PAKISTAN – Biafo - Hispar and Snow Lake

TREK OVERVIEW
This is a journey along the 'highway of ice' that connects the two ancient kingdom of Hunza and Baltistan. The Biafo and the Hispar glaciers are linked at the shallow pass of the Hispar La, cutting a non-technical route through the mountains in the heart of the Karakorum. This great trek will surely be on any serious mountain trekker’s hit list, and really does take you to one of the wildest places in the Karakorum. Eric Shipton described the 16km wide Snow Lake at the head of the Biafo glacier as ‘the last blank on the map’. The Latok group of peaks are among the many spectacular jagged spires that tower above the glacier, helping to create one of the finest mountain views in the world.

Trekking up a glacier is demanding – sometimes walking on rocky moraine, sometimes through grassy valleys between the lateral moraines and the valley sides, and at the higher altitudes on pristine white ice and then snow, where we rope up for security in the crevassed areas. The highlight is camping on the Hispar La itself – with plenty of time to absorb the scenery into minds and cameras. At the end of the trek we descend into the spectacular Hunza valley, dominated by Rakaposhi (7788m) and home to the friendly and hospitable Hunza people, who are also renowned for their longevity believed to be linked to their diet of apricots!!

Participation Statement
AdventurePeaks recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Adventure Travel – Accuracy of Itinerary
Although it is our intention to operate this itinerary as printed, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops and the duration of the day may vary from those outlined. You should be aware that some events are beyond our control and we would ask for your patience.
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE/FITNESS
The trek is **tough and demanding – one of the toughest there is** but the rewards are spectacular. You must be used to multi-day hill walking and **be able to cope with sustained walking on rough and loose terrain and have a high level of fitness** to fully enjoy your time on this trek. Previous winter walking experience is essential for this trip and preferably some knowledge / experience of using ropes. **These skills can be learnt on one of our weekend courses if you are in any doubt about your ability.** Most days involve 5 - 8 hours walking plus plenty of rest stops.

GROUP AND LEADERS
A fully qualified UK leader will accompany all groups of seven or more passengers. He/she will be assisted by an experienced Pakistani leader. Smaller or private groups will be led by an English speaking Pakistani guide. This trip is exclusive to AdventurePeaks.

WEATHER
The best weather is found during the period June to August when it is usually quite fair, dry and stable. Daytime temperatures will vary (10-35°C) and you can expect it to be very hot at the start and end of the trek, but cool to very cold (especially with wind chill) higher up. Night-time temperatures are cold (possibly as low as minus 15°C) and you should make sure you have a very warm sleeping bag. A down jacket and good quality mitts are highly recommended.

WHAT TO CARRY
This trek is fully supported by a team of porters who will transport your main baggage. You will only need to carry a light daypack at the very most. A 45l rucksack is a useful size to comfortably fit in essential items such as water bottle, camera, wet-weather gear and extra layers etc.

CATERING ARRANGEMENTS
Food on the trek is excellent and designed to stimulate your appetite and keep you going despite frequent altitude induced loss of appetite. Breakfast includes porridge and cereal followed by eggs (fried, boiled poached or omelettes) and either bread or chapattis with jam, honey, peanut butter etc. Lunch starts with juice followed by a hot meal which may include some of the following chips, rice, lentils, vegetables, salad, sandwiches, beans, tinned fish and tinned meat. Dessert is usually fresh or tinned fruit and tea. The evening meal always starts with soup (often with a healthy dose of garlic to aid acclimatisation) accompanied by poppadums, popcorn or prawn crackers. The main meal varies from local style – Curry, Dal Bhat (rice and lentils with an onion and vegetable sauce), stew, momos etc. to western style, chips, pasta and even pizza! Desserts are equally appealing and include apple pie, cake, custard etc. You will not be hungry!

ACCOMMODATION
In Islamabad and Skardu you will stay in good hotels in rooms with private facilities. In Karimabad and Chilas (if required) expect a more basic hotel. Twin, double or single rooms are available. In the mountains you will be in two-person tents. Toilet tents, or ‘long drop’ loos, are provided at camps. Warm washing water will be supplied.

