

## ORIGIN OF KALASH

There are three theories about the origin of the Kalash. Some historians believe that the Kalash are descendants of the soldiers of Alexander the Great, while the second group believes that they are indigenous to Asia and came from what is now the Nuristan area of Afghanistan, and according to the third school of thought; the Kalash ancestors migrated to Afghanistan from a distant place in South Asia, which they call "Tsiyam" in their folk songs and epics. However, it is established that the Kalash migrated to Chitral from Afghanistan in the 2nd century B.C.

By the 10th century AD., the Kalash ruled a large part of present-day Chitral. Razhawal, Cheo, Bula-Sing and Nagar-Chao were famous Kalash rulers in the 12th through 14th centuries AD. Their fellow tribesmen in Afghanistan were known as Red Kafirs. The thriving Kalash culture began to fall in 1320 AD., when Shah Nadir Raees subjugated and converted the people to Islam.



## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF KALASH CULTURE

The Kalash language is called Kalasha which is archaic type of Indo-European language (Dardic subgroup). Kalasha has a rich tradition of folklore, epics, love songs and idioms demonstrating a high standard of indigenous wisdom and human experience.

The villages of Drosh, Sweer, Kalkatak, Beori, Ashurate, Shishi, Jinjirate and adjacent valleys in southern Chitral were the last Kalash villages subjected to mass conversion in the 14th century. The Kalash were living in just three Chitral valleys, Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir, by the time Amir of Afghanistan forcefully converted to Islam the Red Kafirs on the other side of the border in 1893 renaming the area Nuristan. Villages of the converted Red Kafirs in Chitral are known as Sheikhanandeh – the villages of converted ones.

The Kalash, as well as the Sheikh community, are popular for domestic and foreign tourism because of their unique culture. The Kalash area is a hub of ecotourism activities. With the opening of the Lowari Tunnel on the road to Peshawar and the proposed road to Tajikistan over the Dorah Pass, the Kalash and Chitral will be linked with the cultural centres of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia by all-weather land routes.



## THE ENDANGERED KALASH

The Kalash are one of the world's endangered minority communities. Their population decreased from 10,000 in 1951 to 3,700 in 1998, motivating conservation experts, development workers and anthropologist to preserve and protect the Kalash culture.



These festivals are Zhoshi or Chilimjusht, Uchaw, Phoo and Chaumos. They celebrate these festivals by offering sacrifices on altars to please their gods and goddesses, cooking traditional meals and dancing to traditional music during the week-long events. The religious ritual is performed with high regard for the supernatural beings, according to the Kalash mythology.

### Zhoshi/ Chilimjusht

The spring festival is celebrated every year from May 13-16. The festival seeks the blessings of gods and

This knowledge is believed to be at the verge of extinction. The Kalasha follow a Polytheist religion based on ancestor worship, as well as twelve gods and goddesses dominated by the main God, Mahandeo. The Kalash religion is based on myths and superstitions that relate to the relationship between the human, soul and the universe. This relationship, according to Kalash mythology, needs its manifestation in music and dance,



which also contribute to the pleasure of gods and goddesses. In their festivals, music and dance are performed not only as entertainment elements, but as a religious ritual.

The Dehar or Shaman plays an important role in the Kalash culture. He makes prophecies during religious rituals. He seeks the help of fairies to make prophecies with regard to the weather, crops, livestock and other agro- pastoral activities, including prospects for the coming year.

An important practice in Kalash mythology is the close observation of the Kalash astronomers in the beginning of New Year in December. The Kalash believe that a new sun is born on Dec 21 and the time and style of new sun affects the flora and fauna of the land.

The Kalash seclude women during monthly periods and pregnancies by confining them to a place called Bashali. Each Kalash village has a Bashali outside the settlement. The women are allowed to work in the fields but are not allowed to go home or inside the village. Kalash belief is based on the strict separation of the pure (Onjeshta) and impure (Pragata) realms. Women, according to it, are considered untouchable and impure during their time in the Bashali.

