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TOURISM CORPORATION

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SWAT: THE TOURIST PARADISE

SWAT VALLEY TRAVEL GUIDE

TOURISM CORPORATION
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

PHOTO:
Usman Mardanvi



SWAT VALLEY

The lush green and historic Swat Valley, in the Malakand Division lies between 34° - 40' to 35° N latitude and 72' to 74° - 6' E longitude and is part of the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The valley is an integral part of the strategic and significant region where three parts of the Asian Continent—South Asia, Central Asia and China meet.

The names found in ancient sources for Swat are Udyana and Suvastu because of the scenic beauty of the valley and the name of the river, respectively. The historical and cultural remains of the area provide evidence about human activities covering a large span of time. Alexander the Great came here in 327 BC en route India. In ancient times it remained center of Buddhism, still having its marks found from river bed to the tops of the mountains. During Abdul Wadud (1917- 1949) and Jahan Zeb's (1949-1969) peaceful region, Swati territories forming part of Swat State witnessed unprecedented development in the fields of education, health and communication.

The magnificent Swat Valley popularly known as the Switzerland of the East, is situated north of Peshawar. In ancient times, it remained centre of the then flourishing Buddhist civilization, still having its remnants found at various places. Its old name was Udyana (Land of Gardens). The archeological sites and monasteries dating back to Buddhist era add to its historical charm. Surrounded by majestic mountains, Swat Valley is full of roaring rivers, lush green forests and snow-covered peaks adding to its natural attraction. "Upper" and " Lower " Swat are terms in vogue based on the arbitrary demarcation of higher and lower regions In the valley by Swat River. Green fruit orchards, beautiful lakes, gushing streams and a fascinating landscape make it a place worth seeing.



HOW TO GET THERE ?

Swat is well connected with important cities like Islamabad/ Rawalpindi and Peshawar via **road**. (See end section "How to get there? **Air Route**: The twice weekly flight (30 min journey) to Swat from Islamabad and Peshawar was still suspended at the time of compiling this publication. (Check with your travel agent.)

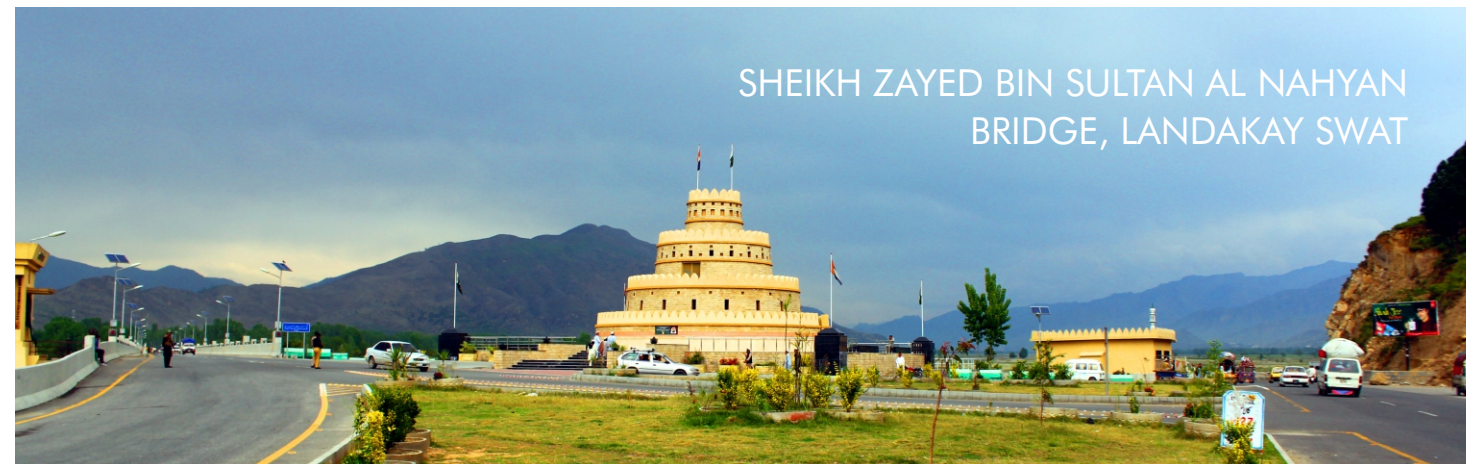
If leaving from Peshawar (or Islamabad) the route to Swat is via Mardan. From Mardan the main road to Swat leads north over the historic Malakand Pass. Swat's distance from Peshawar is 151 km. The distance from Rawalpindi via Nowshera-Mardan and Malakand Pass is 270 km. Dargai and Batkhela are main towns en route until one reaches Chakdarra which is another town steeped in history. Here the road forks into two. One leading towards Chitral and another towards Swat. The Chakdarra fort guards the area. An important post on a hill is the famed **Churchill's Picket** (or **Piquet**), A small fort built in 1896. Winston Churchill had once served here as a Daily Telegraph dispatcher. A subject dealt with in much detail in the autobiographical "**The Story of the Malakand Field Force**".

