



SERENA HOTELS

**PRESS RELEASE
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Serena Hotels launch Gilgit-Baltistan Collection in Northern Pakistan

Visitors to Gilgit-Baltistan in Northern Pakistan will now have the opportunity to experience the areas rich heritage and diverse culture with Serena Hotel's Gilgit-Baltistan Collection.

Serena Hotel's Gilgit-Baltistan Collection is a handpicked selection of small up-market boutique hotels that provide incredible experiences in landscapes all over Gilgit-Baltistan in Northern Pakistan, an area known for being a safe haven for tourists and a popular destination for trekkers and mountaineers from around the world.

The main objective of Serena Hotel's Gilgit-Baltistan Collection is to protect and promote local culture and heritage of the region in an environmentally sensitive manner.

To achieve this, Serena Hotels have spent time developing tourism circuits by working closely with the local communities in which Serena properties are located as well as working with other government and local agencies ensuring that guests experience an insight into the history, culture and natural beauty of the area. From 1000 year old Forts to 400 year old Royal Palaces Serena Hotel's Gilgit-Baltistan Collection offers a varied selection of accommodation and guest experiences that will take tourists on an unforgettable journey through the North of Pakistan.

"The development of Serena Hotel's Gilgit-Baltistan Collection reflects the growing trend of tourists demanding authentic experiences as well as responsibly contributing to the uplift of local communities in their travel destinations. The team realized they had to move beyond just providing excellent accommodation in unique locations and start providing a range of experiences that enables the guests to interact with the local communities and experience first-hand local culture and history of Gilgit-Baltistan."

In July 2011, Serena Hotels inaugurated the historical Khaplu Palace & Residence as an up market boutique hotel complementing their existing Gilgit-Baltistan Collection portfolio which also includes the historical Shigar Fort Residence. These two up-market boutique hotels restored by the Aga Khan Cultural Services Pakistan (AKCSP) are the only ones of their kind in Pakistan with not only provide guests with a totally unique heritage experience but also provide the local community with alternative livelihood opportunities installing pride in their local culture and heritage.

For more information on Serena Hotel's Gilgit-Baltistan Collection and their incredible experiences in Northern Pakistan please visit www.serenagilgitbaltistan.com

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Notes:

The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development's (AKFED) mission is to build sustainable enterprises that contribute to economic development and create jobs in regions that are in need of foreign direct investment. It operates as a network of affiliates with more than 90 separate project companies employing more than 30,000 people and is active in 15 countries in Asia and Africa: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Senegal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

AKFED's *Tourism Promotion Services (TPS)* seeks to develop tourism potential in selected areas in the developing world, particularly in under-served regions. It builds, rehabilitates and manages hotels and lodges that contribute to economic growth and the overall investment climate in an environmentally and culturally sensitive manner.

AKFED owns and manages properties in Afghanistan, Kenya, Mozambique, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Rwanda and Uganda, operating under the brand name Serena. Serena hotels, lodges and resorts contribute to the local economy through the training of skilled manpower, the reinvigoration of artisans and craft industries, and through sensitive conservation or development of the surrounding area. This includes placing priority on the hiring and training of local residents for employment at all levels of the organisation.