Kalash houses and monuments show that the community has a rich background of skills in various arts and crafts, especially woodwork and woollen products. Effigies and Privileges of human and animal figures in Kalash monuments are a testimony to their skill.

The Kalash have unique funeral rituals. According to their beliefs, the departed soul is eager to leave the body and meet other souls after a long separation. They sing special songs and perform a funeral dance.



## KALASH FESTIVALS

The Kalash celebrate four major festivals commemorating seasonal change and significant events in agro-pastoral life.

### Ghaz Guru

A hamlet of Kalash in Birir valley, is famous for its beauty.

### Guru

A historic place in Birir valley, is famous for its ancient and multi-tiered abodes, cultural sites and a dancing hall.

### Aspar

Ascenic village in Birir valley, is famous for its beauty.

### Sheikhanandeh

The name means "village of the converted". Its residents are the descendants of the Red Kafirs who migrated from Nuristan (former Kafiristan) in Afghanistan in the late 1890s. These villages of now-Muslim Kalash are situated at the end of all three Kalash valleys Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur. Their way of life, architecture, traditional culture and language are remnants of the former Red Kafir's tradition of Afghanistan.



## TEMPLES AND PLACES OF SPECIAL RESPECT

The Kalash holy places are widely respected by all. Tourists are requested to move around quietly while visiting these places.

### Malosh

They are the Holy places where sacrifices are offered. These places are situated on the outskirts of a village. Some famous Malosh sites are in Batrik, Krakal, Birir, Rumbur and Gromun.

### Jeshtak-Han

This is a large hall. Decorated with female paintings and animal figures. Jeshtak-Han are holy places where rituals are performed at the times of birth, death and festivals.



### Bashali

The Kalash houses for secluded women are situated near watercourses in each village and are strictly off-limits for men.

### Madaw-Jaw

This is a Kalash graveyard. In the past, dead bodies were put in wooden boxes and placed in open air, while in recent years; the Kalash have started burying coffins.

### Charsu

A dancing place where young couples gather to perform a dance in commemoration of their love.

## KALASH HANDICRAFTS

Due to their proximity to nature, the Kalash are fond of natural colours in handicrafts. Skills in spinning and weaving are exhibited in Palesk (rugs), Qalin (carpets), Chehari (belts) and Copesi (headgear).

## KALASH ARCHITECTURE

Kalash architecture is a unique mixture of ancient wooden craft and medieval traditions of figure art. Multi-storey Kalash buildings present a spectacular view of beautifully carved wooden pillars and beams decorated with unmatched human and animal figures and effigies. Each one depicts certain myths and superstitions.

## KALASH CULTURE CENTRE

The Kalash Culture Centre is in Brun, Bumburet valley, where folk history, culture and civilisation of the Kalash is preserved under one roof. It is an ethnological museum of the Kalash community, initiated and facilitated by the citizens of Greece. Nearby is a government-run archaeological museum.



## THE LEGENDARY LAKES

### Bahuk the Sacred Lake

Bahuk, the sacred lake of the Kalash ancestors, lies between the two picturesque valleys of Bumburet and Rumbur. The turquoise-hued glacier lake is situated at 4000m amongst an amphitheatre of jagged peaks with a good view of Tirich Mir 7708m to the west. The Kalash believe that after the death, their souls go to this Lake. The area is famous amongst both the Kalash and the Muslim Kho community as the resting place of fairies. Reported sightings of a mythical Barmanu (yeti) have also been made here. Its surroundings are the summer pastures of the Kalash community and villagers from Ayun. It has some magnificent cedars, some 1,200 years old. There are lovely treks from both Bumburet and Rumbur linking different valleys in the region where you can see shepherd settlements and a variety of fauna and flora. A special trail has been developed to Bahuk Lake for trekkers. From Bumburet the journey to the lake and back takes five days.

