



INSTRUCTIONS FOR TOURISTS *to*

GILGIT BALTISTAN

GBSTI

A voluntary initiative of academics and activists interested in promoting sustainable and responsible tourism in Gilgit Baltistan.

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Gilgit Baltistan

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE



01

Read an authentic book (e.g., by Mr. Yusuf Hussainabadi, Mustansar Hussain Tarar or Ahmad Hasan Dani) about the area, its people and culture. Or visit the web site of the Tourism Department of the Gilgit Baltistan. Avoid reading the literature or blogs that spread gender or sectarian stereotypes about the region or its people.



02

Learn some basic words of the local language (e.g., Shina, Brurushaski, Balti, Wakhi languages). On site, try and talk to some locals about the culture and their traditions with utmost respect and appreciation, instead of trying to judge or stereotype them.



03

Avoid discussing sensitive political and religious topics, as they can be polarizing and potentially cause discomfort.



04

When visiting mosques, Imambargahs, Ismaili Jamatkhana or other religious sites, behave respectfully. Avoid entering prayer areas if you are not sure about the customs.



05

Try to use local drivers and reliable and well-maintained vehicles (4x4 preferably) with good quality tires, brakes and lights as the mountain roads are difficult for urban drivers. Adhere to traffic regulations and etiquettes, including the practice of using dimmed headlights. Exercise caution with your speed, especially on the Karakoram Highway (KKH), as it poses significant risks due to frequent landslides, and sharp curves.



06

Every passenger in a car should use seat belts. Particularly when traveling with children, ensure their safety by using a child seat.

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Take regular breaks during long drives to rest, stretch, and avoid fatigue.



Avoid blocking the road by stopping at your will to take pictures or do something else. Only stop where there is enough space on the road for other vehicles to pass by.



Avoid honking your horn unnecessarily particularly in urban areas or where there are other people or houses in the vicinity.



Avoid playing very loud music in your cars or hotel rooms. Local people are very soft and quiet by nature and do not appreciate the noise pollution.



Avoid high heels and sandal which are uncomfortable for walking. Sports shoes, joggers or robust sneakers, sturdy hiking shoes are appropriate for local traveling.



Pack clothing suitable for changing weather conditions. Dress in layers to adapt to temperature fluctuations. Do not forget essentials such as rainproof jacket, umbrella, and warm clothing.



Keep a list of emergency contact numbers, both local and back home, in case you need assistance, or in case of emergency people will be able to contact your relatives. Inform a family member or friend about your travel plans, including your destination and estimated arrival time.



Avoid relying solely on mobile networks or internet connectivity. Some remote areas might have limited or no coverage. A local organization, SCO, offers a relatively wider internet coverage and its SIM may be useful.

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In case of emergency or to seek help, you can contact the Gilgit Baltistan Tourist Police at 1422 help line and Rescue services at 1122.



16

Most of the areas of GB are considered high altitude which can cause dehydration to set in faster. So, drink plenty of water, and keep extra water with you. Avoid alcohol and excessive caffeine and alcohol, as they can contribute to dehydration.



17

As per law, any hotel on the road cannot stop you from using their washrooms and consume drinking water. So, you can use them in case of emergency without a charge.



18

Make sure to bring along a safety package that includes essentials such as medications, first aid kit, and if camping, a fire extinguisher.



19

If you plan to camp, get permission from local authorities or landowners. Respect private property and follow camping regulations.



20

Be careful when using heaters in winters. Never leave the heaters on while sleeping as there may be a risk of suffocation or fire



21

Carry a mix of payment methods, including some cash and credit/debit cards.



22

Contribute to the local economy by buying some local gifts from local owned shops for friends and family. Preferably, choose handmade goods made by local artisans.

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Conserve electricity and water. When you get out of your hotel room, make sure you have switched off all the lights and the air-conditioning and all the water faucets are properly closed.



Respect the environment and refrain from harming it. Avoid picking up 'souvenirs' from national parks, game reserves or archaeological sites.



