows the original level of Passu.



THE WAKHI DEMONSTRATION OF 1940

For a long time and even after the British invasion of Hunza in the late 19th century, the Wakhis of Gojal were subjected to heavy taxes and forced labor by the Mir of Hunza. His tax collectors were wildly despised for their arrogant and hostile attitude. In 1940 a group of Wakhis finally stood up and demanded tax relaxation and the appointment of Wakhi tax collectors. The demand was denied and instead an attempt was made by Mir Ghazan Khan to

return the British urged the Mir to consider his people's request. Reluctantly, the ruler granted amnesty to the returning Wakhis, lowered some taxes and removed his unpopular tax collector. The people of Passu still remember this event with pride as their active involvement in the uprising resulted in great benefits for Gojal at large. The consequential reduction of taxes and forced labor held until the final abolishment of the mirdom in 1974.



The house of Odob Khan

Directly connected to the Wakhi Demonstration of 1940 is the house of Odob Khan. Odob Khan was a villager of Passu and a relative of Mir Ghazan Khan. It was Odob Khan's initiative and idea to put forward the request of tax reduction, probably counting on his relations with the Mir.

As his request was denied it was he who lead the uprising and urged his people to flee into China and it was in his house that most of the planning and discussions over the matter took place.

The house of Odob Khan can be visited, but as Odob Khan's descendants still live there today, it is important to ask permission and show the necessary respect.

In many of Passu's old houses, such as the house of Odob Khan, traditional woodcarvings adorn the wooden pillars and door frames.



arrest the instigators of the petition.

As a result, more than 100 people fled from Passu with plans to go to China over the Kilik Pass. In Misgar, they decided to inform the British authorities about the situation and in

Passu Festivals (selection)

FEBRUARY

~4th/8th: **Kit-e-Thit** (*Spring Cleaning*)
Once a year, the traditional houses, especially the wooden ceilings, are cleaned of the black soot, dust and dirt caused by the smoke of the stoves. A traditional game, called *Taksuri*, is played.

MARCH

~7th/8th: **Tagum** (*Sowing Festival*)
Villagers celebrate the beginning of the sowing and plowing period with a communal gathering in a field, prayers and blessings of the grains. A special sweet dish, *Semen*, is served and shared.

21st: **Chey-Sol** (*New Year*)



The three wooden sticks symbolize the yoke of an ox and are put up during Tagum.

MAY

~last week: **Summer Kuch** (*Transhumance*)
Summer Kuch — livestock is being brought up to the lower pastures and later moved to the high pastures.

JULY

11th: **Salgira**
All Ismailis celebrate the day of the Aga Khan's inauguration as the current Imam. The community organizes games, school plays, speeches etc.



As in many cultures, very few of Passu's festivals have fixed dates. The exact day of celebration of many festivals depends on several factors, such as astrology, the weather and the Islamic calendar. If you want to attend a specific festival it is best to ask around for the exact date.

PASTURE LIFE NEAR ICE AND SNOW

Immediately behind Passu, the white snout of the Passu Glacier gives the village its trademark backdrop. On cloudless days one can follow the ice band up until it merges with the snowy slopes of Passu Peak (7478m) and Shishpar (7611m). Hidden deeper in the folds of the mountains lays the massive Batura Glacier, one of the largest in Pakistan.

Embraced by eternal ice and snow to the west and the banks of the Hunza river to the east, the people of Passu need to make a living on whatever little fertile land lays in between. Lack of suitable pasture land has since generations caused the villagers to move up along the glaciers to find grazing places for their livestock.

The masses of ice and naked gray boulders may seem inhospitable to the unknowing visitor; but hidden among the moraines and masses of rock moved and crushed by the

Yaks grazing in Yashpirt.

force of the glaciers, you will find fertile ablation valleys, fed by mountain streams, covered with grass and carpeted with wild flowers in summer. It is here, that the villagers of Passu, year in, year out, lead their precious goats, sheep and yaks for grazing. It is here that the cheerful Wakhi women spend their summers surrounded by high mountains and the eternal ice.



A Wakhi woman is making chapattis (left). Molida (middle) is another traditional dish.