### Lake Awazak

This lake flows in the southwest of Bumburet valley, on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its water streams into the Bashgai valley in the Nuristan. Locals say it takes a quick trekker twelve (12) hours to reach the lake, but for the average tourist it will take much longer. Considerable

superstitions are associated with the lake. It is believed that when an ill-fortuned person looks into the lake, the lake looks blood-red, likely a bad omen foreboding his or her death. The flora around the lake attracts shepherds, who bring their herds up to the lake for grazing.

### Lake Shawal

This lake is south of Bumburet valley. High mountains surround the lake fed by a glacier nearby. From the lake, a route leads into the Nuristan area of Afghanistan. Shepherds bring their herds to the pasture around the lake.

## WALKING TRAILS

### Bumburet Walking Trails

There are a number of walking trails oh both sides of the stream in Bumburet. To walk the length of the valley Anish to Krakal would take you three hours. Several villages lie along this trail.

The route gives you a chance to witness the Kalash day-to-day activities, such as watering and weeding crops and chatting in the orchards. The trail also passes caves that were believed to be Kalash hideouts in case of an enemy attack. On the route is a spring important to Kalash, who say its water cures many ailments.

### Rumbur Walking Trail

The three-hour trail starts from the village of Grom on the left side of the jeep road and follows the face of a steep slope through a dense oak forest. In Grom is a Kalash graveyard with wooden effigies on the graves symbolising the importance and leadership of the deceased. Close by is the dancing place and higher up the sacrifice place, along with the sacred stone and effigies of goats and humans around the altar. The trail passes through the Kalash villages of Balanguru, Kalashgrom and Palo.

### Birir Walking Trail

This trail starts from the Government Guesthouse at village Guru. A traditional centre of the Kalash community, the Jeshtak-Han, is located in the village. The trail passes through a 'dense wood of oaks to reach the villages of Aspar and Beshal – two villages where the Kalash and the now-Muslim Kalash live side-by-side in harmony.

The trail ends at Biyal, where there is another old Jeshtak-Han. From Biyal, one can view the spectacular snow-clad peak of Acharkandur to the west. A majestic glacier view adds beauty to the valley.

## REGISTRATION OF FOREIGNERS

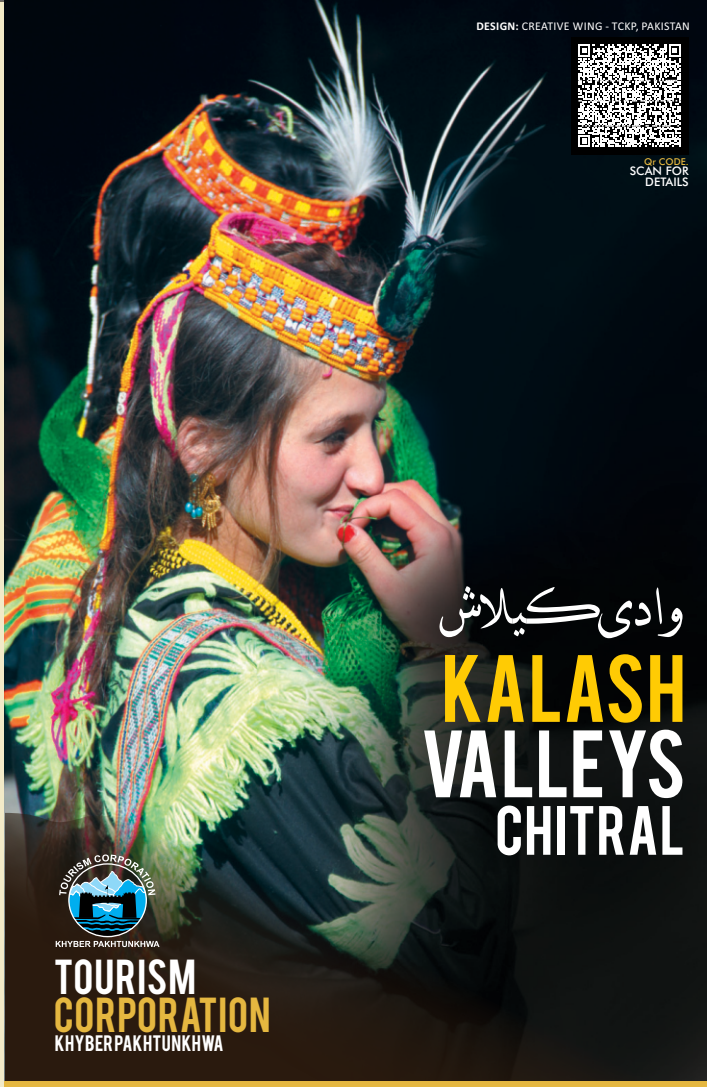
On arrival in Chitral, foreign visitors have to register their names and particulars with the local authorities. TCKP's Tourist Information Centre or CAMATs reception desk at airport or office in town can provide guidance regarding the process of registration and other requirements of foreigners.

## HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

There is a Basic Health Unit (BHU) in Bumburet for secondary healthcare. First Aid Post/Designation are available in Rumbur and Birir. More adequate health facilities are available in nearby Ayun and Broz and in Chitral town.



▲ A View of Kalash village



وادی کیلاش  
**KALASH**  
**VALLEYS**  
**CHITRAL**



## LOCATION

The Kalash valleys of Chitral are located in the southern gorges of the Hindu Kush mountain range in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The valleys share a 380 km border with Afghanistan in the north & west, and the Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan are easily accessible from the area. To the east lies Gilgit, from where one can reach China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region along the legendary Karakoram Highway.

## HOW TO REACH

During summers from May till November the Kalash valleys of Chitral are accessible from Peshawar and Gilgit over the Lowari Pass 3118 m and Shandur pass 3735 m. The distance from Peshawar is 365 km and Gilgit 385 km, a 12-hour journey in either case. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) operates daily flights from Peshawar and Islamabad to Chitral, weather permitting. From Chitral town it takes two hours of jeep drive to access any of the three Kalash valleys located at a distance of 25 Km.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Tourist Information Center (TIC) Chitral	(0943)413540
Dubash Post Junction Point between Bumburet & Rumbur	(0943)490009
Deputy Commissioner's Office Chitral	(0943)412055
District Headquarter Hospital Chitral	(0943)412142
District Police Officer (DPO) Chitral	(0943)412077
Police Station Chitral	(0943)412913
Police Station Ayun	(0943)490007
Kalash Exchange / Enquiry	(0943)404000



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## CODE OF ETHICS FOR VISITORS (DOs & DON'TS)

- Before you visit the Kalash valley, educate yourself about local customs and culture, TCKP TIC & CAMAT can help with this.
- The Kalash are friendly, hospitable and gentle. Unlike other villages in Pakistan, the womenfolk in the Kalash valleys are more visible. Their traditional values must be respected by the visitors.
- Do not gawk at the Kalash, consider how you feel when you are stared at during your travels.
- Always ask permission before photographing people. Do not pay to take photographs.
- Do not disturb the Kalash working in fields or in the privacy of the Bashali (the women's house of seclusion).
- Do not walk into houses and temples or participate in dances or festivals without being invited. It is considered intrusion and bad manners.
- Buying local products benefits the local economy, but buying antiques and ancient artefacts robs the local culture and is illegal in Pakistan.
- All meadows are preserved for animal fodder. Avoid trampling them, and do not camp without permission. Avoid parking vehicles in fields.
- Do not use streams for washing or cleaning. Keep all pollutants, even biodegradable ones, away from streams.
- Use toilets wherever available. (Where not available, stay at least 30 meters from streams)
- Do not preach any religion or seek to convert.
- The Kalash get very little economic benefit from tourism, use Kalash guides, hotels and pay for any space that you utilise.