LANGUAGE AND TIME
**Language:** Urdu is the official language of Pakistan. The local language on the trek is Balti, but over in Hunza Burushaski is the native language. Guides and cooks will speak English.

**Time:** GMT+5. No daylight saving time at present.

HEALTH
All our UK leaders hold first aid certificates and carry a fully equipped first aid kit for medical emergencies. However you should bring your own supplies of plasters, blister prevention pads (Compeed), Paracetamol etc. and any medication you are taking. Contact your GP around eight weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures. Country specific information and advice is published by the National Travel Health Network and Centre, and useful information about healthcare abroad, including a country-by-country guide of reciprocal health care agreements with the UK, is available from NHS Choices. Tap or stream water should never be drunk without first sterilizing with chlorine dioxide tablets or by boiling.

INSURANCE
Insurance which covers mountain rescue, evacuation and medical expenses is **essential.** You should note there are no official mountain rescue services in Pakistan and that any evacuation in the event of a serious medical emergency to the nearest hospital will be by land and not by helicopter. We will require a copy of your insurance prior to departure. Please also ensure your insurance covers you for walking above 4000m (some will exclude this option). As crossing the Hispar La involves the use ice axe and crampons and a rope as well, you must check your insurance covers this activity.
ALTITUDE
If you are new to altitude you may have concerns about the effects. Don’t worry because our itineraries allow sufficient time to acclimatise, and altitude rarely causes anyone any problems on this trip. The best way to avoid such symptoms is to walk at a gentle steady pace and drink plenty of fluid.

USEFUL TIPS
Just in case your main luggage goes missing en route, it is a good idea to wear your boots on the plane. Most other things can be replaced but comfortable, well worn-in boots cannot. Pack important items in strong plastic bags.

EQUIPMENT
A detailed equipment list is provided on booking. Normal winter walking clothing axe, crampons, climbing equipment for the Snow Lake and the Hispar La and a four season sleeping bag (which can be hired from us) are the main items. For equipment purchases AdventurePeaks offers a 15% discount off the RRP from their shop in Ambleside or online.

BAGGAGE
For your own comfort travel light. Normally airlines restrict baggage to 20kg and on trek the weight for porters should be kept to 15kg, (you will be wearing boots and one set of trekking clothes). Some items can be left at the hotel in Skardu for your return.

VISAS AND PERMITS
Visas for entry into Pakistan are required by nationals of the UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and most EU countries. Details of how to obtain your visa will be forwarded to you on booking. A trekking permit will be obtained for you in Islamabad or Skardu.

LOCAL COSTS
All accommodation and all mealson trek are included; please see the itinerary page for full details. Additional costs would include any drinks or snacks outside of mealtimes, personal spending and tips.

CURRENCY
The currency in Pakistan is the Rupee (PKR). ATMs and change bureaux are available in the arrivals hall at the airport, but it is easier to change your money or use an ATM or authorised money changer in the hotel or in Islamabad. Credit cards are accepted for purchases in Islamabad and Skardu.

TIPPING
Tipping is an accepted part of life in Pakistan. We generally tip our local staff as a whole and would recommend around £100 per person to cover all tips.

ADVENTURE PEAKS KITBAG
All Adventure Peaks clients who reside in the UK will receive a FREE kitbag for any treks outside the UK. The bag will be posted to you approx. 3 weeks prior to your departure. If you have travelled with us before and already have an Adventure Peaks kitbag, or reside outside the UK, we will send an alternative gift.

FLIGHTS AND JOINING ARRANGEMENTS
International flights to Islamabad are NOT included as part of this holiday. Adventure Peaks would be delighted to arrange your flights for you. Emirates, via Dubai, currently offer the best service and our itinerary is based on their flights. The earlier you book, the better price we can obtain for flights. The cost of flights will be quoted to you separately and will vary with departure and booking date. Whatever flight you take, you will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel in Islamabad. If you arrive early then we can arrange extra hotel nights in Islamabad.

The rendezvous for this trip is the ARRIVALS HALL AT ISLAMABAD AIRPORT when your flight comes in on Day 2.

Return flights can be booked for any time on Day 22.