FRESH FROM THE PASTURES

As in all Wakhi societies, the pastures are the domain of women and children. Apart from tending the livestock, a lot of time is spent milking the goats and sheep and preparing a range of fresh dairy products, many of which are delicious and rarely to be found in the villages.

Part of the fresh milk is turned into *pai* (yoghurt), *merek* (cream) and *rogun* (butter), which are often offered to visitors together with freshly cooked chapattis.

Later in the season, a special kind of local cheese, called *qurut*, is made by boiling sour milk for hours in large pots. When the milk has

boiled down to a thick, greyish paste, small cheeses are formed by hand and then dried on the roofs of the shepherd huts. *Qurut* is rock-hard and very sour in taste, but apart from a jaw-breaking snack it serves as a base of many other traditional dishes, such as *Molida*. *Molida* could be described as a local pasta dish, a substantial meal of boiled dough strips (the pasta) and a sauce of *qurut* and local butter.

Whether to your taste or not, all the local dishes are definitely worth a try and while visiting Passu's high pastures you will not be short of opportunities to taste many of them.



Passu Festivals continued

JULY

~first week: **Chinir** (*Harvest Festival*)
People celebrate the beginning of the harvesting season. Strands of ripe wheat are cut and brought to the houses for decoration. Special food, like yoghurt, cream is shared in the *Jamat Khana* and extra food is brought to people who cannot be present: the sick, the old and the family members on the high pastures.

SEPTEMBER

~last week: **Winter Kuch** (*Transhumance*)
Depending on the weather and the onset of winter, livestock is being brought down to lower altitudes. Yaks, however, will spend the winter in Avdegar.

~1-2 days after return of Kuch: **Kuch Khudai**
Families celebrate the return of the women from the pastures with food from the pastures and several other traditional dishes.

OCTOBER

23rd: **Salgira**
All Ismailis celebrate the Aga Khan's first ever visit to the Northern Areas in 1960

NOVEMBER

18th: **Salgira**
Date of the Aga Khan's first visit to Gojal in 1987. The community organizes games, school plays, speeches, sporting events, etc.

DECEMBER

13th: **Salgira**
Date of the Aga Khan's birthday.

What to do?

IN VILLAGES/ON HIGH PASTURES

- be considerate of the local culture
- wear appropriate clothing. Locals usually love to see foreigners wearing *shalwar kamiz*
- ask permission before taking photographs, especially of women or religious places
- if you want to give a gift or a donation, hand it to a responsible, respected person, such as a schoolteacher or community leader
- when offered local food be humble and thankful. You can share some of your own food in exchange

WHILE TREKKING

- dispose properly of all your garbage. Burn paper, collect plastic, flatten tins and carry them out. Hiding garbage under a stone is not an option!
- leave your campsite in the state you found it
- use gas or kerosene for cooking. If you need to use wood, leave a donation for the village
- choose toilet sites at least 50m away from your camp and from any river or water source. Dig a toilet pit for larger groups
- avoid toilet paper if possible. Use water instead
- be an example to your guides and porters by following and explaining these guidelines and their reasons

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The term ecotourism has, in recent years, become a popular slogan used by tour operators all over the world. Yet, what exactly is ecotourism? In a nutshell, ecotourism could be defined as ecologically, environmentally and socially responsible tourism. The main aims of ecotourism are to protect and preserve nature and to help provide the means to do so (financial and educational) by directly supporting local communities. Other aspects, such as the sustainability of local culture and history also form part of this low-impact approach to tourism.

Looking at the negative impact mass-tourism can have on native culture and environment, ecotourism is a sensible alternative. Instead of traveling in large groups, consider taking the trip with only a few like-minded people. A simple consideration such as this can already result in a multitude of positive effects. In small villages, the communities can easily accommodate a small group and the need for building large hotels can be limited. A trip for a large group will most likely be organized by an outside tour operator. By taking local guides and porters you will have a chance to get a genuine insight into the life of local people and you will directly contribute to their welfare. Activities, such as wildlife watching are much easier to conduct and have a much better success rate when traveling in a small group.