## HOTELS & GUEST HOUSES IN THE KALASH VALLEYS

Hotels in Bumburet	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room – Amount in Pak Rs.	
				Single	Double
PTDC Motel	Anish	16	(0943)404066	2500	3000
Alexander Post	Bron	8	(0943)404158	1200	2500
Kalash Continental	Bron	5	(0943)404011	1500	2500
Benazir Hotel	Anish	8	(0943)404190	800	1500
Peace Hotel	Batrick	10	(0943)404034	800	1500
Galaxy Hotel	Kandisar	24	(0346) 9894394	1000	1500
Foreigners Tourist Inn	Bron	9	(0943)404033	500	2000
Kalash Hotel	Krakal	8		800	1500
Hi-Kush Himalaya	Krakal	4	(0344)9700024	800	1200
Ishpata Inn	Bron	7	(0943)404122		
Green Hotel	Batrick	4	(0943)404177	400	800
Frontier Hotel	Bron	7	(0943)404043	600	1500
Jinnah Kalash Hotel	Anish	11	(0345)8747077	350	1000
Adventure Travel Pakistan (Camp Sites, Hotel & Wooden Lodges)	Krakal	7 Lodges		600	1200
Alexandra Hotel	Krakal	12	(0943)404255	800	2000
Shangrila Hotel	Krakal	2	(0943)404206	600	1200
Shishuyak Hotel	Krakal	4			
Rose Hotel	Batrick	4			

Guest Houses in Bumburet	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room – Amount in Pak Rs.	
				Single	Double
Bhuto Guest House	Bron	3	(0943)404112	800	1500
Zahid Kalash Guest House	Anish	4	(0943)404121	800	1200
Kalash View Guest House	Bron	3	(0943)320610	600	800
Wali Khan Guest House	Karkal	3	(0321)4001336	1200	1800
Happy Guest House		5	(0943)404181	600	1200
Rest Houses (District Council)	Anish	3			
Rest House Forest Deptt,	Batrick	3			
Rest House C & W	Sheikhanandeh	3			