NOTE: Visitors and tourists are advised to carry their identification cards/documents with them to avoid inconvenience at routine security Checkpoints en route.



TOWN OF MINGORA

Mingora (Pr: Mingawara) the center of economic activities and the only urban area of the valley is adjacent to Saidu Sharif. It offers traditional, Pakistani and Western food outlets, restaurants and hotels. Locally produced beautifully displayed at its main bazaar, shops, show rooms etc. include semi-precious stones, embroidered dresses, hand woven ladies shawls, bed



sheets and woodwork. Traditional ornaments and antiques are available at shops. Visitors on trips to Swat valley usually stroll in its bazaars for shopping at the end of their journey. You can find emerald mines in hills northward of the city, famous worldwide for their expensive and valuable emeralds.

SAIDU SHARIF

Being the capital city of picturesque Swat valley, Saidu Sharif is the principal seat of administration for looking after and managing regional government affairs. Several colleges, schools, government offices are situated here. Swat museum, the tomb of the Akhund of Swat, beautifully built buildings of Swat State era, especially Jehan Zeb College, wooden building of Mehmankhana and archeological sites of Butkara I, 2 and 3 are worth seeing places in Saidu Sharif.

SWAT MUSEUM



This museum has a huge and precious collection of Gandhara Art. Artifacts, stupas, coins of various ages and other assets of Gandhara civilization signify the rich cultural and historical past of the valley. The museum is situated on the main Mingora- Saidu Sharif road. These artifacts, antiques and similar articles are categorized and beautifully showcased. Cultural life of the near past of the valley is displayed in the shape of local dresses, embroidery, Jewelry, musical instruments, weapons of old times and carved Wooden articles. The museum is closed on Friday.



▲ Tomb of Hazrat Saidu Sharif

MALAM JABBA

A trip to Swat is incomplete without seeing Malam Jabba, about 44 km from Mingora, a modern hill resort with surrounding mountains enhancing its natural attraction and beautiful landscape. A majestic landscape adorned with snowy mountain peaks, lush green valleys and sprawling forests. Malam Jabba is the star destination in Swat for adventure seekers. About 44 km from Mingora, this modern hill resort swarming with enthusiastic tourists once housed a winter ski-resort which unfortunately failed to stand the test of time. Therefore, in an attempt to restore the grandeur of the area and attract domestic and foreign skiing lovers, TCKP, in September 2015, awarded the restoration of a state of the art ski-resort equipped with a new chairlift and a 3-4 star hotel. A year later, the chairlift and skiing resort were inaugurated while the construction of the hotel is in the final stages. Malam Jabba offers beautiful landscape of mountain peaks full of snow, green valleys and sprawling forests refreshing minds in a cool and more serene atmosphere generously gifted by nature.



