



**SERENA HOTELS**  
SAFARI LODGES • HOTELS • RESORTS

*Spellbinding ESCAPES*

**YOUR BEAUTIFUL BALTISTAN HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE**  
Royal Palaces, Fortresses, Adventure and the Authentic Baltistan! – 9 days



**EXPERIENCE SERENA HOTELS. EXPERIENCE GILGIT-BALTISTAN**

## BEAUTIFUL BALTISTAN!

Baltistan is a remote and beautiful land spread over 26,227 km<sup>2</sup> in the north of Pakistan. It borders Ladakh to the East, Kashmir to the South, and Sinkiang province of China to the North. It has the most awe inspiring landscape with breath taking scenes of the Karakoram mountain range, sublime & picturesque terraced fields, the worlds 2<sup>nd</sup> highest mountain K2, some of the world's largest glaciers outside of the North & South poles and the world's largest high altitude plateau - the Deosai Plains.

In addition to its amazing natural beauty Baltistan is rich & diverse in history and culture. Its historical treasures include forts, palaces, mosques, and archeological treasures such as Buddha stupa's and thousands of ancient petroglyphs (rock carvings). Due to its isolation from the rest of Pakistan Baltistan has not developed at the dramatic pace of its neighbouring provinces and has managed to preserve its culture adding to its charm and character. The relative lack of development and friendly nature of the Baltistan people make the north the perfect destination for those looking for a varied and stimulating holiday. From stunning landscapes, a vast amount of historical & religious sites, beautiful flora and fauna, amazing architecture, trekking, horse riding and many other adventures for the more active traveller.

Beautiful Baltistan is small enough to explore in 4 to 10 days yet large & diverse enough to offer infinite variety and the holiday of a life time.

### YOUR HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE WILL TAKE YOU TO:

- ✓ Skardu
- ✓ Khaplu
- ✓ Hushe
- ✓ Saling
- ✓ Thalley Valley
- ✓ Shigar

## THE FACTS

- ✓ Inhabited by the Balti people who are of Tibetan descent
- ✓ Official language Balti & Urdu
- ✓ Contains the highest mountains in the Karakorum's, including the worlds 2<sup>nd</sup> highest mountain, K2
- ✓ Officially named Gilgit-Baltistan in 2009 (formerly Northern Areas)
- ✓ The capital is Skardu
- ✓ Key Industries: Subsistence farming, animal husbandry, gems mining & tourism

## THE TRIVIA

- ✓ Locals call Baltistan *Balti-yul*
- ✓ Pakistan is home to 108 peaks over 7,000 meters with most of these mountains located in Baltistan
- ✓ The average altitude in Baltistan is over 3,350m (11,000ft)
- ✓ In the 14th century religious Muslim scholars from Iran and Kashmir penetrated Baltistan's mountainous terrain to spread Islam
- ✓ In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the area was referred to as "Little" Tibet
- ✓ The area is sandwiched between three Asian powers – China, India & Pakistan
- ✓ The building of the Karakoram Highway in the late 1970's opened up Baltistan to the outside world

## OUR FAVOURITE THINGS TO DO:

1. Put your hiking boots & stretch your legs - this is a walker's paradise.
2. Pluck fresh apricots from the abundant trees – they just don't get any fresher!
3. Join in a game of Polo and watch the local teams play it out in this high mountain game with no rules!
4. Climb to the top of Thoqshikhar at sunset and sit with your camera watching the colours of the Karakoram change by the minute.
5. Explore the enormous plateau of the Deosai Plains (4,300m) on horseback and see some of the world's most beautiful and most endangered species of flora and fauna. If you are lucky enough you may even see a snow leopard.
6. Delight in a Royal Palace High Tea at Khaplu Palace & Residence and experience the local delicacies of Baltistan in style!
7. Gem shopping – find that perfect semi precious stone to remind you of Baltistan forever.
8. Purchase some locally made apricot & buckthorn jams – a great gift to take home!