Those are only a few examples of how ecotourism can be employed and directly benefit the area you are visiting. More guidelines are given on the side bars. It is up to you alone to follow these guidelines to minimize the impact of tourism. As an ecotourist you are not just a visitor; you can play an active role in helping to conserve nature and to form a better understanding between people of different cultures.

PASSU DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (PDO) TAKING DEVELOPMENT INTO ONE'S OWN HANDS

The people of Gojal have a deeply rooted social system. As families grow into clans and clans grow into communities, this social system becomes more and more complex, but there exists a traditional understanding of voluntary services and social structures for the benefit of the whole community.

The community of Passu, early on, realized the impact external forces (e.g. tourism, development organizations (NGOs), the arrival of modern amenities) can have on their local culture, environment and social life. Aiming to protect their heritage, while simultaneously embracing the positive changes those outside influences could have on the local community, the Passu Development Organization (PDO) was founded. The organization was established by the people of Passu and has a structured set-up, consisting of a board of directors, elected members, and several committees for the implementation of PDO objectives and projects.

PDO operates on several levels. A main objective is, of course, to unite the local community and to promote and facilitate development initiatives. As an example, PDO played an active role in town planning, the first of its kind in northern Pakistan, developing vast barren land with the help of local labor. PDO also serves as a liaison between the local com-

munity and outside organizations, such as NGOs or international funding agencies. This way the Passu community can step in as a clearly structured entity when dealing with third parties, which greatly helps the process of implementing projects in collaboration with other organizations. Thus, PDO aided the construction of a model school by generating financial resources locally and approaching external agencies for additional support. PDO is further working in partnership with MACP to train local community members in ecotourist guiding, developing and publicizing tourist attractions, and strengthening linkages with tour operators and develop tourism facilities in the valley. In fact, Passu's extremely structured and organized guiding and porter rotation system is a direct result of PDO's planning. Through PDO, an individual tourist or group can be matched with a trained ecotourist guide and cultural programs, such as folk music, traditional food or festivals can be arranged.

A substantial amount of the income generated through ecotourism is spent on maintenance of local treks, cleaning campaigns, and training of ecotourist and wildlife guides. Additionally PDO organizes awareness programs and other community-specific educational programs.

If you should have any special requests or interests while visiting Passu as a tourist, ask to be directed to a PDO member to help you.

GENERAL

- try to travel in small groups
- hire local guides and porters
- support the local community by buying local products and handicrafts directly from the people.

What not to do!

IN VILLAGES/ON HIGH PASTURES

- do not wear shorts or tight fitting shirts
- don't hug or kiss in public

WHILE TREKKING

- don't disturb wildlife by making unnecessary noise
- don't hunt or kill any animals or pull out any plants
- never leave any garbage (esp. candy wrappers, cigarette butts...) on the trail or at campsites
- don't use wood for cooking. If you need to use wood, collect dry branches from the ground – never break fresh branches!

GENERAL

- don't pass out any gifts, such as candy, pens or even money to children. Instead, give your donation to a responsible adult or school
- don't carve or write your name on stones, trees etc.

TREKKING in the Passu area

Rates and Fees

GENERAL TREKKING FACTS

guides are always paid per day for every day they spend with you. This also includes rest days. A guide should have a license and his responsibilities include hiring and supervising of porters, route finding, organizing transport etc.. A guide usually only carries his own equipment.

porters are paid per stage. A porter carries up to 25kg not including his own equipment. On treks above 5000m the load should not exceed 20kg. Porters are paid 1/2 stage for rest days.

wapasi (return) is paid to porters at half the stage rate. Wapasi is paid when the trek ends in a different place and the porter returns to his point of origin unloaded. If the return is via public transport, the transport cost should be paid, but no wapasi.

FEES IN PASSU (as of summer 2003)

guides 1-3 clients: 600Rs/day, 4-6 clients: 900Rs/day, 7 or more: 1200Rs/day

porters 310Rs/stage (each porter pays 1% of their fee into the village development fund managed by the Passu reform Panel (PRP)

yak (for carrying loads) 1300Rs/60kg/stage

ALWAYS DISCUSS FEES & STAGES BEFORE LEAVING ON A TREK!



