Australia 1300 888 225
New Zealand 0800 440 055
info@odysseytraveller.com



From
€7,452 EUR

Single Room
€8,930 EUR
Twin Room
€7,452 EUR

Prices valid until
30th December 2024

22 days
Duration

Pakistan
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Tour of Pakistan including Skardu Valley

Sep 01 2024 to Sep 22 2024



Tour of Pakistan including Skardu Valley

Join Odyssey Traveller as we travel to Pakistan, exploring the long history and colourful culture of this amazing country. A small group tour of up to 16 travellers exploring off the beaten path. A tour for mature and senior travellers, travelling as a couple or as a solo traveller. This 22-day tour begins much like our 16-day tour of Pakistan, with a six-day extension that allows us to further explore the northern parts of the country. The focus of the final six days of the tour is the region of Gilgit-

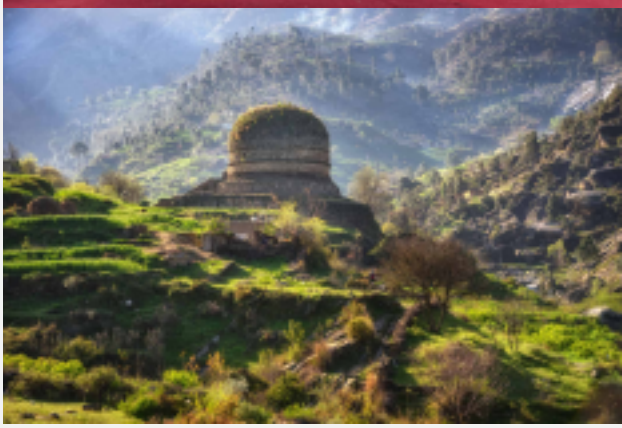
Baltistan, located near the Pakistani border with China. The region's central valley, Skardu Valley, shares similarities in culture, lifestyle, and architecture with Tibet. Three mountain ranges meet in this region–the Karakoram, the Himalaya, and the Hindu Kush–and promises majestic views to the adventurous senior or mature-aged traveller.

We begin in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, and end in its vibrant capital, Islamabad. Our small group tour travels from the south, on the coast of the Arabian sea, and weaves north to the scenic Skardu Valley, a popular gateway to the mountain ranges and utopia for hikers, trekkers, and travellers. Along the way, we visit ancient ruins, medieval capitals, and Pakistan's pre-Muslim temples in Thatta, Hyderabad, Larkana, Lahore, and Peshawar.

This tour is composed of leisurely drives with frequent stops to places of interest along the way, allowing us to experience and learn about various sights at our own pace. Similar to other Odyssey tours, the group will be fully escorted by an Odyssey Program Leader and various local Pakistani guides who will share their knowledge about the ancient cities and monuments we will be visiting.







A Brief History of Pakistan

The history of Pakistan, a young nation created with the partition of British India in 1947, is intertwined with the history of India and the broader Indian subcontinent. Pakistan was carved away from the rest of India by Islamic nationalists led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who believed India's Muslims would only receive just representation in Hindu-dominated India if they formed their own country.

Prior to the 1947 partition, Pakistan's history was India's history. The subcontinent was home to one of the oldest and most influential human civilisations, the Indus civilisation (also known as Harappan civilisation), an urban culture that dated from 2500 BC and declined around the 2nd millennium BC.

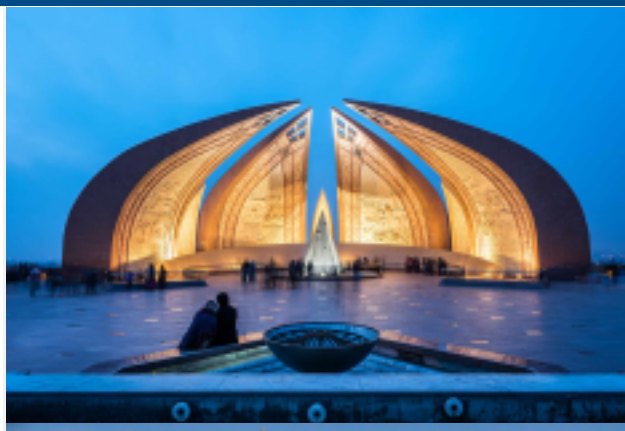
The most well-known period in the subcontinent's history was the rule of the Mughal Empire from the 16th to the mid-19th century. An immensely

successful Muslim empire of Turkic-Mongol origin, its rulers controlled the entire subcontinent of India and reached a population of 100 million at its peak. Though a Muslim dynasty that ruled over a Hindu majority, their overall commitment to religious freedom ensured peace in the subcontinent for two centuries. Shah Jahan was an avid supporter of art and architecture, and his monuments (such as the Taj Mahal in India and his palace complex in Lahore, Pakistan) are still admired today.

