PROMOTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURISM IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Report on Inaugural Trip

“Discover the Past Glory of Swat Valley”
Brief Report

In pursuance to its objectives to promote archaeological tourism in the country, Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan (STFP) in collaboration with Tourism Corporation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (TCKP) and Italian Archaeological Mission’s ACT Project has launched a package tours program for domestic and foreign tourists to promote the exploration of rich cultural and archaeological heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The launching event of this program was held on 9th May at Tourist Information Center of TCKP at Islamabad. Mr. Mustaq Khan, Managing Director of TCKP was Chief Guest on this occasion. In his address to the participants of the inaugural trip he said that his organization is striving hard to promote the great potential for nature and culture tourism of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that this kinds of educational trips create awareness among our people and especially youth and students about the unique cultural and natural heritage of our country. He said that TCKP will organize more such trips in future in collaboration with Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan.

More than 50 participants including professionals of tourism industry, travel writers, media persons, students and faculty members from the Archaeology Departments of various universities participated in this two day inaugural trip to lower Swat Valley from 9th to 10th May 2014 with the financial support of Tourism Corporation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (TCKP). Trip members visited archaeological sites of Bazira at Barikot, Udegram, Butkara Stupa at Saidu Sharif, Ghaleghai rock carvings, Amlukdara Stupa near Barikot and Takht-e-Bahi Buddhist Monastery near Mardan. The group also visited Swat Museum which has been recently renovated by the Italian Archaeological Mission under the leadership of Dr. Luca Maria Olivieri.

The tour was led by Aftab Rana, President of Sustainable Tourism Foundation and Dr. Luca Maria Olivieri, head of Italian Archaeological Mission working in Swat Valley, Dr. Naim Qazi, Head of Archaeological Department of Peshawar University, Faiz ur Rehman, Curator of Swat Museum provided their services as technical resource persons during various site visits.

On this occasion a seminar on archaeological tourism was also held at Pameer Hotel Mingora. Dr. Luca
Maria Olivieri in his keynote address gave a presentation on the recent archaeological excavations in the area of lower Swat Valley. He said Swat has rich historical past and it has been described as “Uddiyana” (the garden) in the ancient Buddhist literature. He said this area is full of rich and amazing archaeological sites in an environment which is still intact and dominated by the calm majesty of the Mount Ilam. He said in the area south of Barikot, in about 200 sq. kilometer archaeologists have documented more than 400 sites from protohistory to Islamic period. He said Italian Archaeological Mission is working in Swat valley since 1955, when Giuseppe Tucci, the famous Tibetologist and Orientalist conducted his first visit to the region and since that time Italian Archaeological Mission has made remarkable work in the field of archaeological discoveries.

Speaking on this occasion, President of STFP, Aftab Rana, highlighted the importance of archaeological tourism and informed that archaeological tourism is travel that focuses on visiting and experiencing ancient sites and historical places. The motivating forces behind archaeological tourism are a passion for past and an interest in learning about the ancient or historical cultures that inhabited the area being visited. He said that archaeological tourism not only helps in conserving the rich heritage of the country but it also provides enormous opportunities of income and employment generation for the local communities.

He said that archaeological sites should be considered a common resource, one that benefits everyone and, by extension, one for which everyone is responsible. He said that visiting archaeological sites can be a very rewarding and educating experience. A well-planned visit increases the awareness of the site, the culture that built and occupied it, the local environment, the local community and their practices and traditions. He said that to promote sustainable archaeological tourism in Swat Valley, STFP has launched a program of guided tours of these sites for domestic and foreign tourists by involving the local community tour guides in collaboration with Italian Archaeological Mission and Tourism Corporation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (TCKP). He said STFP have also developed a code of conduct for the visitors so that they could visit historical sites without creating any damage to them.
Our Travel Log

Shingardar Stupa
Our first stop was at Shingardar Stupa which is situated on the left side of the main road to Mingora from Malakand. This is believed to be the famous stupa build by King Uttarasena to house his share of the relics of the load Buddha. Dr. Naeem Qazi, our archaeology resource person briefed the group members about the history of this site.

Mosque of Sultan Mahmood Ghazni at Udegram
Our next stop was at the remains of an 11th century mosque built by Sultan Mahmood Ghazi at Udegram near Mingora. This mosque is the third oldest mosque in Pakistan after those of Bambhor and Mansurah and the first oldest in northern Pakistan. Saeed Akbar, our local guide and Dr. Naeem Qazi, our archeology resource person briefed the group members about the history of this site.
Swat Archaeological Museum
After lunch on day-1, we went to visit the Swat Museum which has been recently renovated by Italian Archaeological Mission. This museum has very interesting display of material recovered from different archaeological sites of Swat. This museum is still not open for public it was specially opened for our group. Faiz ur Rehman, Curator of Swat Museum briefed participants about various displays at Swat Museum.