DAY TREKS (selection only)

- 1 TWO BRIDGES WALK**
4 - 5 hours
easy
highlights Probably the area's most popular day walk, this trek brings you from Passu to Hussaini via two rickety suspension bridges fashioned of wood and wire (see picture right). For the return you can hitch a ride on the KKH.
- view on Passu and KKH from the opposite side of the Hunza River
 - reward yourself with a dip in Hussaini's hot spring (September to May)
 - combine the trip with a visit to Borit Lake near Hussaini
 - crossing might be impossible for anybody experiencing vertigo!

- 2 YUNZ**
7 - 8 hours
moderate
highlights The Yunz Valley connects the Passu and Batura Glaciers through an easy and scenic trek with great glacier views.
- visit Passu Lake, formed in 1989 as a result of the retreating Passu Glacier
 - close-up views on the crevassed Passu Glacier (Do not walk into this glacier without a guide!)
 - Possible side trip to Zart Sar (+1.5hrs) for panoramic views across the Hunza Valley
 - Bring sufficient water!
 - Return to Passu via KKH

- 3 JANABAD PLATEAU**
4 - 5 hours
easy
highlights For those with little time, this loop trek offers not only great views, but also a glimpse on the mighty Batura Glacier.
- plan for a picnic on the flat plateau
 - walk along the cliff face high above Batura Glacier and see a glacial river emerging from a cave in the ice
 - steep descend to China Camp, return via KKH.



The Passu Cathedrals seen from the river bed.



Don't be afraid of heights! Crossing the Passu suspension bridge is a challenge for most.

MEDIUM TREKS

(this section describes treks of 2 - 3 days. For more possibilities as your local guide or tour operator)



Glacier crossing

Most treks in Gojal will at some point or the other involve a glacier crossing or at least walking along the moraine of one. The smell of adventure or the belief to have sufficient experience causes a few trekkers each year to attempt a glacier crossing on their own. Unfortunately some of these attempts end in accidents and loss of life.

In the past the government made the local communities responsible for such accidents, even though often the trekkers insisted on going alone. Therefore, please, for your own safety and out of respect for the locals, **DO TAKE A LOCAL GUIDE** with you for any glacier crossing. Glaciers shift and move, stones fall, new crevasses open up...a local guide will know the easiest and safest way across and you can concentrate on enjoying the scenery instead of worrying about the route.

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1 AVDEGAR (3930m)

Avdegar, Passu's winter yak pasture offers impressive, almost helicopter like views on the immense glaciers and the KKH far below.

- 2 - 3 days moderate**
- highlights**
- good possibility of seeing ibex
 - great camping and stunning views on Shishpar (7611m), the Batura Wall and other high peaks
 - cross the famous suspension bridge
 - bring enough water for the steep ascent
 - possible extension of trek to the top of the ridge (plan an extra night)

2 YASHPIRT

This trek is most interesting in summer when the Yashpirt pasture is inhabited by Wahki women tending their livestock and preparing delicious dairy products.

- 3 days moderate**
- highlights**
- see shepherd's life
 - cross Batura Glacier
 - many possibilities to extend the trek

3 PATUNDAS

For the crossing of the highly dangerous Passu Glacier it is essential to hire an experienced guide.

- 3 days demanding**
- highlights**
- the effort of the steep ascent is rewarded with spectacular mountain views
 - Patundas alpine meadow makes for some beautiful camping
 - visit Ghulkin shepherds during summer



View on Passu and KKH from Avdegar (top)
Passu Glacier (below)

Spring water lake near Shirin Maidan (next page top)
Shirin Maidan Glacier (next page bottom)



LONGER TREKS

This is just a small selection of a vast range of trekking options

1 GUCESHAM

There are two options for reaching Guchesham, Passu's high pasture, as the Batura Glacier can be crossed at different spot. This makes for a nice loop, taking in both sides of the glacier.