The last Mughal, Bah?dur Shah II, reigned from 1837 to 1857, and was exiled by the British to Myanmar for his role in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 against British rule. Several wars were fought in India at the end of the Mughal empire's reign as the subcontinent transitioned into a British colony, with the British using the reach of their Calcutta-based British East India Company and exclusive trade rights to further their control.

India became a colony in 1858. British India ended with independence in 1947. The Hindu-Muslim conflict led to a bloody civil war in the subcontinent, which led to the birth of a new nation called Pakistan ("pure land" or "land of the pure").

From 1947 to 1971, Pakistan was divided further into two: West Pakistan and East Pakistan. Following years of internal conflict, East Pakistan declared its independence in 1971 as the nation of Bangladesh, and West Pakistan became modern-day Pakistan.







Tour Highlights

This tour is designed to give travellers who are open to a unique Pakistan travel experience and adventure to have a deeper understanding of the history and culture of Pakistan. On this tour we will visit the two major cities of the Indus civilisation. **Mohenjo-Daro** ("Mound of the Dead Men") was built around 2500 BC, a major city contemporaneous with ancient Egypt and Minoan Crete. The original name of the city remains unknown. **Harappa** is second only in size to Mohenj0-Daro, and we will marvel at the level of urban planning on display in both archaeological sites. We will also visit Harappa's local railway station, notable for being built during the British era with the

millennia-old bricks from Harappa.

We will have a city tour of **Karachi**, including a visit to the Jinnah Mausoleum, the final resting place of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and an iconic symbol of Karachi.

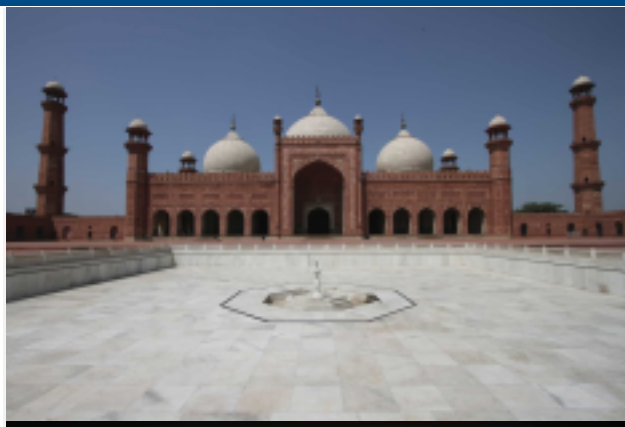
We continue further to the medieval capital of **Thatta**, later ruled by the Mughal emperors and site of incredible monuments. We visit nearby **Makli Hills**, one of the largest funerary sites in the world. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the necropolis covers an area of 10 square kilometres. It is home to various monumental tombs from different dynastic periods, and a site showcasing evolving funerary architecture.

We will also be visiting the mausoleums and shrine complexes of Sufi saints, which feature pre-Mughal architecture. Sufism is a mystical form of Islam that focuses on an inward search for God and tolerance. Members of the two main Muslim sects–Sunni and Shi'a–may incorporate elements of Sufism.

In **Lahore**, we will see the sights of this great Mughal city. Little is known of the city of Lahore prior to the Muslim period, but it undoubtedly reached its golden age under the Mughal dynasty when it became the place of royal residence.

The city of **Peshawar** (*pesh awar*, "frontier town") was once the capital of the ancient Buddhist kingdom of Gandhara. We will see various Gandharan sculptures in the Peshawar Museum before proceeding to the historic Qissa Kwani Bazaar ("Storytellers' Bazaar").

Before we finish the tour in the capital city of Islamabad, we will spend time in Pakistan's **Swat Valley**, which has undergone an incredible transformation from a militant stronghold to a hub of tourism in Pakistan, with its snow-capped peaks and steady stream of tourists. We move further north to explore the **Gilgit-Baltistan region**, with its breathtaking







views of mountain ranges and valleys.

We will also be exploring lively bazaars and scenic landscapes reminiscent of the *Arabian Nights.*

Our small group travel in Pakistan promises to be the adventure of a lifetime.

