

# PAKISTAN 2022



the adventure of a lifetime

## Pakistan - Expedition Information Pack

**Pre-Expedition Preparation:** In this document you will find detailed information on fitness & training, the necessary equipment, tourist visas, travel insurance, medical advice, temperatures & climate, altitude considerations, spending money and tips. Please review this information in full and prepare yourself for this fantastic adventure! I have also included information about Pakistan, an FAQ and the expedition itinerary with details on what's included and excluded.

**Fitness & Training:** The expedition sees treks that can be demanding treks with some being on rather steep climbs, while others are short and rather easy. As with all 'demanding' expeditions I expect participants to have a level of fitness that will allow them to keep together with the group. Although this is not a technical climb, it is challenging in places. You do not need to be an athlete to complete the treks that are part of this expedition but it is good to prepare in advance should you have little to no experience. In the end this will feed into your overall enjoyment of the trip. This is a relatively interesting collection of long and short treks and good stamina is important albeit not essential. For many people it will be challenging and others it will seem very easy. The group moves at a comfortable pace and nobody is ever left behind. Nevertheless, it is your responsibility to contact us if you have any concerns regarding your level of fitness, health or ability to complete the trek. We strongly recommend that you read the expedition itinerary in full before signing up to this challenge.

Everybody is different, so we cannot recommend a specific pre-expedition fitness programme. However please remember the fitter you are the more you will enjoy the expedition.

## Walk Route Time

We highly *recommend* that in the lead up to the expedition itself that you take the time to explore the mountains and outdoors near or in your own hometown to get used to trekking and break in those pesky trekking boots. A trek roughly 3-5 hours long is the ideal length. Please do not attempt these walks alone. You or someone in your party should have walking experience and the necessary navigational skills. We recommend embarking on these training hikes with a 8KG rucksack.

Although hillwalking is best, please remember any type of cardiovascular training will help you prepare for this expedition. Focus your training on building endurance fitness by completing long, slow and low intensity training sessions rather than fast and short sessions. Build the distance and duration of your training sessions slowly as overtraining often leads to injury. In the three months prior to departure try to include two long training days in a row to replicate walking for continuous days on the expedition.

If you have any old injuries, weak joints, soft tissue injuries or any other issues which affect your mobility we suggest you address these issues now. It goes without saying that if you are experiencing discomfort or pain during short training sessions the problem has the potential to become more serious when exercising for long durations on continuous days. Please visit your physiotherapist in an effort to address the issue and strengthen the weakened area. If you have low muscle mass in your legs we suggest that you add strength training to your schedule. Muscle mass protects our joints and this is very important especially on long descents.

If you are buying any new equipment for this expedition such as a rucksack, boots, base layers etc., be sure to use it before departure. All gear should be well broken in to avoid blisters and chafing!

I know it might sound like I'm describing a marathon but it's merely to prepare you for more than a stroll through the hills.

The itinerary has been designed with correct acclimatisation in mind, with no big jumps in elevation. While on the expedition you will be encouraged to take it easy, eat well and stay very hydrated. Very hydrated means drinking between three and five litres of water per day depending on how much you sweat. Drinking three or more litres in a day is much harder than it sounds. We would recommend people practice drinking a large amount of water. Try drinking from a 500ml water bottle and see how many times you can refill it in a day. In our experience, it is those who cannot stay well hydrated that run into problems at altitude. Although your ability to withstand high altitudes is not directly related to your physical fitness levels, a good level of fitness will certainly assist in your general stamina. Keep in mind also that we will not be doing any overly high altitude climbs so your risk is low for altitude sickness.

It is not uncommon for people to encounter stomach problems on expeditions. This is due to a number of reasons such as poor hygiene, change in diet, a low immune system and poorly prepared food. We do everything we can to make sure food and water is safe for you to consume. It is very important that you wash your hands before eating and after going to the toilet. We recommend people eat as healthily as possible and take a multivitamin supplement and probiotics for one month prior to departure and during the expedition. This will help you adjust to changes in your diet and keep you healthy throughout the expedition.

**Equipment:** The following is what we recommend you take and is a guideline of what to bring on this expedition. You are responsible for having the necessary personal equipment you need for this trek.

**RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST** (This is not a compulsory list)

- Walking boots. If you are buying new boots for this trip please ensure they are well broken in before departure. Few things will make you more miserable during the trek than blisters.
- Runners or sandals (to wear in transit & around camp).
- Mid-weight hiking socks x 3. At least three pairs, some people choose to bring a pair of socks for each day of trekking.
- Underwear, we recommend you bring enough so you are comfortable at all times. Synthetic rather than cotton underwear is advisable.
- Shorts x 1 (knee length or below).
- Lightweight trousers x 1.
- Synthetic/wool/silk long johns (for night time use).
- Waterproof trousers (N.B. make sure the trousers have zips to the knee at least).
- Long sleeve base layers x 2 (silk, wool, or synthetic).
- Short sleeve base layer x 2 (as above).
- Mid weight fleece x 2.
- A down jacket. It must be heavy weight with a hood (at least 600 grams in weight).
- Waterproof jacket.
- Waterproof poncho.
- A fleece hat to wear in the mornings and evenings.
- Sunglasses (category 3).
- A sun hat with a wide brim to cover the face and neck.
- A pair of lightweight wool or synthetic liner gloves.
- A pair of down mitts.

- Walking poles.
- Rucksack (Day pack): This is a small rucksack (30 to 35 litres) to carry the equipment you will need while trekking such as your camera, spare jacket, waterproof jacket, water bottle and packed lunch.
- Duffel bag (90 litres) or large rucksack to carry all of your stuff. This will not be required to be carried on treks as it can be left in accommodations and/or on our expedition vehicle.
- Dry bags (If either your day bag or duffel bag don't have sufficient waterproofing and to separate your equipment in your bags).
- Water bottles and water bladder. You must have the capacity to carry three litres of water while walking.
- A warm sleeping bag (comfort rating of -15°C or lower).
- Suncream at least factor 30.
- SPF lip balm
- Insect repellent, deet based products are best.
- Hand sanitiser. You need to have enough supplies for the duration of your expedition.
- Toiletries. N.B as little as possible, if you are travelling with friends try to share toiletries. \* Wet wipes and a nail brush are very useful.
- Personal first aid kit. You need to have enough supplies for the duration of your expedition. We recommend you carry the following:
  - Rehydration salts • Plasters
  - Compeed
  - Paracetamol
  - Imodium
  - Motilium
  - Throat lozenges
  - Nasal spray
  - Decongestant such as Sudafed
  - Antibiotics suitable to treat traveller's diarrhoea Azithromycin or something with similar coverage would be the most suitable antibiotic, please consult your doctor for up-to-date advice. We will have some first aid equipment but do strive to have your own.
  - Personal medication. Please carry any medication you are currently taking on a regular basis such as:
    - Asthma inhalers
    - Nutritional supplements

- Blood pressure tablets If you suffer or have suffered from any skin condition, bring appropriate creams such as:
  - Canesten • Zovirax
  - Anusol • Hydrocortisone 1%
- Small towel for washing.
- Personal snacks; although sufficient food is supplied throughout the trek you need to bring your own supply of high energy snacks for the expedition. Bring snacks you enjoy eating such as sweets, energy bars & chocolate.
- Head Torch with spare batteries. Handy for making your way around at night when power is limited.
- A spare set of clothes to wear after you finish the expedition.
- A photocopy of your travel insurance and passport. Always handy to have should you need access to the information offline.
- Your vaccination booklet should you decide to get them

### **OTHER OPTIONAL ITEMS**

- Diamox (tablet form not capsules); if you have decided to take it. For more information about Diamox its uses and side effects please refer to the information on AMS and Diamox in this document.
- We ensure that all drinking water provided to you is treated correctly but you may still wish to bring your own personal supply of tablets/drops for water purification such as iodine or chlorine. Powdered fruit juice can be used to disguise the taste of the purification.
- A sleeping bag liner (This is not essential but it helps to keep your sleeping bag clean and adds an extra season).
- Power adaptor – Plug type C is used in Pakistan Ear plugs
- For glasses/contact wearers we advise bringing both glasses & contact lenses. Daily disposable lenses rather than monthlies are highly recommended.
- A camera
- A book and/or writing paper Hand warmer sachets.

**Tourist Visas:** At the time of writing, EU and UK passport holders are able to obtain a tourist visa through the online eVisa platform for Pakistan. The visa fee is approximately €35-45 depending on your passport. You must have at least two free pages in your passport and ensure that your passport is valid for at least six months after you return to home. You can apply here about 2 months before your arrival in Pakistan. <https://visa.nadra.gov.pk/>

If you want a walk through on how to fill it out online, click this link and watch the video:

<https://visa.nadra.gov.pk/tourist-visa/>

**Travel Insurance:** It is your responsibility to ensure that you have sufficient personal travel insurance for this expedition. Your policy must provide cover for; a) medical injury or sickness b) trekking up to 4,500 metres (c) helicopter evacuation in an emergency situation, and d) repatriation to country of residence. You must declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your insurers and ensure you receive written confirmation that any pre-existing medical conditions are fully insured. We advise you to obtain travel insurance as soon as you book, that will cover you for unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury that might result in you not being able to take part in your expedition.