▲ Ski Resort Malam Jabba

MARGHUZAR

About 13 km from Saidu Sharif, is situated the serene small town of Marghuzar at the foot of Mount Elum. Its White Marble Palace, built by the ruler of Swat in 1940, adds to the grandeur of this peaceful small valley. The palace has now been converted into a top class hotel with excellent lodging and boarding facilities. While voyaging towards Marghuzar, you can see a road turning towards Salampur, a small village famous for its wool cottage industry.



MIANDAM

Encircled by mountains, the picturesque tourist resort of Miandam is at a distance of about 57 km from Saidu Sharif. Surrounding mountains during the summer do not allow the sun to cast its shadows on this attractive resort making it the coolest place in the area. A PTDC motel, few hotels and official guest houses keep this beautiful place alive in the summer season. It provides a refreshing view of large forests, fruit orchards and flowing streams.



MADYAN

The valley of Madyan is situated about 56 kilometers to the north of Mingora (Pr: Mingawara) city. It lies on the main road that leads to Bahrain, Kalam and other beautiful valleys of Swat. Its riverside location and cool climate make it an attractive spot with rows of shops, hotels and restaurants queued along the road. A trout hatchery adds to its fascination. Local handicrafts, embroidery and antiques are displayed at roadside shops.

The slightly wider valley of Madyan is different in comparison to other valleys in the sense that almost every type of modern facility and amenity is available here i.e. internet, cellular networks, cable and satellite TV, hotels, restaurants and other basic necessities of life.

Apart from these up-to-date facilities, tall mountains covered with green foliage and dotted with small mud and concrete houses from three sides surround the beautiful town of Madyan. The roaring and foaming river Swat looks like a ferocious monster here as the huge mountains on both sides appear to fetter and restrain its movement.



BISHIGRAM VALLEY

The sprawling valley of Bishigram is the last village on the road. The houses are built like gigantic steps on the uneven landscape of the mountain. The total time to reach the valley from Madyan is forty minutes as the road is not in good condition. Several other small hamlets surround the valley, which can be approached by trekking for an hour and a half. The track to Bishigram Lake starts from this village and that is how it has taken its name. Lush green forests surround the valley, which receives heavy snowfall. Several springs and streams are scattered throughout the valley. Electricity and telephone facilities are available.



The area is no more secluded and the people visit the nearby town of Madyan almost on daily basis to merchandise their goods and buy the daily consumable items. Most of the inhabitants live permanently here while the adjoining hamlets are deserted during winter and are occupied in the summer again.

The people are very hospitable and welcome everyone in their beautiful locale. Most of the people rely on farming and grow maize and off-season peas, which get them lucrative prices in the market. The people speak Pashto and Kohistani languages but the latter is dominant language in the area. Their dialects are different. The people are very traditional and some old customs related with matrimony are still followed there. Some small shops in the area provide the daily consumable items. Due to harsh surrounding and life, the people are physically rough and tough, and their complexions sunburned as the area is situated at a fairly high -altitude from sea level. The beauty, of the valley and genial hospitality of the people are some of the wonderful memories, which the visitors are sure to take back with them after visiting the rustic and pastoral locale of Bishigram.



“Camping Paradise” For the provision of good, clean and not too expensive facilities for families, students and holiday makers, Tourism Corporation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (TCKP) has made a unique camping sites at Bishigram (near Madyan, Swat), Sharan in Kaghan and Thandiani (near Abbottabad) at Yakhtangi (Shangla) and Sheikh Badin (Lakki Marwat)

BAHRAIN

This small riverside town, at a distance of 66 km from Saidu Sharif and just 10 km from Madyan, is the most frequently visited resort because of its location on the road leading to other beautiful resorts. A humming bazaar with shops, eateries and hotels make it a popular place.

Household traditional decoration items are available at shops. Architectural beauty is fully evident in wooden-made pillars and fixtures of mosques and buildings arousing interest of visitors. Nearby valleys full of lush green thick jungles offer hiking on narrow mountainous paths.



▲ Bahrain Valley

KALAM

Being the home town of Kohistani inhabitants, Kalam is like an earthly paradise in Swat Valley. Located at a distance of 40 km from Bahrain, Kalam is the main town of this region presenting one of the most panoramic natural beauties. The people known as Kohistani are its original inhabitants, proud of their own language and still unchanged traditions. A fascinating view of 6471m Fala kshiar Peak with its melting snow during summers from Matiltan (3000m) is breathtaking. The journey is incomplete without seeing and going to Mahodand, a famous lake, about 23 km beyond Matiltan. The picturesque Kalam provides road access to reach magnificent valleys of Ushu (2286m) Utrot (2225m) and Gabral (2286m) above sea level, where journey through green forests and beautiful view of landscape is memorising. Rivers and lakes at Kalam offer good trout fishing after getting permits obtainable from the Fisheries Department.

THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA MADE SPECIAL PROJECT KEEPING IN VIEW THE FACILITATION FOR VISITING TOURISTS TO THE VALLEY. THE ROADS HAVE BEEN RENOVATED AND ROAD SIDE FACILITIES LIKE REST AREAS WITH PARKING, TUCK SHOPS, TOILETS AND MOSQUE HAVE BEEN BUILT.

MANKIAL VALLEY

The beautiful valley of Swat is a mix of different and varied valleys and plains. The southern region is comparatively wide and open, consisting of plains that are cultivated throughout the year and yield extremely large quantity of fruit and crops. The Northern region is a congregation of tall high rising mountains where small valleys provide little ground for cultivation and residential area for the small mass of population scattered in different groups and families. The valley of Mankial is one such places located in the north of Swat on the main road leading to Kalam.

The total distance of the valley from Saidu Sharif is about eighty kilometers. The condition of the road is not good but still the scenic beauty along the Swat River keeps the visitors engaged. The fascinating valley of Mankial is famous throughout Swat for its several sharp and jagged summits or peaks, which can be seen hundreds of kilometers away from down the plains. The tallest peak's height is 18750 feet above sea level.



BALAKOT/DAWANR

The valley of Mankial has a T-shaped location. Towards the western end, above the main road, the villages of Balakot and Dawanr are located face to face against the towering summits of Mankial. The dominant language in the area is Kohistani but Pashto is widely spoken and understood. The people of Balakot rely mostly on farming and some of them are employed in foreign countries. The cash crops are maize, peas, potato, turnip and cabbage. Natural and pure mountain honey is also one of the products of these exotic vales, which has high demand in the national and local market and is mostly used as a base in herbaceous medicines. Telephone and electricity have been provided to these villages and some daily consumable items can also be procured in the small shops scattered in the Valley.



SANGOTA FIZAGHAT, MINGORA (SWAT)

SPECIAL TOURIST POLICE LAUNCHED IN SWAT



Help Line: 0946-881374

In order to facilitate the tourists and ensure their utmost safety, KP government has launched a tourist police force in Swat. Earlier in June 2017, a similar tourist police force was launched for the region of Abbottabad and Nathiagali. According to the District Police officer of Abbottabad, a squad of 40 Tourist Police men was setup in the Nathiagali Division.

These policemen have been trained by the police department as well as by the tourism department. The tourist police force would remain operational around the clock.

Moreover, this police force has been specially trained to handle accidents and other criminal activities related to tourism. The tourist police squad consists of 40 policemen having 20 motorbikes.

JABBA

The road turning to right hand leads to the beautiful and exotic highland of Jabba where the local people of Mankial reside in summers, growing potatoes and raising livestock. The slightly open valley of Jabba wears a thick blanket of cedar or deodar forest decorated by the mosaic of colorful wild flowers and fruits during early spring. The valley is guarded by the sky touching peaks of mount Mankial in the east where huge glaciers melt down and form spectacular waterfalls, which cool the eyes of the beholder and reverberate in the valley.