For more details, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right-hand side of this page.





Articles published by Odyssey Traveller to assist you on your visit to Pakistan

The following list of articles published by Odyssey Traveller for mature aged and senior travellers to maximise their knowledge and enjoyment of Pakistan when visiting:

- The Making of the Mughal Empire
- History of British Rule in India (1750-1820)
- The Clash of the Mughals and the Marathas

External Articles to assist you on your visit to Pakistan

- How to Plan Your First Trip to Pakistan (AFAR)
- Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation
- Pakistan Climate (US Library of Congress)
- 10 Famous Places of Skardu That Make It Worth Visiting (Skardu.pk)
- Geography: Mountains of Pakistan (DAWN)



Other Odyssey Tours

The following tours may also be of interest:

- Iran Culture & History
- Silk Road tour
- Culture & History Tours of India
- North East India Tour

See our other tours of Asia. Odyssey also has more information about Pakistan.

Highlights

1. Visit magical Karachi on the coast of the Arabian Sea.
2. Explore the Skardu Valley and the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, where three mountain ranges meet: the Karakoram, the Himalaya, and the Hindu Kush mountains.
3. Visit the two major cities of the influential Indus civilisation, Mohenjo-Daro ("Mound of the Dead Men") and Harappa.
4. View the pre-Mughal mausoleums and shrine complexes of Sufi saints, and see the cities built by the South Asian Mughal empire.
5. Marvel at the snow-capped mountains and beautiful villages of the Swat Valley.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Karachi

Overview:

We arrive in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, and make our own way to our accommodation. You will meet as a group with your Odyssey Program Leader for a tour briefing, followed by a welcome dinner.

Day 2

Locations: Karachi

Overview:

After breakfast, we begin our sightseeing tour of Karachi. Karachi in southern Pakistan is located on the coast of the Arabian Sea and is the country's principal seaport. It is also a major commercial and industrial centre. Today we will be visiting:

- **Masjid e Tooba**, a 20th century mosque constructed in 1966
- **Jinnah Mausoleum,** the final resting place of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and an iconic symbol of Karachi
- **Gandhara Art Gallery,** showcasing art from Pakistan's pioneering and next generation of modern artist

We will also be visiting the **Empress Market**, constructed during British rule in India and named to commemorate Queen Victoria, the then Empress of India. In seaside Clifton, we will visit the luxurious **Mohatta Palace**, summer home of Shivratan Chandraratan Mohatta, a Hindu businessman who had to return to his native India when the nation of Pakistan was created. It was formally turned into a museum in 1999.

During the tour we break for lunch at a local restaurant and have our dinner at the hotel.

Day 3

Locations: Karachi - Thatta - Hyderabad

Overview:

After breakfast, we depart for Hyderabad, which in modern times has become an international hub for information technology. En route from Karachi, we will stop at **Chaukundi** to view an early Islamic cemetery and admire the tombs' unique sandstone carvings.

We continue on and go a bit off-road to visit the ancient port ruins of **Bhambore**, which some historians believe was where the ships of Alexander the Great docked on the Indus river.

We continue further to the medieval capital of **Thatta**, later ruled by the Mughal emperors of Delhi and site of incredible monuments. We visit nearby **Makli Hills**, one of the largest funerary sites in the world. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the necropolis covers an area of 10 square kilometres. It is home to various monumental tombs from different dynastic periods, and a site showcasing evolving funerary architecture.

We proceed to Hyderabad and transfer to our accommodation.

Accommodation:

Hotel Indus or similar

Day 4

Locations: Hyderabad - Sehwan - Larkana

Overview:

After breakfast at our hotel, we will have an early morning departure for **Larkana**, which is irrigated by canals and occupies a fertile plain known as the "Garden of Sindh", producing sugarcane and fruits such as guavas and mangoes.

Along the way, we stop at **Hala**, home of artisans and famous for its handcrafted and hand-painted pottery. We shall visit a local pottery store and if time permits we can watch artisans create and decorate pottery in a workshop.

We continue to **Bhit Shah**, a small town which houses the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, after whom the town is named. Shah Abdul

Latif Bhittai was a Sufi scholar and poet, and his richly decorated shrine complex is considered among the most important in Sindh, attracting half a million visitors during the annual March *Urs* festival (death festival).

We drive along the right bank of the Indus river to reach **Sehwan**, and visit the mausoleum of the Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, revered by both Muslims and Hindus as he preached love and tolerance for people of all religions.