Please make sure that your policy explicitly covers Pakistan. Some sites allow you to buy the policy but may exclude Pakistan. Some will include Pakistan but exclude travel in some areas. You will need to be covered for Gilgit Baltistan but primarily the regions of Fairy Meadows, Gulkin, Gulmit, Lahore, Islamabad, Naltar and Hunza Valley as these are places we will visit on the way and are completely safe.

**Vaccinations & Prophylaxis:** We are not qualified to answer all your questions about travel health directly. We recommend consulting your GP or The Travel Health Clinic ([www.travelhealth.ie](http://www.travelhealth.ie)) for the most up to date medical advice.

**Medical:** Before departure you will be required to disclose as much detail about your medical history as possible. The information you supply is treated with the strictest confidence. We will do our best to accommodate everyone on this expedition, but we do reserve the right to refuse participation if we feel your safety or that of the group may be compromised.

**Temperatures & Climate:** Temperatures on the expedition could vary from 6 to 30 degrees during the day and -10 to 15 degrees at night. It's best to be prepared for lower temperatures due to wind chill or the weather turning bad. Usually the days are hot and the nights are cold. You

should be ready for inclement weather at all times as the weather can change rather quickly at high altitude. For accurate weather information please review these two websites; Mountain Forecasts: [www.mountain-forecast.com/](http://www.mountain-forecast.com/) Norwegian Meteorological Institute: [www.yr.no](http://www.yr.no).

Typically the first 3 days are warm before we head up towards the mountainous regions. You will be wearing lighter clothing here and then swap to warmer clothing for the trekking segments.

**Altitude Considerations:** The human body is quite capable of adapting to a very wide range of barometric pressures and there is plenty of oxygen even at the highest point of this expedition. However, the process of adaptation or acclimatisation does take time and the most important rule is to gain height slowly. Keeping well hydrated is also a huge factor in avoiding AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness). AMS is brought on by lower oxygen levels at higher altitudes, which we mostly avoid on these treks. Symptoms include breathlessness, headache, poor sleep, nausea & dizziness. AMS is treated simply by not ascending to higher elevations or in more severe cases descending to lower elevations, where in most cases the symptoms are quickly relieved. This itinerary has been designed to minimise the chances of you getting altitude sickness. Our guides are highly experienced in these matters and will be able to give you good advice to help minimise any temporary discomfort that you might experience. If you have suffered serious problems at altitude before, you should seek the advice of your doctor or a specialist. Please note it is common for most people to experience mild headaches on the summit day of this expedition. Always keep your guide informed on how you are feeling.

**Diamox:** Diamox (Acetazolamide) is a carbonic anhydrase inhibitor. In simple terms Diamox causes the kidneys to excrete more bicarbonate which causes the blood to become more acidic. Acidifying the blood stimulates ventilation, which increases the amount of oxygen in the blood which reduces the chances of getting AMS. We recommend all participants, especially those who have had AMS in the past, to take Diamox prophylactically (as a preventative), starting on the first day of trekking. Current guidelines suggest 125 mg twice per day (tablet form not capsules). You should try taking Diamox for two days at some stage prior to departing on your trip to ensure you don't suffer any of the more serious side effects. Numbness and tingling fingers and toes are common but in some cases users can suffer from nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea. If you experience any of the latter three side effects, we would advise against using Diamox. Always consult and follow the advice of your own doctor about Diamox or any other medication.

**Spending Money & Tips:** We recommend that you bring US \$300 in cash and a credit or debit card with you to Pakistan. It is possible to convert US Dollars/Euro to Pakistani Rupees in or near our Lahore hotel. There are also ATMs throughout Lahore/Islamabad where you can withdraw cash using a debit card. On the trek it is best to have some rupees as it is difficult to get change for foreign currency when buying small items. Tipping is not common in Pakistan, it is not compulsory but we do usually suggest a small tip for the driver at the end of the 15 days. We recommend notifying your bank that you will be abroad and possibly using your debit/credit card.

**Optional Expenses:** Water bottles along the way are generally pretty cheap if you need additional water. Also, on the first night we go to a covert underground bar where you will be able to buy beers in what is otherwise a dry country. This is an optional evening excursion so you will need to buy your own beers. Lastly, moonshine is often available for you to try. This is something we can facilitate for you but the locals will charge for it. Please note that discretion is advised anywhere alcohol is being consumed.

**About Pakistan:** We advise all participants to educate themselves on local laws and customs before travelling to Pakistan. Up to date travel advice can be found on the DFA website.

