

Hunza, Shimshal and the Rush Lake Trek

Trip Code: RLT

Version:



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek across glaciers and alpine meadows to camp atop Rush Lake
- Take in the views of Karakoram giants, including K2 (8611m)
- Stay at the Shangri-La village of Shimshal and trek for astonishing views of the Yazghil Glacier
- Marvel at the incredible natural beauty of the Hunza Valley as seen from the Eagle's Nest
- Sail across the azure-blue waters of the recently-formed Attabad Lake

AT A GLANCE

- 7 days trekking
- Max altitude - 5098 metres
- Join at Islamabad

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

North of the regional capital and former Silk Road trading post of Gilgit, the famously scenic Hunza Valley provides access to some of the highlights of Northern Pakistan's Karakoram Mountains. Here, the intrepid traveller will discover historic towns and isolated villages, welcoming people, ancient forts, the newly-formed Attabad Lake, as well as a wealth of breath-taking scenery including some of the world's biggest glaciers and mightiest snow-capped peaks. This fantastic new [adventure holiday](#) allows you to experience all of this without having to undertake a particularly long or sustained expedition-style trek.

Starting out in Karimabad, we visit the old Baltit Fort and have breakfast at the renowned Eagle's Nest Hotel with its superb overview of the Hunza Valley, overshadowed by Rakaposhi (7788m). We then take a beautiful ferry ride along the length of the recently created Attabad Lake and, from Passu, drive up to the traditional Wakhi village of Shimshal, one of the highest and most remote communities in the Hunza area. Day-hikes from Passu and Shimshal provide us with more exceptional mountain views and help with our fitness and acclimatisation before we embark on the week-long trek from Hopar to the rarely-visited Rush Lake (4694m), perched on a high ridge between the Hispar Valley and the Barpu Glacier. This stunning lake is one of the highest alpine lakes in the world. From a viewpoint above the lake, the sensational panorama includes every one of the Hunza peaks, the Hispar La, Snow Lake and the giants of the Central Karakoram including K2 (8611m), Broad Peak and the Gasherbrums. For an unforgettable taste Northern Pakistan's mountains and warm hospitality, without the challenges of a lengthy and committing expedition-style trek, come and join the Karakoram Experience.

Is this holiday for you?

After flying up to Gilgit, we begin this great holiday with 6 days of exploring, sightseeing and acclimatising in the Hunza Valley and its tributary valleys. This part of the holiday includes 2 superb day-hikes, one from Passu and one from Shimshal, which each take around 5 hours and provide us with a great introduction to Karakoram trekking and a useful warm-up ahead of the 7-day Rush Lake Trek.

This walking holiday is at the top end of its grading. The daily distances are short on this trek, but the height gain is not inconsiderable, reaching a high camp at 4695m. We have a rest day for acclimatisation during the 4-day ascent to Rush Lake. This is not intended to be a long or continuous trek and should fall within the compass of regular weekend hillwalker. The classic outing involves cross the Bualtar and Barpu glaciers (twice each), mostly on unconsolidated moraine material but also on exposed glacier ice. We are able to keep clear of crevassed areas and these crossings are actually relatively straightforward. No specialist skills nor equipment are needed for this trek but a sense of adventure and a willingness to adapt to the needs of self-supporting group travel will stand you in good stead.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- An experienced KE Western leader
- Islamabad Airport transfers for international flights on Day 1 and Day 16
- Internal flights and associated airport transfers
- All land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- All meals throughout the holiday
- Full trekking service including food and all equipment (excluding personal equipment)

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Pakistan Visa
- Tips for local guides and support staff
- Guided Islamabad sightseeing
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc
- PLEASE NOTE: an airport departure tax of Rs500 is sometimes payable.

Important Notice

Travel on the Karakoram Highway

We encourage you to read the up to date Travel Advice on the [FCDO website](#). Currently, the FCDO warns against travel on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) between Mansehra and Chilas.

We generally manage to avoid travel on the KKH by flying from Islamabad to and from Gilgit. Occasionally it may be necessary to drive on the KKH if the flight is cancelled one or both ways, but in this event, the route taken on the Karakoram Highway does not include the section referred to in the FCDO advice.

We have been taking groups to Pakistan for over 35 years and have never had any problems on this road. In actuality, the journey along the Karakoram Highway is spectacularly scenic and an epic experience which has been enjoyed by hundreds of KE clients.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Islamabad.