**NAME:** Beautiful Baltistan: Royal Palaces, Fortresses, Adventure & the Authentic Baltistan

**LENGTH OF TIME:** 9 days with options to extend

**BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:** Anytime from March through to October! (Note: The fantastic trek between Shigar & Khaplu is ideally done between late May and August)

Day	Destination / Drive time	Accommodation Details	Activities & Highlights	Optional Experiences	Visual Reflection
1	<p><b>Skardu</b> (50 minute scenic flight)</p> <p><b>Khaplu</b> (2 ½ hour's drive)</p>	<p><b>Khaplu Palace &amp; Residence</b> (Full board) – Heritage Boutique Hotel <i>Deluxe Heritage Room</i> <a href="#">Click here</a> for more information</p>	<p>Get your cameras charged and ready for a journey of awe inspiring scenery.</p> <p>Arrive in time for a late lunch.</p> <p>Take a guided historical tour of the beautifully restored <b>Khaplu Palace &amp; Residence</b>.</p> <p>Spend the afternoon soaking in the historical &amp; cultural beauty of Khaplu Palace.</p>	<p>You have just arrived so we suggest you take it easy today.</p> <p><b>Top Tip #1:</b> Stop in Skardu bazaar to purchase some local dried apricots &amp; almonds. A great snack to overcome a hungry tummy on your journey.</p> <p><b>Top Tip #2:</b> Take your pic at the junction of two powerful rivers – where the Indus River meets the Shyok River. A great moment to capture!</p>	 <p>Khaplu Royal Palace &amp; Gardens</p>
2	Khaplu	<p><b>Khaplu Palace &amp; Residence</b> (Full board) – Heritage Boutique Hotel <i>Deluxe Heritage Room</i> <a href="#">Click here</a> for more information</p>	<p>It's time to stretch your legs – climb to Thoqsikhar, panoramic view point and ancient seat of Yabgo rulers where ruins of the 400 year old castle are visible. (2 hour return walk)</p> <p>For the more energetic continue on walking along the high ridge and carry onto Hanjor Broq – an alpine pasture dwelling of lush green fields, domestic livestock and spectacular views of Khaplu. (2 hour walk). Those who don't walk can take the vehicle to Hanjor Broq. For lunch be treated to one of our gourmet picnics in a picturesque location close to Hanjor Broq.</p> <p>Visit the imposing historic Khaplu Khanqah and its newer addition being built by the community in tradition style.</p> <p>View the UNESCO award winning tomb of the saint "Astana Mir Muhammad".</p>	<p>Witness the game of the kings when the locals of Khaplu jump on their horses for a chukka or two of authentic Polo.</p> <p>For horse riding enthusiasts consider an afternoon or all day horse riding trip on the local polo ponies.</p> <p><b>Top Tip #3:</b> Learn a little bit of Balti before you arrive. The locals will really appreciate it. Here is a start: Hello <i>Assalamu Alikum</i> Goodbye <i>Khudai fakring</i> How are you? <i>Lakhmo yota ju</i> Thank you <i>Baksobish</i> How much is it? <i>Xam la yo</i></p>	 <p>Polo – the games of the Kings!</p>  <p>Sunset from Toqsikhar, Khaplu</p>

Day	Destination / Drive time	Accommodation Details	Activities & Highlights	Optional Experiences	Visual Reflection
3	Khaplu	<b>Khaplu Palace &amp; Residence</b> (Full board) – Heritage Boutique Hotel <i>Deluxe Heritage Room</i> <a href="#">Click here</a> for more information	<b>Macholo Valley</b> - vernacular architecture and spell bounding landscape. A photographers dream.  Take a short walk to see one of Central Asia's largest Buddhist <b>Stupa's and rock carvings.</b>  Enjoy a magnificent picnic lunch by the <b>Shyok River</b> surrounded by towering mountains and overlooking <b>Khaplu</b> . Devour deliciously cooked trout from the local trout farm and other BBQ treats.  Afternoon at leisure.	For those wanting to travel further afield take an all day trip up the Hushe Valley which is featured in Greg Morteson's book Three Cups of Tea.  Locals believe that the Hushe Valley was the ancient route to Yarkand an important stop on the Silk Road. Hushe is also a mountaineer's paradise from where it only 3 days hiking to reach K2 base camp. It is also home to the best views of the majestic Mashebrum Peak towering 7,821 meters.  <b>Top Tip #4:</b> Live like royalty and experience Khaplu Palace & Residence's Royal High Tea. Try the traditional Balti Tea - Payoo Chai. You will never forget it!	 The ideal spot for Royal High Tea  Picutre Perfect Picnic Spot – Saling
4	<b>Thalley Valley</b> (2 ½ hour's drive)	Camping or Traditional Home Stay in <b>Thalley Broq</b> . The choice is yours! (Full board)	First stop is <b>Bara</b> – a small village just 20 minutes from Khaplu. Visit a wool spinning & weaving centre that trains & supports local women. Purchase a local Baltistani topi!  Drive up through the <b>Thalley Valley</b> – possibly one of the most spectacular & interesting valleys in Pakistan filled with terraced agricultural fields, local men & women attending to their wheat & potato crops, high altitude yaks & mules and towering jagged mountain peaks.  Spend the afternoon wondering around the traditional village of Thalley Broq.	<b>Top Tip #5:</b> If you have any spare note books and pens the local Thalley School would be hugely appreciative.	 Thalley Valley  Yaks braving the chilly river, Thalley
5 - 6	<b>Trekking</b> (Ave. 4-5 hours walking per day)	<b>Camping</b> (Full board)	Commence your 3 day trek to <b>Shigar Valley</b> and the historical Shigar Fort by crossing the Thalley La (Pass) at 4,578m.  Known as one of the most beautiful treks in Baltistan this 3 day easy hike takes you through green pastured meadows abundant with summer wild flowers, Marmots & Markhor, shepherd herds and glacial streams. You will be supported with a mountain guide, porters and cook.	Everything is included! You will be well looked after.  <b>Top Tip #6:</b> Bring plenty of chocolate and snacks for those hungry moments in the mountains.	 Trekking between Shigar & Thalley