**Pakistan Expedition Summary & Itinerary:** *Please note that this itinerary is subject to change.*

*Routes may close with little notice or areas can be closed off to us at any time. We will always supplement with alternative activities, treks and routes where possible*

**Day 0: Arrive Lahore.** Most flights land early in the morning so please advise what flights you have booked at your earliest convenience. We will be asking you for this information in advance. The day you arrive you will relax, get to know each other and try some local food.

**Day 1: Tour Start Lahore.** We kick off early in the morning to check out the Lahore Fort and Badshahi Mosque. After which we walk through the bustling city to see the bazaars and streetlife. We will explore another Mosque called Wazir Khan before getting some food and making our way back to the hotel to change into clothes for the evening. From here we will make our way to the Wagah Border Ceremony.

**Day 2: Depart to Islamabad.** We will leave for Islamabad, where we will do our first trek up around the famous margalla hills and visit the Faisal Mosque. The trek takes 3-4 hours and you will require a lot of water due to the warmer temperature.

**Day 3: Islamabad.** Here we spend the day meeting a startup incubator, meet people who are making waves in Pakistan and hopefully meet a sufi guru/calligraphist. Lastly, we will then spend time with a family and have dinner in a local home near the city.

**Day 4: Depart to Gunnar farm.** This is a long road trip that winds our way up through the mountains to spend the night in a traditional farm house. We will drive through high peaks, luscious valleys and cross over the Babusar pass. There is no trekking on this day.

**Day 5: Depart to Fairy Meadows.** We drive to a jeep point where we will transfer to 4x4's to take one of the most fascinating jeep drives up to Fairy Meadows. There is a 2 hours trek to fairy meadows from the end of the jeep trail. The evening is spent exploring the local area around our lodgings.

**Day 6: Trek to Nanga Parbat Basecamp.** We start after breakfast, have lunch on the way up and make our way back down for dinner time. This is the 9th tallest mountain in the world and a killer mountain that many have failed to reach. We will stay at Fairy Meadows for one more night.

**Day 7: Depart to Naltar Lake.** Early departure to Naltar Lake via off-road jeeps. Here we will camp beside the lakes for the night.

**Day 8: Explore Naltar.** The area is rich in coloured lakes, rock hopping and stunning photo opportunities. Afterwards, we will make our way to Karimabad for the night.

**Day 9: Explore Karimabad.** A break from isolation, here you will have places to access possible WiFi and shop for precious stones from miners and crafts in the local shops. A worthy and authentic souvenir. In the afternoon, we will trek up to Eagles Nest to glamp for the night.

**Day 10: Travel to Gulkin.** (We will then embark on the Patundas trek which will take several days providing the route is open and accessible. If not, the following agenda will take its place.) Here we will travel to stay with a family I am close friends with. On the way we will stop off at Attabad Lake, an infamous blue lake. The evening you will have free time to explore the farm, village and orchard.

**Day 11: Cross the black and white glaciers.** A fun but enduring day of trekking that sees you scrambling across the dynamic and tricky glaciers. Exploring the ravines and valleys as you see the mountains hidden lakes, and take in the vast expanse of glacial formations. The evening you will try the local famous apricot cake.

**Day 12: Husseini Exploration** We start to trek across some of the worlds most nerve racking rope bridges. Used locally everyday by those living in the area. Going to places where there are no vehicles and exploring lake beds. The afternoon we will visit the Passu cones.

**Day 13: Trip to Naran.** We have a final breakfast with our family in Gulkin and begin the drive south with a stop off at Naran. Often considered a tourist hotspot for domestic tourists, it was previously a small pass through town to some local trails and has now become a hub. We will enjoy the scenic valley views and stop off in Gilgit for dinner along the way.

**Day 14: Trip to Lahore.** We will drive to Lahore to rest up before your flight home where we will go for a last supper and you can pick up any last souvenirs that you may need.

**Day 15: Depart Lahore.** You will be brought to Allama Iqbal Airport to catch your departing flight

**Expedition Costs:** £650 non-refundable deposit at the time of booking & balance payment of £1150 at least two months prior to departure - Total £1800.

### **EXPEDITION COSTS INCLUDE:**

- All accommodation for every night of your stay. You will be expected to share rooms and accommodations with other people.
- Internal transport in Pakistan.
- Experienced expedition leader accompanying you from Lahore airport. • Pakistani translator that will help you when you need it.
- All of your meals are included with drinks
- All camping equipment as required
- Off road jeeps where required
- Local entertainment when available

### **EXPEDITION COSTS EXCLUDE:**

- Personal travel insurance.
  - Flights to and from Pakistan. • Medical vaccinations.
  - Tourist visas.
  - Personal equipment.
  - Personal spending and tips.
- Expenses of a personal nature like laundry, phone calls, alcohol, excess baggage charges and any costs arising out of unforeseen circumstances such as bad weather, landslides, road conditions and any other circumstances beyond our control.