After having lunch at a local restaurant, we proceed to Larkana, arriving in the late afternoon or evening.

Accommodation:

Hotel Sambara Inn or similar

Day 5

Locations: Larkana - Mohenjo-Daro - Sukkur - Bhawalpur

Overview:

We depart for Mohenjo-Daro ("Mound of the Dead Men"), built around 2500 BC, and marvel at the level of urban planning in this ancient city. Now an archaeological site and UNESCO World Heritage Site, **Mohenjo-Daro** was once one of the largest settlements in the Indus Valley, a major city contemporaneous with ancient Egypt and Minoan Crete. The original name of the city remains unknown.

We will also visit the ancient city's site museum, to see the collection of preserved toys, pottery, and jewelry.

We continue on to **Bhawalpur**, where we will stay for the night.

Accommodation:

Hotel One or similar

Day 6

Locations: Bhawalpur - Multan

Overview:

This morning we depart for Multan. This is a shorter drive, and upon arrival we transfer to our hotel and have lunch at a local restaurant.

Multan is one of the oldest cities in South Asia and derives its name from that of the idol of the sun god temple, a shrine from the city's pre-Muslim period. The city has been ruled by various powers throughout the centuries–Alexander the Great, the Delhi sultanate, the Mughal Empire, the British, among others–and is now famous for numerous shrines and monuments within the old city.

Today we visit the mausoleum of Sufi saint **Shah Rukn-e-Alam** ("Pillar of the World"), a revered place of pilgrimage in South Asia. The ornately decorated 14th century tomb was built in the pre-Mughal architectural style and is a sight to behold. It was also built on a slope, an excellent vantage point for us to view Multan (and take photos!) in the afternoon light.

We will also be visiting the mausoleum of the Sufi saint's grandfather and spiritual mentor, Bahauddin Zakariya, and that of Afghan Islamic saint Shah Yousuf Gardezi, as well as the colourful local bazaar.

Day 7

Locations: Multan - Harappa - Lahore

Overview:

Today we shall be travelling from Multan to Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city.

En route, we stop at **Harappa**, site of an ancient city of the Indus civilisation, second in size only to Mohenjo-Daro, which we have visited on Day 5.

We will also visit the local railway station, notable for being built during the British era with the millennia-old bricks from Harappa.

We will travel to Faisalabad town for lunch at a local restaurant, before transferring to our hotel in Lahore.

Day 8

Locations: Lahore

Overview:

This is a free day to refresh ourselves after several days of sightseeing. Take this time to relax or explore the city!

Day 9

Locations: Lahore - Islamabad

Overview:

Today we will have a half-day of sightseeing in the great Mughal City of Lahore. Little is known of the city of Lahore prior to the Muslim period, but it undoubtedly reached its golden age under the Mughal dynasty when it became the place of royal residence. We will be exploring, among other sights, **Lahore Fort,** a citadel located in the northern end of the Walled City of Lahore and which contains monuments spread over 20 hectares, including the quadrangle of Shah Jahan built in luxurious marble.

In the afternoon, we will be driving for around six hours from Lahore to Islamabad.

Day 10

Locations: Islamabad - Taxila - Peshawar

Overview:

Today we depart from Islamabad to Peshawar. Along the way we stop at the **Taxila** archeological site which dates to the 6th century BC, the time of Cyrus the Great and the Achaemenid Empire (First Persian Empire). This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with ruins showing remains, among others, of a Greco-Bactrian city (Sirkap) and a 2nd century Buddhist monastery (Jaulian).

We proceed to Peshawar and transfer to our hotel for the night.

Day 11

Locations: Peshawar

Overview:

The city of Peshawar (*pesh awar*, “frontier town”) was once the capital of the ancient Buddhist kingdom of Gandhara. We will see various Gandharan sculptures in the **Peshawar Museum** before proceeding to the historic **Qissa Kwani Bazaar** (“Storytellers’ Bazaar”), the **Jewellery Bazaar,** and the 17th century **Mohabbat Khan Mosque,** a stunning mosque finished in white marble.

Day 12

Locations: Peshawar - Takht-i-Bahi - Swat

Overview:

Today we will departing for Swat Valley, stopping en route at the **Takht-i-Bahi** (“throne of the water spring”), an Indo-Parthian archaeological site of an ancient Buddhist monastery. Located in the higher reaches of Mardan province, the monastery survived foreign attack and is still well-preserved. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

After a picnic lunch, we continue our drive to **Saidu Sharif**, capital of the Swat District, driving through the Malakand Pass, a mountain pass, with a stop to view the Shingardar Stupa. If time permits, we will also visit Mingora town, the main town of the Swat Valley.