Day	Destination / Drive time	Accommodation Details	Activities & Highlights	Optional Experiences	Visual Reflection
7	<b>Trekking to Shigar</b> (5 hours walking)	<b>Shigar Fort Residence</b> (Full board) – Heritage Boutique Hotel <i>Heritage Room</i> <a href="#">Click here</a> for more information	Final day of your trek ending up at the magnificently restored and award winning Shigar Fort Residence.  Enjoy the luxuries of a hot shower, comfy bed and delicious Baltistan cuisine.	<b>Top Tip #7:</b> Ask the chef to make you some local fry (pancakes) – they are seriously delicious with butter and honey and go particularly well with a hot cup of tea!  If you are really hungry, order the Raja’s High Tea!	 Shigar Valley
8	<b>Shigar</b>	<b>Shigar Fort Residence</b> (Full board) – Heritage Boutique Hotel <i>Heritage Room</i> <a href="#">Click here</a> for more information	Sleep in and enjoy the comforts of your room or relive the history of <b>Shigar Fort</b> with a guided walking tour.  Morning trip to <b>Satpara Lake</b> , ancient <b>Buddhist rock carving &amp; Skardu Bazaar</b> .  Lunch back at the <b>Shigar Fort Residence</b> .  Time to explore Shigar town and more cultural and historical assets of the area.	Optional all day trip to see the world’s 2 <sup>nd</sup> highest plateau – the <b>Deosai Plains</b> (6 hour return drive)	 Deosai Plains – fancy some fishing
9	<b>Islamabad</b> (50 minute flight)	Homeward bound! Or perhaps you would like to stay on and continue exploring Beautiful Baltistan with Serena Hotels.  How about a trip to the famous high altitude plateau of the Deosai Plains?  We can tailor make an experience of a life time that you will never forget. Just let us know!	It is time to leave Beautiful Baltistan!  Stop off at the Italian K2 Museum in Skardu before ending up at the airport for your departure.	<b>Top Tip #8:</b> When checking in ask for a window seat on the left hand side of the plane – you will get a fantastic view of Pakistan’s 2 <sup>nd</sup> highest mountain Nanga Parbat (8,126m).  Up, up and away!	 The world’s 2 <sup>nd</sup> highest mountain – K2

**SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE BOOKS TO READ ON BEAUTIFUL BALTISTAN:**

- ✓ *Pakistan Trekking Guide: Himalaya, Karakoram and HinduKush* by Isobel Shaw
- ✓ *Empires of the Indus* by Alice Albinia,
- ✓ *Where the Indus is Young: Midwinter in Baltistan* by Dervla Murphy
- ✓ *A taste of Baltistan: Famous for Balti-Style Cooking* by Sabiha Khokhar
- ✓ *A History of Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan* by Parvez Dewan
- ✓ *The Big Game of Baltistan and Ladakh: A Summer in High Asia* by Frederick Edward Shafto Adair and Stuart Hill Godfrey

LET THE PICTURES DO THE TALKING



The awe inspiring mountainous landscape



Khaplu Palace Residence in its glory!



The ultimate camp site!



Sunset over the Karakoram



Dine in style at  
Khaplu Palace & Residence



Ancient Buddhist Rock Carving, Satpara



The stunning meadows of Saling



Historical luxury – Shigar Fort Residence!



Traditional threshing techniques  
Shigar Valley



The game of the Kings – Polo!



The historical Shigar Fort Residence



Satpara Lake, Skardu

To book your Karakoram Experience call us on +92 (051) 111-133-133 or email at [holidays@serena.com.pk](mailto:holidays@serena.com.pk)  
[www.serenagitbaltistan.com](http://www.serenagitbaltistan.com)