### **Expedition FAQ:**

**What is a typical day like on this expedition?** The following is a typical day on this expedition and most days on the route will follow this general format. However, every day is slightly different and the weather can have a huge influence too. Wake up, sometimes at sunrise, to enjoy the spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. After a Pakistani breakfast, we pack up all the equipment and get ready to leave. You'll be briefed on the day's activities that morning or the night before. How many hours trekking is advised in advance. You will start your trek and typically have lunch along the way with dinner happening after your trek has come to an end for the day.

**What is the accommodation like on this expedition?** It varies greatly. Hotels, tent, wooden cabins, farm houses, home stays, glamping. We stay in it all.

**What is the food like on this expedition?** Pakistani food is insanely tasty and can come in a variety of spice levels. If you have any dietary conditions, do let us know. Meat is an important part of their diet but we can cater for vegetarians. It's not an extensive veggie menu, but it's possible. Just make sure to let us know.

**Can you cater for my dietary restriction?** We will try our best to cater for those with dietary restrictions. If you have a dietary restriction, please inform us. There is of course a limit to what we can cater for so if you have 100 things you have a slight aversion to, it will be difficult for us to accommodate but if you don't eat meat or have severe allergies to something, just let us know.

**How many people can take part in this expedition?** This expedition will have an average of 13-15 participants maximum. This allows us to keep a tight schedule and a speedy trekking itinerary

**Who is leading this expedition?** You will be with William Meara who has been bringing people to Pakistan and opening the doors of tourism there for the last few years. You will also have Imran Khan (Same name as their prime minister, not the actual PM. He's pretty busy managing a very hectic country), who is Will's partner on these expeditions, local fixer and all round good guy.

**Will I get a chance to meet any of my other team members before departure?** Yes, we will be making a communications group with you all in it before departure so you can meet up in advance and get to know one another. We will be letting you know who is sharing flight paths so that you can link up in the airport to travel together where possible.

**Can participants extend their stay after the expedition?** If you arrive early or want to stay afterwards, we will do the best we can to accommodate you. This is done on a case by case scenario so make sure to let us know of your intention as early as possible.

**What back-up support is there on this expedition?** Along with William and Imran, we use local guides, cooks, drivers and support teams of the highest standard. We employ local staff based on their qualifications, experience and references. Our expedition leaders and local staff are familiar with the locations of local medical services and hospitals.

**What happens if someone gets sick or injured?** In the event of someone falling ill or getting injured, we will assess and treat the sick or injured person. Often with some rest, participants can continue without a problem. If needed a porter and donkey will help the injured person to the next station where an evacuation to a hospital can be arranged for more serious incidents. In the unlikely event of a serious incident which requires

urgent hospital treatment a helicopter evacuation can be requested from local authorities. The decision to evacuate is ultimately the expedition leader's. You must respect the decisions of your expedition leader at all times. Extra costs incurred as a result of an evacuation must be paid by the participant. Your personal travel insurance must cover such eventualities.

**What happens in bad weather?** In the event of a sudden change of weather conditions the expedition leader will assess the situation and make an informed decision on what to do. Participant safety is always the priority in the decision-making process. Our itineraries are designed taking into consideration possible bad weather. Alternative routes and contingency plans are always in place in case of adverse weather conditions. We always aim to keep to the itinerary as much as possible but please remember that this is adventure travel and changes can occur!

**What will happen to participant's luggage during the expedition days?** On this expedition, you only need to carry a small bag with the essentials such as a spare jacket, hat, water, packed lunch, camera etc. The bulk of participant's luggage will be in their larger bag and held in the accommodations or transport vehicle.

**Are there cultural norms to be aware of?** Absolutely. Pakistan is a muslim country which means that certain things are considered haram. They are conservative by the whole and things such as public displays of affection are considered taboo. Men and women dress conservatively. Any questions and queries that you might have about specifics when you are on the ground can be addressed by your expedition leaders.

**What if Pakistan is no longer accepting tourists due to COVID-19?** In the unlikely event that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is no longer able to accept international travelers due to COVID-19 related restrictions and the expedition is in no position to go ahead, you will be refunded your deposit in full.

**What if Pakistan changes its policies to require a negative PCR test or vaccine to enter the country?**

You will be expected to comply with any COVID-19 entry related requirements or restrictions as part of this expedition.