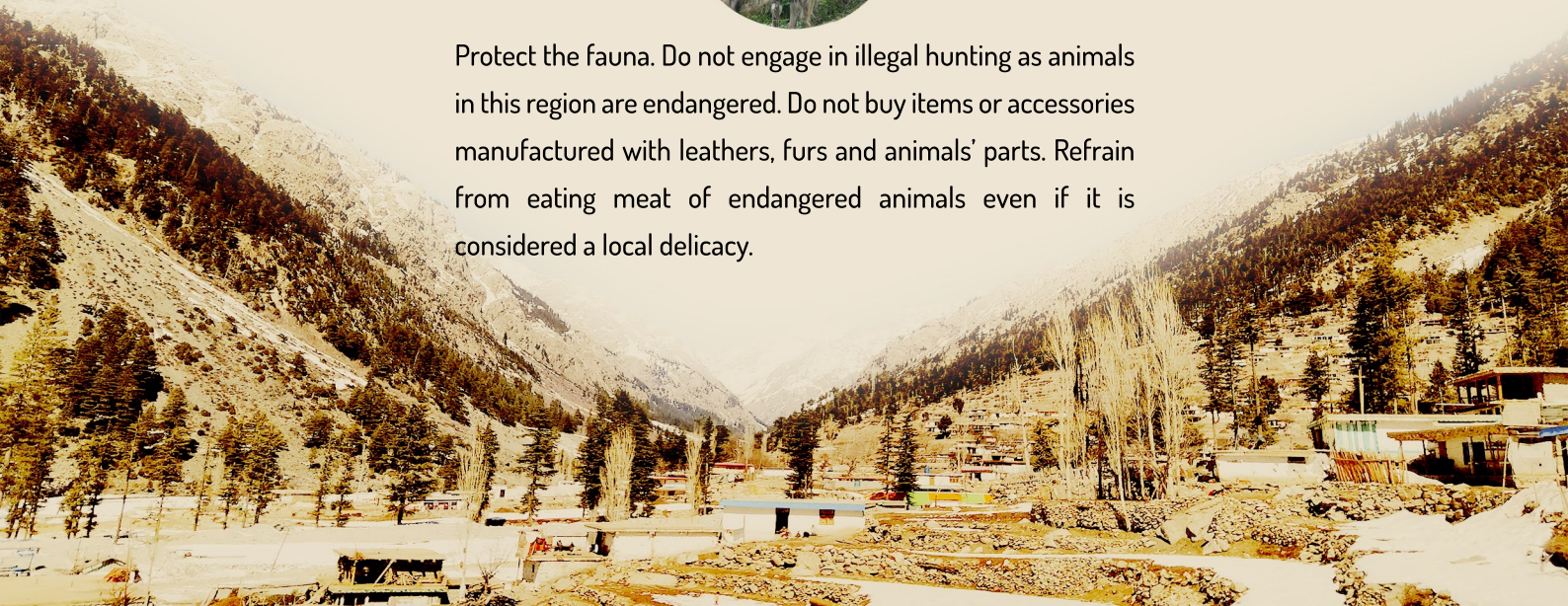
Respect local heritage and ancient remains. Avoid writing your name or love stories on stones, trees, doors or walls.



Refrain from abandoning your plastic and other garbage: keep it with you until you find a trash can and recycle, when possible.



Protect the fauna. Do not engage in illegal hunting as animals in this region are endangered. Do not buy items or accessories manufactured with leathers, furs and animals' parts. Refrain from eating meat of endangered animals even if it is considered a local delicacy.



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Respect the customs and local traditions. For example, dress adequately and modestly. Avoid inappropriate dress, e.g., exposing or very short dress.



Do not chase, harass or hoot other domestic or international tourists. It is illegal and you may end up in prison.



The local people sleep early usually around 10 PM as their day starts quite early. Avoid making noise or playing loud music after this time.



