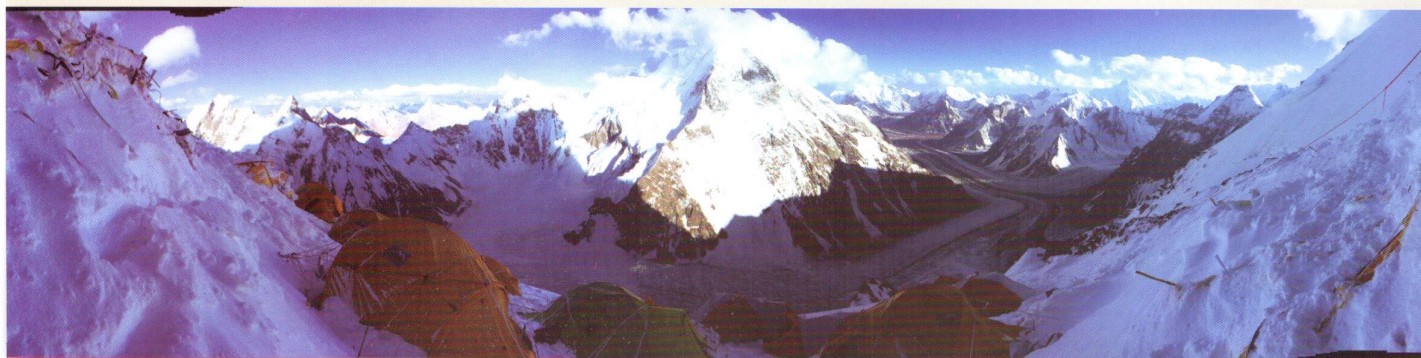


Pakistan boasts some amazing Glaciers & Peaks



A panoramic view of the Karakoram Mountain Range and glaciers from K2 Camp 2 (photo: Estalin Suarez)

“Northern Pakistan is home to some of the world’s most breathtaking ‘must-see’ landscapes. Among these attractions are glaciers and mountains, and in abundant supply. Pakistan Geographic estimates that the country’s glaciers constitute the biggest collection of ice anywhere outside of the North and South Pole regions. As much as 37% of this collection of ice lies in and around the Karakoram Mountain Range.

Among the most famous glaciers is the Siachen, second longest in the world (75 km), in the eastern Karakoram Range. The Biafo (63 km) meets the Hispar to create the longest glaciated highway (100 km), from Askole in Shigar valley to Hispar in Nagar Valley. The Baltoro (62 km) forms the ice highway guiding trekkers to and from Concordia. Here tourists can admire the vast range of mountains, including four of the world’s 8,000-meter peaks.

Pakistan Geographic estimates over 160 peaks above 7,000 meters exist, with the majority of these peaks located in the Karakoram mountain range near Concordia. This area represents the densest collection of the tallest and most precipitous peaks in the world – even more so than in the Himalayas. Most are clearly visible from space.

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Tourism Secretary Jehanzeb Awan recently commented on how tourism has skyrocketed in a recent article in Dawn. “For a few years, between 10,000 and 20,000 tourists would visit GB each year, but in 2015 over 600,000 people visited GB; and this year, it is expected that around one million people will travel to



Vanessa O'Brien (right) greets 62nd Brigade Commander Brigadier-General Ahsan Mehmood (left) during her trek to Concordia in June 2016 (photo: Estalin Suarez)



The K2 United team during the trek from Askole to Concordia in June 2016 (photo: Farman Ullah Baig)



Vanessa O'Brien (center) boards the full PIA flight from Skardu to Islamabad August 2016 (photo: Flt Lt Rahim Anwar)

GB." Tourism generally peaks after Ramadan until mid August.

The tourism numbers support Pakistan's overall growth. The country's economy is growing at its fastest pace in seven years, the local currency is stable against the USD, and interest rates are at their lowest in 42 years. Pakistan is a country with a powerful consumer base of 200 million people. It only makes sense that tourism is on the rise.

But can local infrastructure support it?

