

Northern Pakistan: A 7-Day Itinerary

Day 2

Fly to Gilgit, Drive to Hunza

A short mountain-hopping flight (weather permitting) trades the capital for the Karakoram, then a fort and a sunset viewpoint in Hunza.

Domestic Flight — Islamabad to Gilgit (PIA)

~1 hr 10 min, weather-dependent · from \$90–\$140 USD / person one-way

One of the world's great short-haul flights when it runs — a low-altitude pass with close-up views of Nanga Parbat from the window. Morning flights are cancelled on cloudy days, so build in a spare day if possible.

Private Transfer — Gilgit to Karimabad, Hunza

~2.5 hours via the Karakoram Highway

A paved, gradually climbing drive along the Hunza River with Rakaposhi's summit appearing and disappearing around the bends.

Apricot Tours · +92 33 111 11 065 · <https://www.apricottours.pk>

Baltit Fort, Karimabad

~1 hour · entry approx. \$3 USD (PKR 800)

A 700-year-old fort perched directly above Karimabad, restored with Aga Khan Trust funding and still the valley's defining silhouette.

Eagle's Nest Viewpoint, Duikar — Sunset

~1 hour, including the drive up

The classic Hunza postcard view: the whole valley floor laid out below with Rakaposhi (7,788m) catching the last light directly across from the terrace.

O 130059 T /O Serena Inn Fort, Karimabad

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Boat Ride — Attabad Lake

~45 minutes · approx. \$8 USD / person

A 2010 landslide dammed the Hunza River and buried a stretch of the old highway under water this improbably turquoise — small motorboats run the length of the lake between the new tunnels.

Passu Cones & Glacier Viewpoint

~1.5 hours

A roadside pull-off beneath a row of knife-edge granite peaks nicknamed the Passu Cathedral, with the Passu Glacier's tongue visible across the valley.

Hussaini Hanging Bridge

~45 minutes · free to cross

One of the most photographed suspension bridges in Pakistan — a narrow plank-and-wire crossing over the glacial Hunza River, swaying underfoot the whole way.

Lunch on your own — Gulmit or Passu

Est. \$5–\$10 USD / person

Roadside restaurants along this stretch serve simple Wakhi dishes and fresh apricot juice — an easy stop between Attabad and Passu.

Overnight — Hunza Serena Inn, Karimabad

From \$150–\$200 USD / night, for 2 people

Second night back at the same orchard-set property below Baltit Fort.

Day 4

Hunza to Skardu

A long but paved scenic transfer east across Gilgit-Baltistan, trading Hunza's granite spires for Skardu's wide desert valley.

Private Transfer — Karimabad to Skardu

~7–8 hours via Gilgit · arranged with driver/guide

Back down the Karakoram Highway to Gilgit, then east on the Skardu road, which climbs through bare mountain desert before dropping into the wide, sandy Indus valley around Skardu.

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Kargah Buddha Photo Stop, near Gilgit

~20 minutes

A 7th-century Buddha relief carved into a cliff face, a quick detour on the way out of Gilgit and a reminder of the valley's pre-Islamic Buddhist history.

Overnight — Shangrila Resort, Skardu

From \$120–\$170 USD / night, for 2 people

A resort built directly on the shore of Lower Kachura Lake, inside a volcanic-rim bowl of orchards — the only overnight stop in Skardu this trip needs.

Shangrila Resort Skardu · +92 581 5454941 · <https://shangrilaresorts.com.pk>

Day 5 Shangrila & Shigar Valley

A gentler day around Skardu's two famous lakes and a restored fort valley a short drive away.

Lower Kachura Lake (Shangrila Lake)

Free with resort stay · boating approx. \$5 USD

The still, reed-edged lake the resort is built around, ringed by poplar trees and a single red footbridge — the valley's most-photographed spot.

Shigar Fort & Shigar Valley

~2 hours round trip from Skardu · fort grounds approx. \$5 USD entry

A restored 17th-century fort of the former Raja of Shigar, now a small heritage museum, set among apricot orchards along the Shigar River.

Upper Kachura Lake

~1 hour, including a short walk in

A quieter, higher lake a short walk past Lower Kachura — turquoise, glacier-fed, and usually far less crowded than its famous neighbor.

Overnight — Shangrila Resort, Skardu

From \$120–\$170 USD / night, for 2 people

Second night on Lower Kachura Lake.

Day 6 Deosai Plains Day Trip

A full-day 4x4 trip up onto one of the world's highest plateaus, open only in the warmer months.

Jeep Day Trip — Deosai National Park

~8–9 hours round trip, 4x4 required · approx. \$75–\$95 USD / person

Known locally as the "Land of Giants," this rolling alpine plateau sits at roughly 4,114 meters and is one of the last refuges of the Himalayan brown bear, along with golden marmots and, in July, carpets of wildflowers.

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Packed Lunch at Sheosar Lake

Included with jeep tour

A deep blue lake in the middle of the plateau, ringed by snow even in midsummer — the turnaround point for most day trips and the best stop for lunch.

Overnight — Shangrila Resort, Skardu

From \$120–\$170 USD / night, for 2 people

Third and final night on Lower Kachura Lake after the long day on the plateau.

Day 7

Skardu to Islamabad & Departure

A last scenic flight back over the peaks, then free time in the capital before heading home.

Domestic Flight — Skardu to Islamabad (PIA)

~1 hr 15 min, weather-dependent · from \$100–\$150 USD / person one-way

On a clear morning this route passes within sight of the Nanga Parbat and Karakoram high peaks — worth requesting a window seat on either side.

Free Time — Centaurus Mall or Jinnah Super Market, Islamabad

As long as your flight allows

A last stretch of city time for souvenirs, dried Hunza apricots, or a final proper meal before the airport.

Departure — Islamabad International Airport

Arrive at least 3 hours before an international flight

A straightforward end to a week spent almost entirely in the Karakoram.