

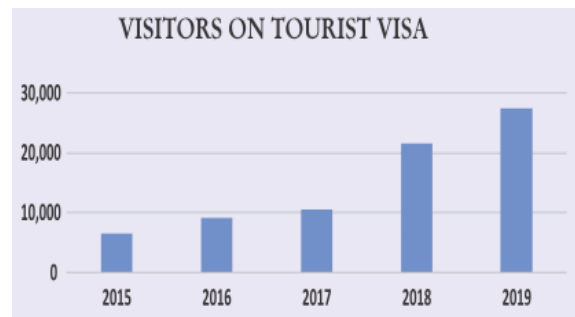
Pakistan Eco-Tourism Profile 2024

DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.26930.82880](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.26930.82880); June 2024



Tourism in Pakistan

The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) is actively promoting tourism by highlighting the country's rich history, diverse culture, stunning landscapes, arts, and archaeological monuments. The visa policy has been liberalised, offering e-visas on arrival to 64 countries, including China. An e-portal, Salam Pakistan, facilitates tourists in finding hotels, transportation, and other services. PTDC has established connections with travel enthusiasts through Facebook and Instagram, and has developed draft National Minimum Standards for accreditation and certification to ensure service excellence. Tourist Information Centers provide assistance to both domestic and international tourists. Forbes listed Pakistan's northern areas as one of the top 10 adventure travel destinations in 2020, a recognition bolstered by visits from notable figures like Prince William and Kate Middleton.



The Eco-Tourism Resource Base

Pakistan's diverse landscape includes northern mountains and lakes, central deserts, and southern beaches. The Karakoram mountains feature K2, the world's second-highest peak. Notable lakes include Saifal Malook and Shangrilla, while famous deserts include Kharan, Thal, and Cholistan. Clifton and Gwadar are renowned beaches along the Arabian Sea coastline. The Forest, Wildlife, and Environment Department of Gilgit-Baltistan focuses on collaborative management of protected forests and biodiversity hotspots, developing national parks as eco-tourism hubs. The department's 2023-24 Annual Development Program supports projects like strengthening protected areas management, community-managed conservation efforts, and climate change mitigation through energy plantations. Federal projects like the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Program (TBTP) and UNDP-sponsored Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) risk reduction are also underway.

Khunjerab National Park (KNP)

Khunjerab National Park (KNP) is located in Hunza district, where the Himalayas, Karakorams, and Hindu Kush meet. Established in 1975, the park spans 226,913 hectares at an elevation of 17,000 feet. Its primary purpose is to protect endangered species like the Marco Polo sheep and snow leopards. The park features alpine flora and many threatened species, including the snow leopard, Marco Polo sheep,

Himalayan ibex, blue sheep, and brown bear. Bird species include the golden eagle, Himalayan snowcock, and Himalayan griffon vulture. The park's vegetation zones range from dry alpine scrub to birch forests. Tourist attractions include Jaisam Lake, Khunjerab top, Chafchingol peak, and Koksil peak.

Transportation Options

Air Travel: Pakistan has a network of domestic airports in major cities and tourist destinations, with airlines like Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Airblue, and SereneAir providing regular flights. This facilitates quick access to remote areas, though it has a higher carbon footprint and limited service to some locations.

Road Travel: Operators like Daewoo Express and Faisal Movers offer extensive intercity connections. Specialized tourist services provide comfortable and direct routes, with some adopting eco-friendly practices. There are some private taxi services offering a variety of options including cars and luxury vehicles. Another mode of transportation is a passenger car service operating between Islamabad, Skardu, Gilgit, Ghizer, and Hunza.

Security Status

The security situation in northern areas like Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has significantly improved, with established protocols and special tourism police units to assist and protect visitors. Security checkpoints monitor sensitive areas, enhancing safety. Tourists are encouraged to stay informed, travel smart, and take precautionary measures to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

Food and Accommodation

Food: Northern Pakistan offers a variety of traditional dishes, such as Chapshuro, local cuisine such as Chap Shuro, Daodo, and Garma may be enjoyed. Many eco-tourism spots emphasise organic and locally sourced ingredients. Eco-friendly restaurants adopt sustainable practices like waste reduction, composting, and biodegradable packaging. Community dining experiences provide authentic regional cuisine and support local economies.

Accommodation: Eco-friendly lodges and hotels use sustainable architecture, energy-efficient lighting, and water conservation systems. Community-run guesthouses offer comfortable stays, ensuring that tourism benefits remain within the local community. Popular eco-friendly accommodations include Serena Hotels, Eagle's Nest Hotel, and PTDC motels. Most hotels can be booked through registered tour operators or online websites such as booking.com. Additionally, NATCO and Mashabrum are the main bus services available.

Dedicated Implementation Team

PTDC is the primary service provider and regulator of eco-tourism, offering important information and regulatory support. However, accommodation and travel facilities are often provided by private sector facilitators. Collaboration between public and private sectors, along with NGOs and educational institutions, is essential for promoting eco-tourism that benefits the environment, local communities, and the economy.

KIU Eco-Tourism Support Center (KESC)

The establishment of an Eco-Tourism Support Center (ETSC) at Karakoram International University (KIU) in Gilgit is recommended to facilitate Chinese tourists in Northern Pakistan. The centre would train and certify tourist guides, maintain a database of hotels and transportation facilities, facilitate passport and visa processes and launch postgraduate programs in eco-tourism, Chinese language and hotel management. Director ORIC-KIU has supported the establishment of ETSC.

Prepared by:

- i) Prof M Subhan Qureshi, President NESS-Pak; <https://dairysciencepark.org/ness/>
- ii) Mr Mahmood Ghaznavi, CCF, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan
- iii) Prof Sher Bahadar Khan, AWKUM, Mardan
- iv) Dr Ishrat Rumi and Dr Ashfaq Ali, KIU, Gilgit

Published by: National Eco-Security System Pakistan, Dairy Science Park, 23-A, Royal Dairies, Industrial Estate, Hayatabad, Peshawar-25000, Pakistan after presentation at [Changbaishan Conference on Global Geoparks](#) organised by [International Alliance of Protected Areas \(IAPA/ISZS\)](#)



Khunjerab National Park, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan