

Pakistan

Pakistan, 2003 overview. Approximately 54 expeditions took up permits for peaks over 6,500m. Mountains below this altitude are now exempt from royalty fees, though not from trekking and Sirdar fees for those situated in restricted areas. Despite this, 85 percent of the expeditions went to the Baltoro and 75 percent attempted 8,000m peaks. At the Ministry of Tourism the Secretary for Mountaineering appears motivated to improve services for climbers and in 2004 peak fees will remain 50 percent of the normal rate. Expeditions (to the Baltoro 8,000ers in particular) are now being allowed up to three permits.

2004 coincides with the Golden Jubilee of the first ascent of K2, and it is expected that the number of climbers and trekkers will substantially increase over 2002 and 2003 levels. However, there is still a serious terrorism threat in the North West Frontier. For the Baltoro there will be increased pollution problems, damage to the delicate environment, problems with porters, and of course increasing costs. Pakistan is now the cheapest country in which to climb an 8,000m peak, but the future of climbing there is limited if the concentration continues to center almost exclusively on the Baltoro and 8,000m peaks. To this end it is reported that the Ministry is considering the latest UIAA proposal (backed by some of the major local tour operators) to remove royalty fees to mountains below 7,000m in non-restricted areas. It is also promising to be more helpful to climbers by replying quickly to inquiries and remaining open for briefing six days a week.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, U.K.



Pakistan, the implementation of more normal relationships with India. As India and Pakistan strive toward more normal relationships, the following measures have been agreed by both countries:

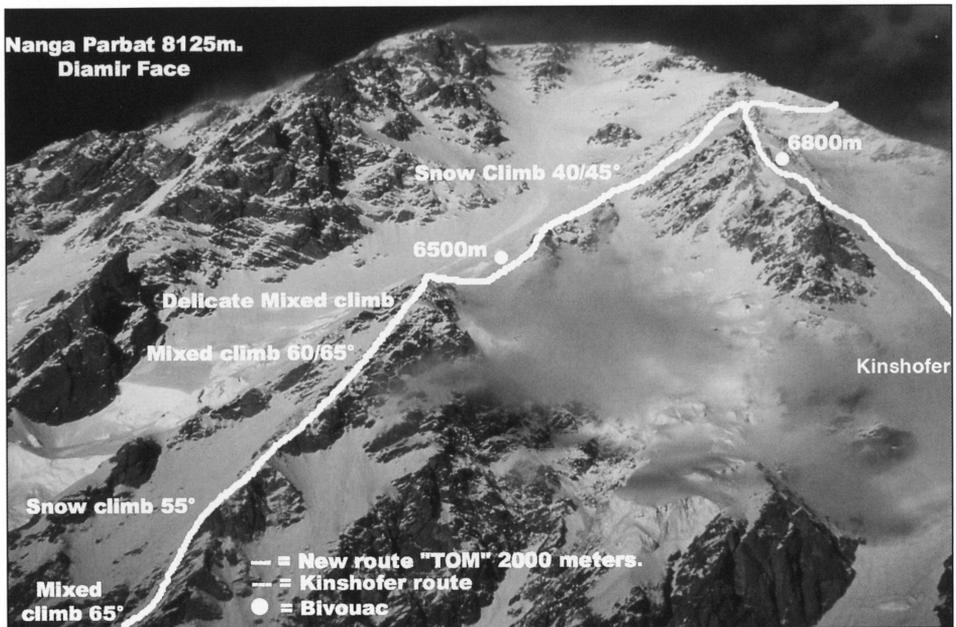
1. Opening of bus services between Delhi and Lahore.
2. Resumption of air flights from January 1, 2004.
3. Resumption of train services from two border points, Wagah and Kokhrapar, and the possibility of resuming shipping between Karachi and Bombay.
4. Resumption of diplomatic links at High Commission level and expansion of embassy staff.
5. Resumption of trade relations.
6. On Pakistan's initiative, guns have been silenced on the LOC in Kashmir and there is a cease fire in operation all along the Kashmir front up to the Siachen Glacier.
7. A delegation from the European Parliament (including Reinhold Messner) is visiting Pakistan to inspect the situation in Kashmir. Subsequently it will also visit the Indian occupied Kashmir. These efforts are encouraging for peace in this region.
8. On top of this the Indian Prime Minister decided to attend the SAARC conference

to be held in Islamabad in January 2004. The Indian PM has expressed his readiness to meet his Pakistani counterparts.

These measures have ended the political tension between the two countries and greatly improved the climate of peace in the region. Internally, the government has put a complete ban on religious extremist groups, closed their offices in Pakistan, and frozen their funds in Pakistani banks. Meanwhile, British Airways, in expectation of increased travel to Pakistan from the U.K. and Europe, resumed its London-Islamabad flights from December 1, 2003.

NAZIR SABIR, *Pakistan*

WEST HIMALAYA



The Diamir Face of Nanga Parbat, showing the 2003 route "Tom" on the left, and the Kinshofer Route on the right. The summit, still a long way off, is not visible in this photo. *Jean Christophe Lafaille*

Nanga Parbat (8,126m), new route on Diamir Face. Of the five expeditions to Nanga Parbat, only two were successful and a total of 14 climbers reached the summit, bringing the total number of ascents of the mountain to 216 from 1953 up to its Golden Jubilee year. However, the Diamir Face of the peak proved the venue for the only new route on a very high mountain in Pakistan during 2003.

Jean Christophe Lafaille reached the 4,100m base camp below the face on June 5, a little later than other members of his team. Almost immediately he set off for the standard Kinshofer Route with Ed Viesturs, climbing up to Camp 2 at 6,100m, where they erected a tent. Bad weather drove them down, and the next time they regained the camp Lafaille was ill with suspected giardia and had to be escorted down by Viesturs. He recovered quickly on antibiotics and on