- 5 - 6 days moderate**
- highlights**
- enjoy Wakhi hospitality on the pastures
 - possible extension of trek to Kampir Dior base camp or cross into Chapursan via the newly opened Yuksh Goz Pass

2 PASSU PEAK BASE CAMP

This trek leads via the alpine meadows of Patundas to the base camps of the snowy summits of the Passu Massif.

- 4 - 5 days demanding**
- highlights**
- rest and relax on Patundas and enjoy the superb views
 - camp by the Upper Passu Glacier where you will be surrounded by 7000-meter peaks, including Passu Sar (7478m) and Shishpar (7611m)

3

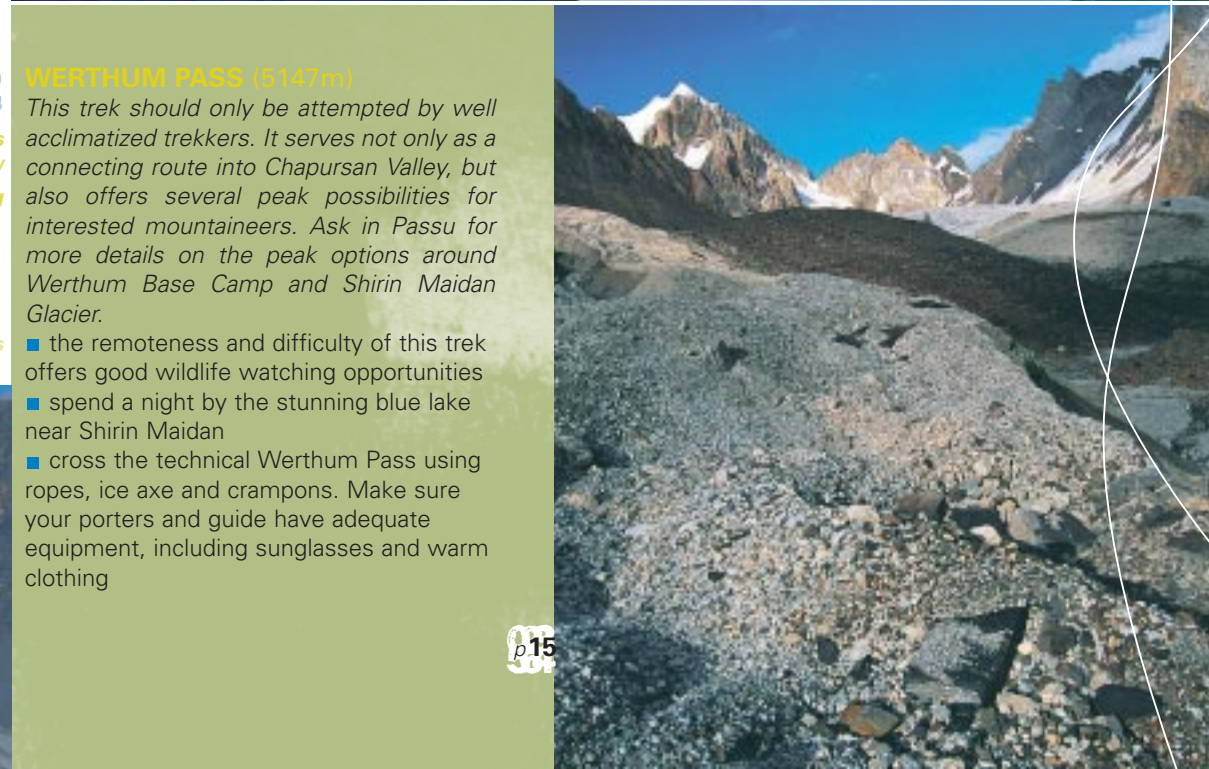
7 days technical/demanding

highlights

3 WERTHUM PASS (5147m)

This trek should only be attempted by well acclimatized trekkers. It serves not only as a connecting route into Chapursan Valley, but also offers several peak possibilities for interested mountaineers. Ask in Passu for more details on the peak options around Werthum Base Camp and Shirin Maidan Glacier.

- highlights**
- the remoteness and difficulty of this trek offers good wildlife watching opportunities
 - spend a night by the stunning blue lake near Shirin Maidan
 - cross the technical Werthum Pass using ropes, ice axe and crampons. Make sure your porters and guide have adequate equipment, including sunglasses and warm clothing



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FOR MORE INFORMATION...