### List of Hotels & Rest Houses in Rumbur

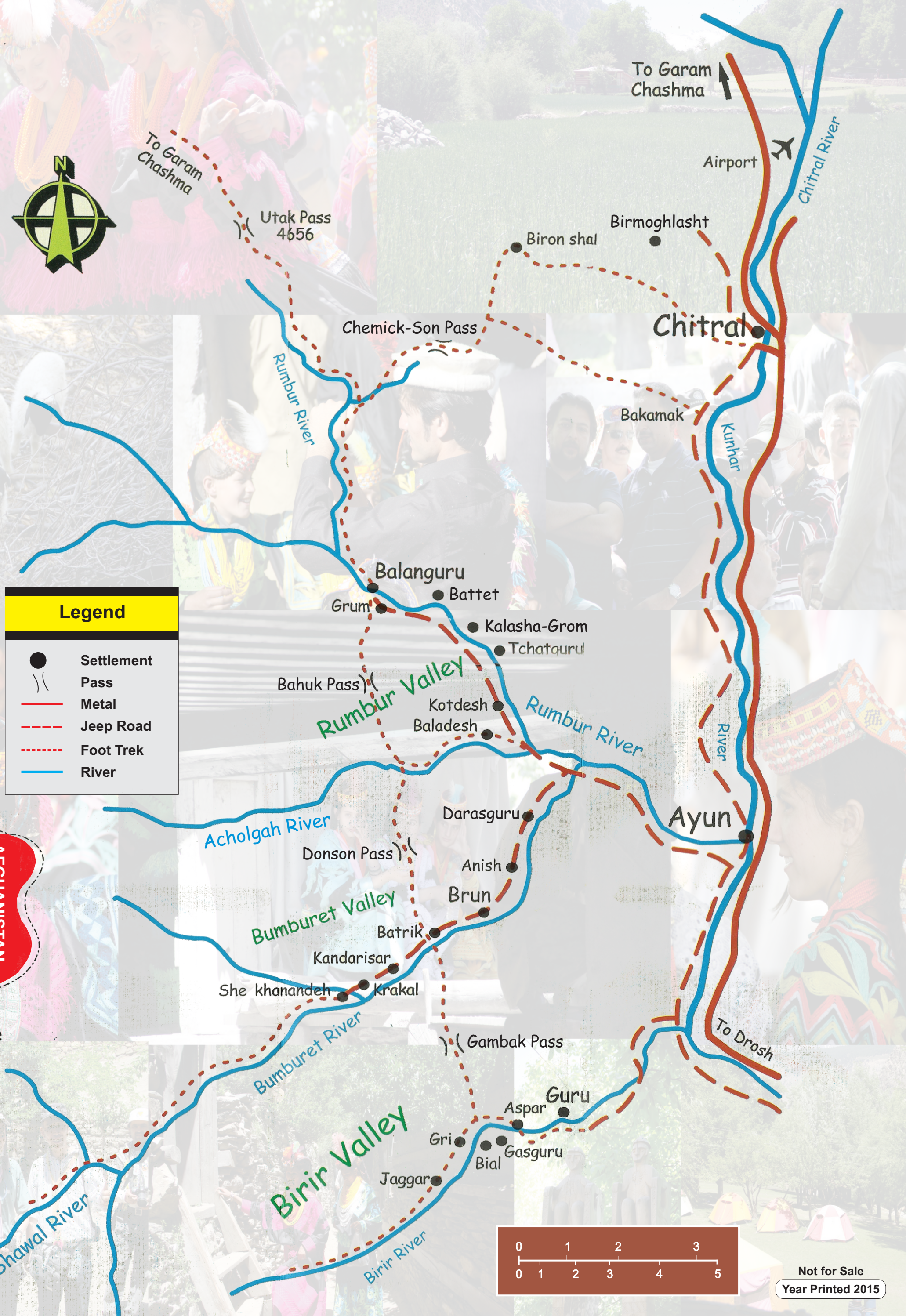
Hotels in Rumbur	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room – Amount in Pak Rs.	
				Single	Double
Munir Hotel	Grom	4		800	2000
Garden Hotel and camping	Grom	4		600	1500
Bashara Khan Hotel	Groom	4			
Guest Houses in Rumbur	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room – Amount in Pak Rs.	
				Single	Double
Saif Ullah Jan Guest house	Balanguru	14		1200	2000
Kalash Home Guest House	Groom	4	(0943)315788	800	1500
Sarawat Guest House	Kalashagrom	3		600	1000

### List of Hotels & Rest Houses in Birir

Hotels in Birir	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room – Amount in Pak Rs.	
				Single	Double
Insaf Hotel	Guru	6		800	1600
Kachai Hotel	Guru	7		800	1800
Guest Houses in Birir	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room – Amount in Pak Rs.	
				Single	Double
Grabat Guest House	Guru	3	(0943)302091	800	1200
Irfan Guest House	Guru	4		800	1600
Afzal Guest House	Guru	4		800	1800



# CHITRAL: THE KALASH VALLEYS



**TOURISM CORPORATION**  
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Head Office

13-A, New Block, Khyber Road, Peshawar, Pakistan, Ph: + 92 91 9211091, Fax: 0092 91 9210871

**TCKP – Tourism Information Centres (TIC)**

PESHAWAR MUSEUM, PESHAWAR CANTT. PH: + 92 91 9213762 FAX: + 92-91 9210009

ALLAMA IQBAL ROAD, JALAL BABA AUDITORIUM ABBOTTABAD CANTT. PH: + 92 992 335876 + 92 992 335877

DUNGAGALI MAIN CHOWK, MURREE ROAD. PH: + 92 992 355173 + 92 992 355174

NEAR MOUNTAIN INN HOTEL CHITRAL. PH: + 92 943 413540 + 92 943 412800

SIDB PLAZA, OPP: HILL VIEW HOTEL JINNAH SUPER MARKET, F7/4 ISLAMABAD. PH: + 92 51 2655614 + 92 51 92102606



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