Mr. Awan expressed concern as to whether there would be enough hotel rooms to accommodate this upward trend in tourism, and made a plea to lift the current restrictions in air access due to limited scheduled flights, which are often cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. "Larger planes cannot land at the Gilgit Airport and an Instrument Navigation System is required for planes to land and take off around the clock," he said.

Despite the growing pains, for those who book ahead and visit this region, there are plenty of rewards. Highly recommended are hikes in and around the Baltoro glacier to Concordia to catch a glimpse of K2, the world's second highest peak (8,611m). From Concordia, K2 is another 11 km to Base Camp. K2's relentlessly steep slopes, unpredictable weather, and extreme altitude have helped dub

it "The Savage Mountain". There is only one summit of K2 for every 18 summits on Everest. Should you manage a glimpse of this majestic peak, be sure to consider its history, which dates back to 1856 for naming purposes.

K2: First 100 Years

1856

Thomas George Montgomerie, a British Royal Engineers Lieutenant and a member of the Great Trigonometric Survey of India, sighted two peaks from 16,000 feet on Haramosh peak. He named them K1 and K2. Today, K1 is known as Masherbrum, 7,821m and is shorter than K2, at 8,611m.

1861

Captain Henry Haversham Godwin-Austen, a British soldier, explored and mapped the glacier region comprising Baltoro, Chogo Lungma, Biafo, and Panmah. He was the first to traverse most of these glaciers to discover approaches to K2 and to sketch its topography.

1887

Francis Younghusband was asked by British intelligence to take a closer look at the Chinese side of K2. He entered the Karakoram via Muztagh pass at 18,000 feet and surveyed the Northern side.

1892 - First British Expedition

Martin Conway, a cartographer and mountaineer, led the first expedition to explore Himalayan and Karakoram peaks. Oscar Eckenstein accompanied him, but left early after disagreements.

1902 - Second British Expedition

Oscar Eckenstein, a mountaineer, and Aleister Crowley, an occultist, make first serious attempt to climb K2, taking three tons of equipment with 150 porters. After five serious and costly attempts, the team reached 6,525 m. They spent 68 days climbing, reporting only 8 days of clear weather.

1909 - First Italian Expedition

Duke of Abruzzi reconnoiters K2, mapping the region including Broad peak, Gasherbrum, and Chogolisa peaks. He takes three times as much food and equipment as Eckenstein did seven years earlier. Unable to summit K2, the Duke of Abruzzi reaches 7,300m on Chogolisa peak and sets a new altitude record.

1938 - First American Expedition

Charles Houston and Robert Bates reach the shoulder of K2 at 8,000m, establishing the feasibility of the Abruzzi Spur as a route to the summit. However, bad weather and diminishing supplies make them retreat, unable to continue.

1939 - Second American Expedition

Fritz Wiessner reaches similar heights as the 1938 team, but loses four men in the process. These are K2's first fatalities – one westerner and three Sherpa.

1953 - Third American Expedition

Charles Houston and Robert Bates return to K2, however, once they reach Camp VIII, at the base of the Shoulder at 7800m, they find Art Gilkey in need of rescue. They lose Art to (blood clots) and an avalanche and build the Gilkey Memorial.

1954 - Second Italian Expedition

Ardito Desio lead 10 members, with Lino Lacedelli and Achille Compagnoni reaching the summit on 31 July. Amir Mehdi and Walter Bonatti, who brought them oxygen, assist them.

References

1. Source: Ali Muhammad Saltoro in *The Summit Post*, Wikipedia and *The Ghosts of K2: The Epic Saga of the First Ascent* by Mick Conefrey
2. For trekking trips to Pakistan originated in Pakistan please visit Nazir Sabir Expeditions <http://nazirsabir.com/>
3. For trekking trips to Pakistan originated in the UK please visit KE Adventure Travel <https://www.keadventure.com/holidays/pakistan-climbing-k2-gondogoro-la>



Celebrating EID, the end of Ramadan at K2 Base Camp in 2016. Vanessa O'Brien (lower left), counter clockwise from lower right: Kari Kobler, Garrett Madison, Chhang Dawa Sherpa (photo: Estalin Suarez)