Several other pastures and grasslands situated at a relatively high altitude from Jabba including the misty pastures of Boksar and Sor Kar **which** can be easily accessed from this area. The sprawling meadows of Boksar are incomparable in beauty and are identical with the splendid highlands of Deosai in Gilgit. These hypnotising valleys are famous for their rich wild life in which the Snow Leopard, Markhor, Black Bear, Flying Squirrel, golden Monal, Koklas, Pheasant and the bulky Snow Cock are some well-known names. Jabba has great potential for eco-tourism, which can be beneficial for the region. A strong initiative from the government and NGOs with support from the local community could certainly make the area prosperous and will help to conserve the ecosystem.

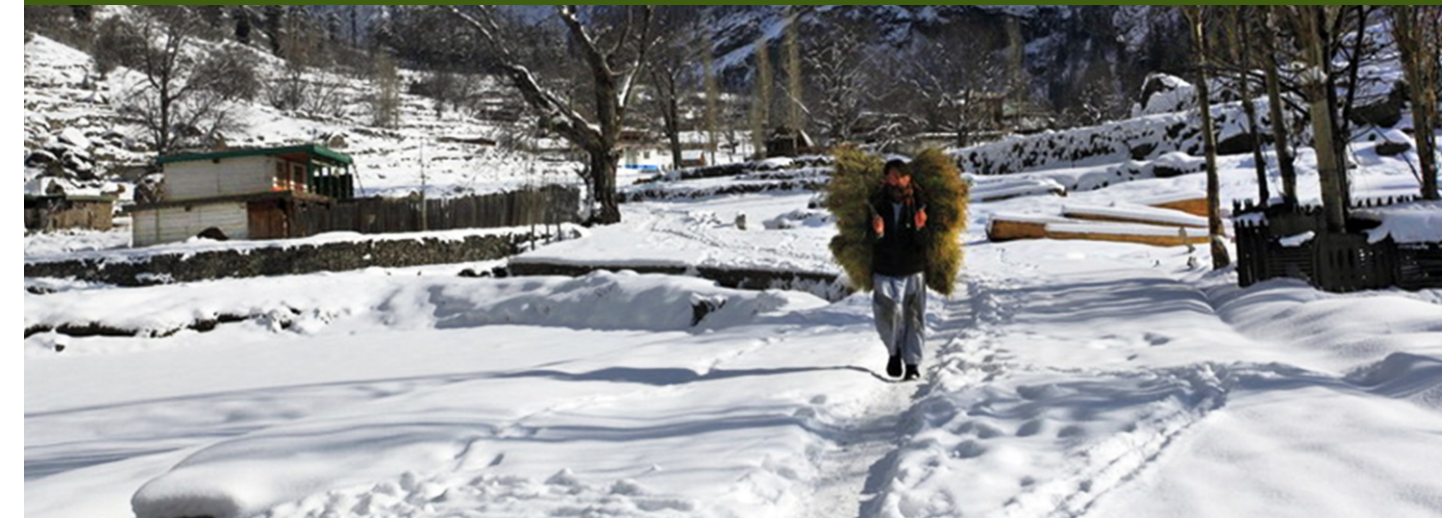


MATELTAN



Matiltan in winter

The Mateltan Valley runs northeast from Kalam and offers magnificent view of Mount Falaksiar (5918 M). It is the most famous peak in the area. The valley offers numerous picnic spots and first-class fishing and hiking opportunities.



UTROR VALLEY

It is 16 km (10 miles) up the Utror River to Utror Village. Utror Valley, about 2, 200 meters (7, 200 feet) above sea level has shaded picnic spots and strewn streams full of fish. The modern Muslim graves in this area are surrounded by intricately carved wooden railings.



GABRAL VALLEY

Gabral valley is another picturesque valley which is accessible from Utror and is at the terminus of the hiking trail, Kharkharai Lake is located here.