Butkara Stupa
After the visit of Swat Museum we went to visit Butkara Stupa. This is one of the most important Buddhist shrine in Swat Valley. It dates from 3rd century BC and was possibly built by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka. At museum we also saw enlargements of ancient rock paintings of early Iron Age.
Seminar on Archaeological Tourism

Dr. Luca Maria, head of Italian Archaeological Mission in Swat was our guest speaker in the Seminar on Archaeological Tourism in Swat Valley. He shared with us his 27 years work on discovering number of archaeological sites in Swat Valley and his recent work at Bazira site near Barikot.

Ghaleghai

On 2nd day of our archaeological exploration trip to lower Swat Valley our first stop was Ghaleghai. Here a large Buddha image dating from the 6th century is carved on the cliff face directly beside the main road. The face is very battered. A flight of cement steps to the left leads up to a natural cave containing some rock carvings.
Remains of Bazira
Ancient town of Bazira near Barikot as our next stop on day-2. Bazira was a living city when Alexander the Great invaded this area in 327 BC. What has been uncovered is a large fortified city of Indo-Greek period (2nd century BC). Dr. Luca and his team is still working on this site.

Amluk-Dara Stupa
Amluk-Dara Stupa is an ancient relic situated about 2 km on the north of Nawagai village in the beautiful small valley of Amluk-Dara, on the main road which travels from Barikot to Buner via Karakar Pass. Dr. Naeem Qazi, our archeological resource person briefing the group members about the history of this site.
**Takht-e-Bahi**
The famous Buddhist Monastery of Takht-e-Bahi near Mardan was our final designation of our archaeological exploration trip of Ancient Gandhara. Thakht-e-Bahi is the most impressive and complete monastery in Pakistan. It was founded in the first century AD and abandoned in the sixth or seventh centuries. There is lot to see at this site. One can spend even a full day in exploration of the main monastery and its surrounding area. The panoramic view from the top of the hill is really marvelous.

**Chappli Kababs of Takht-e-Bahi**
Obviously one cannot resist the mouth-watering aroma of famous Chappli Kababs while passing through the bazar of Takht-e-Bahi. So the last item on our trip agenda was to have a farewell dinner of delicious Chappli Kababs with hot Tandori Nans at Safdar’s Hotel in Takht-e-Bahi Bazar.
Comments by Some of the Participants

"We would like to thank the Sustainable Tourism Foundation of Pakistan and Tourism Corporation of Khyber-Pakhunkhwa for organizing an outstanding archaeological tour of Swat. All the arrangements including transport, boarding and lodging were excellent but the key component of the tour was the useful information about the monuments shared by the tour leader Mr. Aftab Rana and other experts including Prof. Naeem Qazi, Dr. Luca Olivieri and Mr. Saeed Akbar. They showed us a totally different picture of the majestic Swat; previously we travelled to the area to beat the scorching heat and enjoy the scenic beauty and icy cold waters of River Swat. The trip was just a glimpse of the rich cultural heritage of Swat. We look forward to more of such trips in future".

(Ijlal Hussain, Executive Director, Silk Route Center)

“Chirping of birds, sprinkling rain drops and a puff of air; how often are disregarded without given the desired mindfulness. The more intimate we get with the nature the closer we get to the point of realization that these trees, animals, mountains, rivers and winds; are a part of us.

There are certain places which are bestowed with a magical healing powers. The archeological sites all around the world accompanied with the appropriate blend of nature; are such sites.

The Archaeological Tour to Swat organized by STFP served as an opening door to the world of nature and spiritual strengthening. It was indeed a wake-up call for the slumberous souls to enter into the world of enlightenment by looking back at our history and get intimate with the nature. I'm hoping to witness such wake-calls more often until one day the whole humanity live in the real essence of life”.

(Zermeena Ikram, Consultant TCKP)
“Even though I've had the opportunity to go to Swat before and even seen the zamurd mines in 1982, this trip gave me unprecedented insight into the archaeological history of the land. I learned more about Mahmud Ghaznavi and the Buddhists that I had ever known and realized the importance of preserving our history, it's diversity of religion, culture and beauty. I am thankful to the STFP for this trip and would love to work for community awareness and fundraising of this culturally rich area”.
(Zahiruddin Khawaja, IT Consultant)

“Thank you so much for organising this trip - I have not stopped talking about it with my friends and family and now they're all eager to go as well.