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU DO NOT PURCHASE YOUR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL (FLIGHTS OR OTHER) UNTIL WE HAVE GUARANTEED YOUR TRIP IS RUNNING.**

All images courtesy of Bob Wilson
# BIAFO - HISPAR AND SNOW LAKE ITINERARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Day, date</th>
<th>Today we...</th>
<th>We stay at...</th>
<th>Accommodation...</th>
<th>Meals...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>(4170m)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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**Days 1/2** Depart UK, arriving Islamabad the next day and transfer to the hotel for a few hours’ sleep. After an early breakfast we return to the airport for the flight to Skardu, which usually departs mid-morning. Given good weather this is perhaps the most spectacular commercial flight in the world, with magnificent views of Nanga Parbat the ninth highest mountain in the world. The flight however will not operate in poor weather, and you must be prepared for a wait in Islamabad of the flight is cancelled.

**Day 3/4** After a free day in Skardu, we travel by Jeep to Askole, the last village between us and K2. This journey takes about 7 hours and is on very rough narrow tracks often blocked / damaged by landslides.

**Day 5** Initially we follow the K2 basecamp route along a dirt track towards the Biafo Glacier. Before the crossing of the Biafo River, our track veers left, climbs over a rocky shoulder onto the moraine and onto the glacier. We head of the left side to the grassy campsite behind the lateral moraine. 7 to 8 hours walking.

**Day 6** A challenging day walking up the rocky medial moraine in the center of the glacier before returning to the left bank to another grassy campsite. Latok-I (7145m), Latok II (7108m) and Latok III (6949m) are all visible from here. 5 hours walking.

**Day 7** Back to the centre of the glacier to walk, more easily now, up a broad strip of ice before crossing to the right bank to camp. From here we can see up to the pass. 6 hours walking.

**Day 8** Our first acclimatisation day with the option to head up the ridge behind camp for views of the Latok group and the Ogre. This is Ibex country so keep your eyes peeled! Walking optional.

**Day 9** A tricky descent takes us back down onto the glacier where we can enjoy more relatively flat, even walking. Soon we come across our first crevasses where a rope may be required for security. Great views of the Ogre (7813m), Hispa La and Snow Lake. 6 hours walking.

**Day 10** We wend our way through a network of crevasses, roping up as and when required, to reach the southern edge of the mighty Snow Lake which is over 16 km wide. 5 to 6 hours walking.

**Day 11** Our second acclimatisation day to rest and soak up the scenery of go and explore the vastness of Snow Lake. Walking optional.

**Day 12** We cross Snow Lake, becoming insignificant dots in its vastness, and ascend gently to the Hispar La where we will camp for the night. More stunning views greet us - back across Snow Lake to the Ogre and down the other side to the peaks above the Hunza Valley. 5 to 6 hours walking.

**Day 13** From our bird's eye camp we start or descent down the Hispar Glacier. There are more crevasses to negotiate before getting onto the flatter glacier below. We cross the Kani Basa glacier and make for another fine grassy campsite off to the side. 7 hours walking.

**Day 14/17** For the next four days we make our way down the Hispar Glacier. The walking is mixed (we should know that by now!), the hardest sections usually being where side glaciers have to be crossed. Sometimes we will follow the centre of the glacier, at other times the lateral moraine ridges. Glacial streams flow fastest late in the day and it can be an interesting challenge to get across them. There are a number of grassy campsites we can use, so we don’t specify exactly where we stay as conditions vary from year to year. We eventually reach greenery and civilisation at Hispar village, where, depending on the condition of the road we may meet our vehicles or we may need to walk on down to Huru. 5 to 7 hours walking per day.

**Day 18** A couple of hours drive takes us to the Karakorum Highway (KKH) where we turn right and head up to the Hunza 'capital' of Karimabad. After a long awaited shower we can relax in the afternoon and enjoy this stunning valley, famed for its orchards of apricots and incredibly friendly people.

**Day 19** Free time and sightseeing in Hunza and Karimabad. We can visit the 13th century forts at Alti and Baltit perched in dramatic positions above the Hunza Valley.

**Day 20** We either fly to Islamabad from Gilgit or if the flight is cancelled drive to Chilas.

**Day 21** Free day in Islamabad or drive to Islamabad via the spectacular Barbusa Pass.

**Days 22/23** Depart Islamabad, arriving home the following day.