KALAM VALLEY

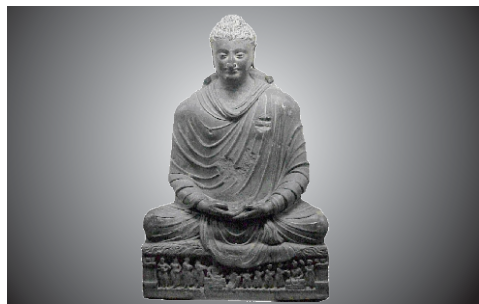


ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN SWAT

BUDDHIST SHRINES

A fairly large number of Buddhist sites such as stupas, monasteries, viharas, settlements, caves, rock-carvings and inscriptions are scattered all over the Swat Valley. This heritage of immense interest may be seen both in plains and in the hilly tracts. Fa-Hein, who came to Swat in the 4th century AD, wrote about 6000 monasteries in the valley. The memoir of Sung-Wung, who visited the enchanting valley in the 6th century AD, records 6000 images in the sacred monastery of Talo (Butkara). The most famous of all the Chinese pilgrims, Hsuan-Tsang who came here in 7th century A.D, mentioned 1400 monasteries in Swat, which eloquently confirmed the extensive remains of the Buddhist period.

Even today over 400 Buddhist stupas and monasteries may still be seen in ruins in Swat covering an area of about 160 square km. The Buddhists built their stupas and monasteries higher on the hills with the aim that agricultural economy may not suffer and also to provide a sort of protection and security to them from the invaders.



▼ Death scene of Buddha

PANRR BUDDHIST SITE (SWAT)



LIST OF LOCATIONS

BUTKARA

The Buddhist sacred precinct of Butkara identified as the monastery of Ta-Lo, mentioned by Sung Yun (520 AD) visited and described by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims of the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries AC lies at the eastern end of the ancient capital of Udyana, Meng-Chich-Li, or present Mingora (Mingawara). The main Stupa stands in the middle, around it are crowded monuments, stupas, Viharas and columns. On the Northern side stands a great building and further to the north and west the inhabited area. The Great Stupa underwent five reconstructions, each new one incasing the older from 3rd century B. C to 10th century A D.



▼ Butkara remains, Swat valley

SHINGARDAR STUPA

Location: The Stupa of Shingardar is situated about 3km to the northeast of Brikot village, by the left side on the road from Mingora to Mardan. The stupa stands in the mouth of a small glen descending from a bare spur above the valley plain.

Description: The Shingardar satupa was identified by Colonel Deane and Sir Aurel Stein with the famous Stupa built by King Uttarasena on the spot where the white elephant that carried the King's share of the relics of the Buddha halted.

When he had arrived at this spot, the elephant suddenly dropped down and, dying, changed himself into a rock. By the side of this rock, the King at once erected this stupa. This myth of the Stupa is derived from a local tradition (Deane, 1886, Stein, 1930). The tradition was recorded by Hieun Tsang who visited Swat in the 7th century A.D.

It is further claimed that the hilly ridge opposite the great stupa on the north depicts a faint figure on it, visible only to the pious eye. G. Tucci, the Italian Archaeologist does not agree with the identification, and says that this stupa was not erected by the King Uttarasena. He places the stupa of the legend somewhere near the Naway kalay about 500 meters to the north of Kota village. This enigma needs further investigation and research.



NIMOGRAM STUPA

Just 7 km from Landakai, a road goes towards Nimogram, which is further at a distance of 21 km. Nimogram is famous for its monastery on the top of a hill overlooking the whole area. Three main stupas with several other ones are also found here. These archaeological sites revive the Buddhist period of this place. These structures have been built with dressed stones, a mastery by the old Artisans. They resemble Andan Dheri monastery situated in Dir district.

Location: The Buddhist site of Nimogram is situated about 45 km west of Saidu Sharif and about 22 km from Barikot, on the right bank of the Swat river in sub-valley of Shamozei. This site was discovered in 1966 and excavated in 1967-68.