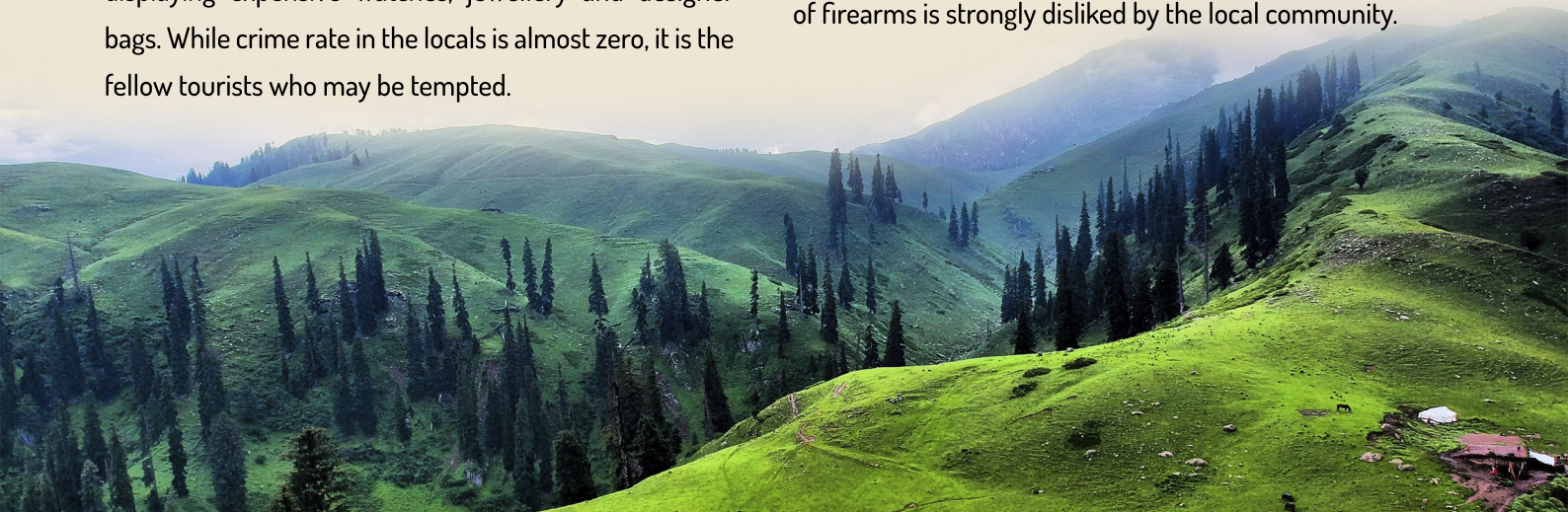
Refrain from making inappropriate videos (e.g., exhibiting inappropriate dress or vulgarity) of your parties and activities and uploading them on TikTok or other social media. Local people consider it insulting and disrespectful.



Avoid showing off your wealth unnecessarily by displaying expensive watches, jewellery and designer bags. While crime rate in the locals is almost zero, it is the fellow tourists who may be tempted.



Avoid bringing firearms to the area. Aerial firing or the display of firearms is strongly disliked by the local community.



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Avoid the use of cigarettes, e-cigarettes, shisha, alcohol, or drugs of any form. Avoid rave parties. Refrain from spoiling local people and children by displaying bad habits.



If you want to help the local community, do not donate to dubious, gender discriminatory or sectarian organizations. Instead donate to credible organizations such as the Aga Khan Development Network or the Shaheed Foundation.



Avoid giving money to kids, because this is not a custom in this area and beggary is not appreciated.



Avoid asking local people to invite you to their houses or to look from inside. This is culturally and ethically rude and disrespectful. Always remember that locals are not animals in a zoo: before snapping the picture, seek their permission.



While local people are very generous and allow people to pluck an apple or two free of cost, avoid abusing their generosity by filling in an entire sack of apples or apricots. Also do not harm the branches or the trees at all.



Women in Hunza and other parts of Gilgit Baltistan (except some conservative areas such as Chilas or Diamer) enjoy a gender egalitarian and safe culture. That's why they freely participate in social and economic activities in the public space. Avoid misjudging their equality and visibility as their lack of modesty or accessibility. Treat them with respect and dignity and avoid to unnecessarily approach them or intrude their private space.

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Except for Chilas or Diamer, Gilgit Baltistan is a Shia Muslim majority area where Twelver (Imami) and Ismaili (Aga Khani) Shias along with the Noorbakhshi Sufis (who venerate the Prophet PBUH and the 12 Imams) constitute a major part of the population. Avoid judging their religious and cultural traditions and avoid trying to convert them to your religion or sect. Avoid teasing them by insisting that you would like to slaughter your own chicken or goat to make it proper Halal. Their zabiha or Halal meat is as authentic Islamic as is anywhere else in the country.



You cannot fly a drone without prior permission of local authorities.



Refrain from making commercial plans such as buying land (or its long-term lease) to build hotels or other concrete structures to make quick money. Think about the long-term beauty, environmental serenity, and sustainability of the local area.



Stay updated on weather conditions, road closures, and local news. This will help you plan your activities and stay safe.