Transfers are provided from/to Islamabad Airport for all clients arriving on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price from arrival on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 16.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

During the Rush Lake Trek breakfasts and dinners will be provided in a mess tent at camp. There will be a mix of local and Western dishes made from ingredients purchased in Pakistan and cooked by highly trained trek cooks. Breakfasts consist of cereal, muesli or porridge, eggs, bread or chapatti, tea and coffee. Lunch is generally a picnic consisting of a choice of canned fish, tinned meats, cheese, pickles, pate, and crackers or chapattis, sometimes accompanied by hot soup and noodles and finished off with tea or coffee. Dinner is a three course meal; soup, main course, dessert. At the hotels we use during this holiday, it is not unusual that dinner is provided in the form of a buffet with a wide choice of dishes.

Accommodation

During this trip the group will have 3 nights in Islamabad at a good standard of hotel. There will also be several nights in tourist class hotels in Gilgit, in Karimabad and in Passu, whilst in Shimshal and Hoper we will use more simple guesthouses. Accommodation at each of these places is twin-share and there are generally en-suite facilities. Whilst on trek there will be 5 nights camping in 2-person tents. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single client of the same sex. Single room occupancy can be pre-booked for each of the hotel nights and you can also pre-book additional hotel nights in Islamabad. Hotels are subject to availability and prices may vary. It is also possible to arrange for single tent occupancy at additional cost.

Internal flights

Gilgit is a weather-dependent airport. Since the valley is completely surrounded by high mountains, planes can only land here in good visibility and this means flights to and from Gilgit are never guaranteed. The planes fly more often than not, but cancellations can occur and in these circumstances we will travel by road. If we were not prepared to do this, our groups would risk being stranded in Islamabad. See our 'Important Note' about travel on the Karakoram Highway for more details.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by an experienced KE Western leader assisted by a local guide. During the Rush Lake Trek the group will be accompanied by a support crew, including a cook and a team of porters who will carry all equipment and personal trek bags. This crew is drawn from local villagers who depend on working for trekking groups to supplement their subsistence income. Most of the crew will have worked with KE groups before. Travelling with these friendly and hardy people is a major part of the experience of Karakoram trekking.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to very high altitude. During the course of your trip you will be spending at least one night above 4000 metres and/or trekking to 5000 metres or above. This is not something that you should worry about; the human body is quite capable of adapting to a very wide range of altitudes, but it is important that we follow some simple rules in order to acclimatise successfully. Before coming on this holiday you should read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). Unless you have previous experience of trekking above 4000 metres you should consult one of our trekking experts before embarking on this holiday. On this trip we carry a portable altitude chamber (PAC-bag) and/or bottled oxygen for use in emergencies.

Spending Money

Approximately £200 (or equivalent in US dollars, Euros etc.) changed into local currency should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses, including porter and trek crew tips. You will also pay directly for guided sightseeing in Islamabad if this works out for your group and you choose to take part in the tour. The cost of this will be approximately 50 US dollars for a half-day tour. Note that money for tips should be changed into local currency (denominations of 500 rupees or smaller only) before you leave Islamabad. It is not necessary to purchase local currency (Pakistan rupees) before your trip. Money can be changed at a reasonable rate at the airport or at authorised money changers. Since you will be changing the majority of your spending money into local currency soon after your arrival, we recommend that you take it in cash, taking care that all notes are new, clean and in good condition. US dollars, Sterling and Euros can readily be exchanged at the airport. US dollars will give you more flexibility to exchange in smaller towns or in an emergency. Credit cards can be used to purchase many goods in Islamabad or Skardu and are particularly useful for more expensive items such as carpets. Withdrawing cash from an ATM machine may prove to be impossible anywhere on this trip.

Guidance on Tipping

It is usual to tip the members of your local crew and drivers, if you are happy with the services provided. We estimate that £80 (in local currency equivalent) will cover this aspect of your trip expenditure. Towards the end of the trek, the trip leader will help the group to determine an appropriate level of tipping for each crew member, and this is most usually done as a group 'thank-you' with ceremony on the final day of trekking.

Beat the Jet Lag

Our holidays are normally designed with minimal 'down time' at the start of the trip, but having a day or two at the beginning will have the additional benefit of allowing you time to get over the stress of a long journey or travelling across time zones, leaving you refreshed and ready for your holiday. We can easily arrange for you to have additional nights and airport transfers.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage, which should be a soft and sturdy duffel bag, and one day pack. Your baggage will be carried in the support vehicle and by porters or pack-ponies during the trek. The packed weight of your bag whilst trekking including your sleeping bag and camping mattress should be no more than 12.5 kgs. You should note that this allowance which is governed by maximum porter loads, is slightly less than allowances for treks in India and Nepal and is quite strictly adhered to. It is possible to leave items not required on trek at the group hotel in Islamabad and also in Gilgit.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

All British passport holders are required to obtain a visa for entry into Pakistan. Download our [Pakistan Visa Information](#) document for full details of how to apply.