The Site: The site consists of three main stupas in a row from north to south with a courtyard of 56 votive stupas and the adjoining monastery on the west of the main stupas. It is difficult to give a definite date to the monuments at Nimogram. Nevertheless, based on the discovery of a few coins of Kushana period, the site may be traced back to 2nd and 3rd century A.D. Apart from the coins and pottery of Scytho-Parthian period, a large number of stone and stucco sculptures depict various scenes of Buddhist mythology. These sculptures are on display in Swat museum.

▼ Biggest Buddhist Monastery of Gandhara at Nimogram, Swat. Fifty six stupas unearth during excavation



AMLUK DARA STUPA

Location: The stupa of Amlukdara is situated about 2km to the north of Nawagai village in the beautiful small valley of Amlukdara, on the main road to Buner. One is required to walk about 1 KM through the village in order to reach the site.

Description: The high Stupa stands prominently visible from the surrounding area, naturally sheltered by the great Mount Elum. The Stupa is raised on a magnificent square plinth with base moulding in torus and Scotia pattern, measures 34 meters in diameter. The height of the square shape base plinth is about 4 meters.

The height of the stupa from the floor level on the ground up to the existing top of the dome measures 20 meters. The entire stupa building from base to the top shows a remarkable fine, semi-ashlar masonry, preserving good stretches of the architectural decoration, typical of the Gandhara valley during the Kushanas period.

▼ Model of a fully intact stupa



ELEPHANT PAW: SHAHKOT PASS

Shahkot Pass, lying between the Mura Pass on the East and the Malakand Pass on the West, is an enchanting valley. On the North-East lie vast plains and a small hamlet, Shahkot Banda, with numerous Buddhist settlements. On the South-West is located the famous Hathi Darra, or the Elephant Paw, near village Zalam Kot, about 10 miles from village Thanra, on the main road leading to Swat .

A broad road about 20 feet wide and measuring 6 miles across the mountain, joining both sides of the pass, was constructed for the elephant caravan of a ruler of the Kushan period. This ancient road, which came to be known as “The Elephant Paw”. and the famous Queen's Throne on top of a hillock near Hathi Darra, are a feast for the eye and have great tourist potential. The retaining walls on the mountain slopes, which present a thrilling, sight, run down to the valley below and stretch from Shahkot plains to the village of Palai.

In the 9th century AD., when Hindu Shahi conquered this land, the Buddhists were forced to flee and take refuge in the distant mountains of the North. The forces of Mahmud of Ghazna subdued Raja Gira, the last king of Hindu Shahi, in the early 11th century A.D. The Elephant Paw and the Queen's Throne are valuable relics of the past. No attempts have been made to excavate and preserve them from further decay.

TOKAR DARA (NAJIGRAM) STUPA & MONASTERY

Location: The Buddhist site of Tokar-dara is situated about 5km to the south of Barikot on the way to Karakar Pass and lies about 1 km from the modern village of Najigram at the mouth of a small picturesque valley.

Main Stupa: The Large Stupa is probably the best preserved in this area. It consists of a hemispherical dome, upper and lower drums resting on a square podium and scale. The stupa court is 32m long to south-north and 72m east-west, fortified by a wall. The main stupa was surrounded by the votive stupas which have been completely destroyed by unauthorised relic hunters. Faint traces of the votive stupa can still be seen.

Cave: On the eastern side of the glen, about 45m above the monastic quadrangle, lies a cave with its high entrance which is blocked about half of its height by a wall. This cave was probably used by the monks for meditation.