In Saidu Sharif, we transfer to our hotel for the night.

Day 13

Locations: Swat Valley

Overview:

Pakistan’s Swat Valley has undergone an incredible transformation from a militant stronghold to a tourism hub. In recent years it appeared on the news as the hometown of Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, and is now dubbed Pakistan’s Switzerland with its snow-capped mountains and steady stream of tourists. Today we will take a morning drive to the **Upper Swat Valley** to see the beautiful villages of Madyan and Bharin, and in the afternoon visit the **Swat Museum** and **Mingora Bazaar**

.

Day 14

Locations: Swat Valley - Khawazakhela - Besham

Overview:

Today we depart for Besham through the Shangla Pass, arriving at the **Karakoram Highway** by the river Indus. **Besham** is the commercial centre of Pakistan's Shangla District, and was once on the historic Silk Road connecting India with China.

The rest of the day can be spent at our leisure.

Day 15

Locations: Besham - Gilgit

Overview:

Today we will take a drive from Besham to Gilgit, the capital city of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan's northern autonomous region where three mountain ranges meet–the Karakoram, the Himalaya, and the Hindu Kush. This drive provides us a view of the majestic Indus and great peaks such as the **Nanga Parbat** (26,660 feet [8,126 metres] high), one of the world's tallest mountains situated in the western Himalayas.

Along the way we will also stop at **Shatial** to see a large collection of rock art, dating from the 1st century BC to 7th century AD.

Day 16

Locations: Gilgit - Karimabad

Overview:

Today we will visit Gilgit town, viewing the **Kargah Buddha**, an image of the Buddha carved into a cliff face dating back to the 7th century, the town bazaar, and a chance to walk across the bridge crossing the river Gilgit.

We will have lunch at the hotel, and depart for Karimabad through the mountainous Hunza Valley, with short stops en route to view the peaks

of the Karakoram mountain range.

We can go on short hikes in the village of Karimabad near our accommodation before dinner.

Day 17

Locations: Karimabad

Overview:

Karimabad, situated on the west bank of the Hunza River, was a formerly independent principality under the hereditary ruler known as the Mir of Hunza before it joined with the state of Pakistan in 1947.

We will learn more about the culture through visits to the villages and lunch with a local family.

In the afternoon, we will make an excursion to the scenic **Hopar Valley**, a base camp for treks to the surrounding peaks.

Dinner will be arranged at a restaurant near the **Baltit Fort**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Karimabad is also known as Baltit.

Day 18

Locations: Karimabad - Gilgit - Skardu

Overview:

Today we will take a scenic drive to Skardu, with plenty of opportunities to stop and take photos, or to simply view the amazing landscape.

We shall stop for lunch at Stak Nullah, a breathtaking verdant valley with a view of mountain peaks.

We continue to Skardu, the central valley of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, and transfer to our hotel.

Day 19

Locations: Skardu

Overview:

Skardu is located on the Indus, which separates the Karakoram Range from the Himalayas. Today we will be exploring the Skardu city centre

and take drives to nearby sights.

Later in the day we will prepare for our departure for Islamabad tomorrow.

Day 20

Locations: Skardu - Islamabad

Overview:

Today we fly out from Skardu to Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. In the afternoon, we will spend time exploring the capital city, visiting the **Folk Heritage Museum,** the **Shakarparian hills** with its beautiful terraced garden, and the **Faisal Mosque.**

Note: *Mountain flights to and from Skardu is dependent on the weather. If the Skardu-Islamabad flight gets cancelled, we will travel by road from Skardu to Chilas today and transfer to our Chilas accommodation to rest. This ensures you do not miss your international departure from Pakistan.*

Day 21

Locations: Islamabad

Overview:

Today is a free day in Islamabad.

Note: *If the Skardu-Islamabad flight got cancelled on Day 20, Day 21 is a continuation of our road travel, travelling from Chilas to Islamabad.*

In the evening, we will meet again as a group for our farewell dinner.

Day 22

Locations: Islamabad

Overview:

Our tour and services end after breakfast.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 21 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 21 breakfasts, 21 lunches and 21 dinners.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Domestic flights where indicated (economy class)
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach.
- Field trips as indicated.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Services of an Odyssey program leader.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- Return international airfare and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive international travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Meals not specified in the itinerary.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.