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any vaccinations or other medical preparation prior to your holiday. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella), along with hepatitis A and typhoid. Malarial prophylaxis is discretionary for this trip. Malaria exists in the area around Islamabad. However, incidences of urban transmission of malaria are extremely low. In Skardu or Gilgit and in the mountains there is no malaria risk. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travellers having transited for more than 12 hrs through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Travellers who intend to visit Pakistan for 4 weeks or more should note that proof of Polio vaccination will be required on exiting the country. On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

Currency

The unit of currency in Pakistan is the Pakistani Rupee.

Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on a trekking holiday getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. You need to be comfortable walking for 6 hours on the longest of the trekking days and you need to be able to cope with a variety of terrain including loose scree and boulders. Regular hiking in hilly country is the best training but running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardio vascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

From mid-June to the end of August, we can expect to encounter temperatures as high as 30°C at Gilgit, 20°C at Shimshal and 10°C at Rush Lake. If the weather is clear, it will be warm during the day and cool in the evenings above 3000 metres. This part of Pakistan is reasonably sheltered from the effects of the monsoon and the weather tends to be settled during the summer. However, weather in mountainous areas is notoriously difficult to predict, and short-lived storms can occur at any time of the year.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Trekking in Pakistan. Isobel Shaw.
- Karakoram Highway. King.
- Top Treks of the World. Steve Razzetti.
- Throne Room of the Mountain Gods. Galen Rowell.

Maps

TerraQuest: Karakoram. 1 : 175,000 Available from Stanfords - stanfords.co.uk

This is the best map for all of KE's current Karakoram treks. Covers the central part of the Karakoram Range on a waterproof and tear-resistant, double-sided map, with coverage extending from Gilgit and the Karakoram Highway to the peaks of K2 and Gasherbrum. The map is presented in a special format, handy for conveniently viewing just small sections of it at one time.

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Please note that a paper copy of your travel insurance is required if you are travelling to Huaraz and the Huayhuash region.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. You do not have to bring everything on the list and you should use your own experience and judgement, but we ask you to ensure you have the items on the mandatory list. When selecting clothing for this holiday, please be culturally sensitive. Tight fitting or revealing clothing is not appropriate. Shorts and tee shirts can be worn but only once we are above the last temporary habitations of the valley.

You must bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Sports sandals or old shoes (for river crossings)
- Kahtoola Microspikes (or similar footwear traction) for the glacier crossings
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper

- Waterproof jacket
- Warm jacket (e.g. down)
- Scarf or buff
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses
- Gloves or mittens
- Daypack 30 to 40 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottles 1 litre (x2) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Sleeping bag (comfort rated -15°C)
- Thermarest or similar sleeping mat
- Basic First Aid Kit including: antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), altitude (Diamox), painkillers, plasters, blister treatment, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).
- 2x small padlocks (one for left luggage and one for trek bag)

Packing checklist:

- Socks

- Trainers for camp use
- Spare laces
- Trekking trousers
- Underwear
- Baselayer shirts
- Shirts or T-shirts
- Thermal underwear
- Trekking poles (recommended)
- Gaiters (optional)
- Insect repellent
- Washbag and toiletries
- Sleeping bag liner
- Travel clothes
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Antibacterial handwash
- Small towel
- Repair kit – (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Camera
- Dry bags(s) for daypack/kitbag contents (to ensure they keep dry)

Notes:

PHD Gear Advisor PHD specialise in cold weather equipment, from the world's lightest right up to the most protective for Everest or the Poles. It's a large range. So to help you choose what you need to keep you warm, PHD have listed the gear that is appropriate for this expedition. View
 >>http://www.phdesigns.co.uk/gearadviserdestination.php?destinations_id=18

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.
 >> [Find out more](#)

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting at the hotel in Islamabad. Transfers are provided from/to Islamabad Airport for all clients arriving on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Islamabad. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the morning, arriving in the early morning of the following day (Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary). Return flights will depart Islamabad usually in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

With more than 35 years of experience running adventure holidays in Northern Pakistan, there really is no alternative if you are looking to visit this stunning part of the world and we have long considered ourselves to be the experts on operating treks in this region. Our most renowned Pakistan treks are epic in nature, so we have developed this walking holiday to access some of the most staggeringly beautiful scenery in Pakistan for those who would like to experience this wonderful country another way.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 03/07/2024 and the trip is subject to change