About MACP

The *Mountain Areas Conservancy Project* (MACP) is a seven-year project funded by GEF/UNDP. Its aims are the protection of biodiversity of the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and western Himalayan mountain ranges through community-based conservation efforts.

The project believes that the long-term conservation of natural resources is not possible without the active participation of the local communities, who should take on the role of local custodians of their environment. MACP helps organize, educate and empower these communities, creating an in-house capacity at the grass-roots level. The project interventions range from planning, organizing, awareness raising activities to helping communities accessing resources and sustainable use demonstrations. In addition, MACP helps molding government policies for participatory conservation in order to help communities establish conservation endowments as sustainable financial mechanisms. These funds are managed by the communities themselves and are based on profits made from ecotourism activities, such as limited trophy hunting, medicinal plants ex-situ and in-situ conservation, wildlife watching safaris or trekking. This approach enables and motivates the communities to provide better facilities to tourists, for maximum enjoyment. This novel approach has now been replicated in most parts of the mountain valleys in Northern Areas.

MACP operates in four designated areas in northern Pakistan, totaling a zone of 16,300 square kilometres. Two of these areas (the Nanga Parbat and Gojal Conservancies) are in Northern Areas and two (Trichmir and Qashqar Conservancies) are located in NWFP.

For more information on MACP, please refer to the sources on this page.

There are a number of organizations, professionals and individuals whose help and expertise made this publication possible. We tried to give the most accurate and up-to-date information possible, but please always consider that prices go up and that "The only constant thing in life is change". Help us to make this change as smooth and positive as possible by being a responsible ecotourist.

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USEFUL WAKHI WORDS AND PHRASES

ENGLISH	WAKHI	ENGLISH	WAKHI
How are you?	<i>chizole?</i>	ahead	<i>terperit</i>
I'm fine.	<i>bidurte</i>	behind	<i>tertsabas</i>
What's your name?	<i>ti nunge chiz?</i>	in front	<i>perit</i>
My name is ...	<i>zhu nunge ...</i>	near	<i>qarib</i>
Where are you going?	<i>kumeret takhk?</i>	big/small	<i>lup/zaqlai</i>
I need ...	<i>marey ... bokor</i>	a little	<i>safkek</i>
I am thirsty.	<i>weskim vitk</i>	good/bad	<i>baf/shak</i>
I am hungry.	<i>merzim vitk</i>	beautiful	<i>khushrui</i>
Sit down.	<i>nezd/nezdid (pl.)</i>	cold/hot	<i>suur/thin</i>
Drink tea.	<i>choi pev</i>	day/night	<i>ror/naghd</i>
Eat food.	<i>shapik yao</i>	today	<i>woodg</i>
Yes	<i>yan</i>	tomorrow	<i>piga</i>
No	<i>nei</i>	yesterday	<i>yezi</i>
Go!	<i>chow</i>	bridge	<i>skord</i>
How much/many?	<i>tsumr?</i>	cloud	<i>witish</i>
What?	<i>chiz?</i>	fire	<i>rakhnigh</i>
When?	<i>tsogdar?</i>	flower	<i>spregh</i>
Where?	<i>kumr?</i>	house	<i>khun</i>
Who?	<i>kui?</i>	mountain	<i>koh</i>
Why?	<i>chizer?</i>	rain	<i>mor</i>
this/these	<i>yem</i>	stone	<i>gar</i>
here/there	<i>drem/drar</i>	sun	<i>yir</i>
right/left	<i>rost/chap</i>	trail/path	<i>videk</i>
		water	<i>yupk</i>

NUMBERS

1 <i>yi</i>	8 <i>hath</i>
2 <i>bui</i>	9 <i>nao</i>
3 <i>troi</i>	10 <i>thas</i>
4 <i>tsabur</i>	11 <i>thas yiu</i>
5 <i>panz</i>	12 <i>thas bui</i>
6 <i>shath</i>	20 <i>wist</i>
7 <i>hub</i>	100 <i>yisad</i>