I found the sights to be beautiful, and I can appreciate how much careful planning had taken place in showing us the best of the best. The guides were very well informed and we got a chance to see some places which were not open to the general public, so thank you again”.
(Maira Azhar, Consultant working with PPAF)

“I have been to Swat over five hundred times in my professional career of 35 years and have seen almost every inch of it including all archaeological sites... I have got opportunity to travel with most decorated professors of the subject, learned so much that eventually, I traveled to Japan and USA for the purpose of delivering lectures on the Buddhism and Buddhist Art at Sofia University Tokyo and UC Berkly in late nineties. But believe me travelling you all was exceptional, you all were special as individuals and especially, our trip leader Mr. Rana so caring and the way he explained the dry subject was amazing. I am really impressed and appreciate his concern to protect the archaeological sites. Let’s be part of his concern and work as team to raise voice for the protection of this treasure of historical significance”.

(Amjad Ayub, President of Pakistan Association of Tour Operators)
“It was wonderful to be a part of the Swat Trip with all of you amazing people! I had more fun than I have probably ever had, and the memories I have made will last forever”. (Gul Afshan, Student of NUST University, Islamabad)

“As for as the trip is concerned, It was a lifetime experience. I always hated history until the day I joined the trip. Thank you so much STFP for providing such an amazing and unique opportunity. I have been to other trips with STFP as well, It always provides the best of everything. Being surrounded with so many experts, researchers and inspiring personalities actually taught us a lot. I hope I will do my best to contribute for the promotion of cultural tourism. Thank you every one for such an AWESOME company”. (Nida Ibrahim\Student of NUST, Islamabad)

“Thanks for this wonderful trip. I believe I learned a lot from the valuable company and comments of respected participants. I will send you my detailed feedback based on my initial ideas about these efforts i.e., conservation, promotion and sustainable use/tourism at archeological sites in Pakistan”.

(Dr Muhammad Arif, Islamic International University Islamabad)
## Trip Itinerary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day-1</td>
<td>0700 hrs</td>
<td>Departure from Islamabad at 0700 hrs /from Peshawar at 0800 hrs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1230 hrs</td>
<td>En-route commentary about sites of tourist interest on the way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>09 May</td>
<td>1330 hrs</td>
<td>Arrival at Udegram. Cold drinks will be served on arrival.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Friday)</td>
<td>1415 hrs</td>
<td>Visit archaeological site of Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi era</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1430 hrs</td>
<td>Mosque</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1430 hrs</td>
<td>Continue travel towards Mingora/Saidu Sharif.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1530 hrs</td>
<td>Arrival at Pameer Hotel, Mingora.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1630 hrs</td>
<td>Lunch at Pameer Hotel, Mingora.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1730 hrs</td>
<td>Transfer to rooms and free time for rest.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1815 hrs</td>
<td>Departure for Swat Museum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1900 hrs</td>
<td>Visit Butkara Stupa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 hrs</td>
<td>Return to hotel and free time for rest.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2130 hrs</td>
<td>Assemble at PAMEER Hotel’s conference hall for talk by Dr. Luca Maria</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Olivieri.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Dinner at Pameer Hotel</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Night stay at Pameer Hotel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day-2</td>
<td>0715 hrs</td>
<td>Breakfast at hotel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>0830 hrs</td>
<td>Departure for site visits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Saturday)</td>
<td>0900 hrs</td>
<td>Visit Ghalighai</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1000 hrs</td>
<td>Visit Bazira at Barikot</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1130 hrs</td>
<td>Departure for Amluk-Dara Stupa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1245 hrs</td>
<td>Visit Amluk-Dara Stupa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1300 hrs</td>
<td>Lunch at Amluk-Dara</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1430 hrs</td>
<td>Departure for Islamabad/Peshawar.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1700 hrs</td>
<td>Visit Takht-i-Bahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 hrs</td>
<td>Arrival of group at Islamabad/Peshawar</td>
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*End of tour.*
developed various tour packages to promote community based ecotourism in lower Swat Valley.

Amluk-Dara Stupa

Dr. Naeem Qazi briefing trip participants about Amluk-Dara Stupa
Panoramic view of Bazira archaeological site

A group photo of trip participants at newly renovated Swat Museum
Trip participants looking at enlargement of ancient rock painting at Swat Museum
Remains of Butkara Stupa at Saidu Sharif

Takht-e-Bahi Mhuddist Monsstary

All photographs are taken by Aftab Rana and Sami Ullah.
Media Coverage

Media coverage was provided by following TV/Radio channels and news paper:-

TV Channels

• Dawn News
• Geo News
• Express New
• Swat News.com
• Channel 5
• Aaj News
• Pashto-1
• PTV

Radio Channels

• Power 99
• Voice of America
• Radio News Network

News Papers

• Daily Dawn, Islamabad
• Daily Express, Islamabad
• Daily Awaze Swat
• Daily Shamal Swat
• Daily Khabarkar Swat
• Daily Salam Swat
• Daily Chand Swat
• Daily Azadi Swat
• Daily Bashart Swat
• Daily Bad-e-Shamal, Gilgit-Baltistan
• Daily K2, Islamabad

(Some of the press clippings are enclosed)