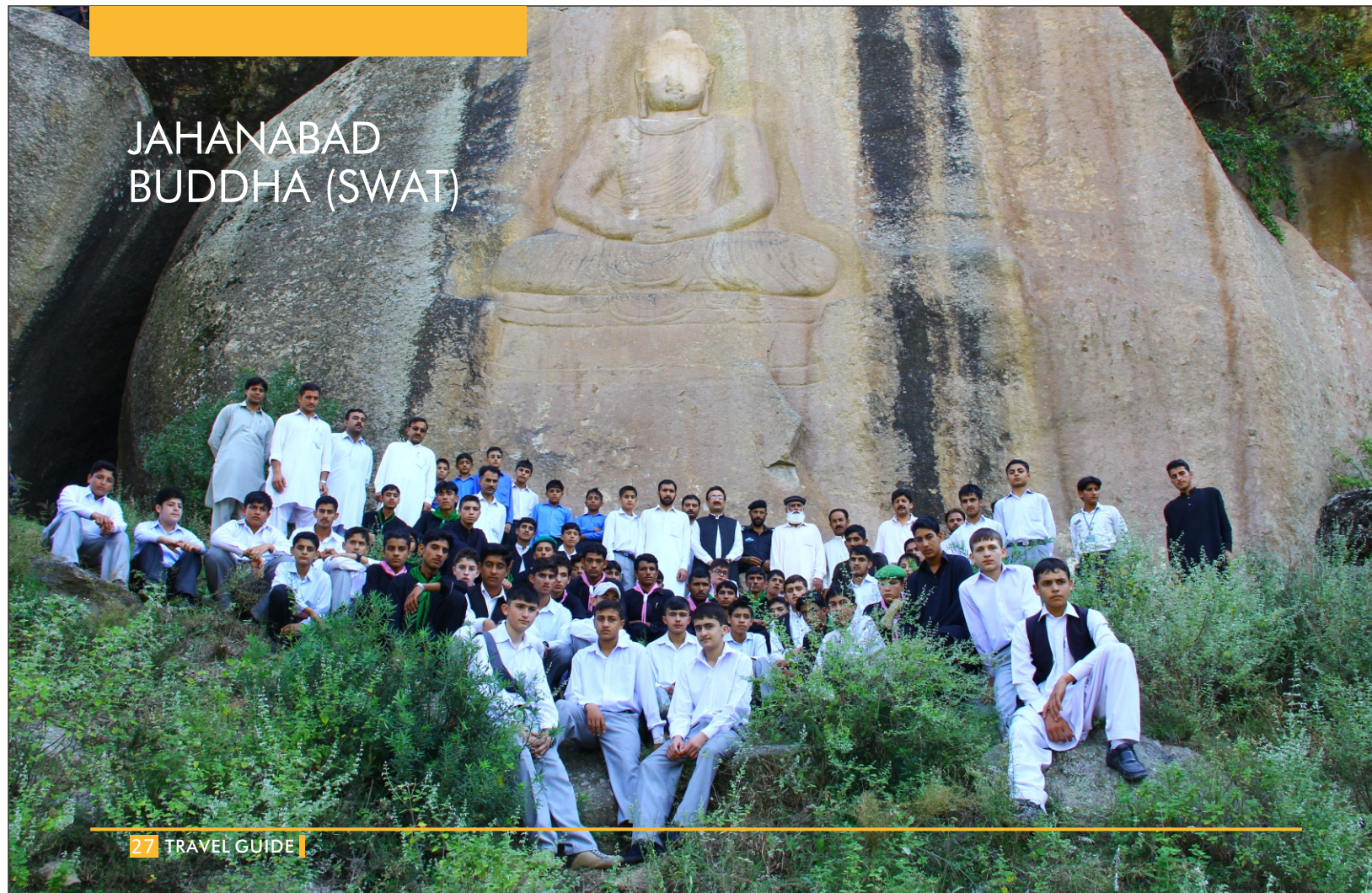
JEHANABAD SEATED BUDDHA

Location: The huge image of a seated Buddha carved into a high rock face of reddish colour that rises on the hill side to the southwest of Jehanabad (Shakhorai) village. It is situated at a distance of 5km to the N-E of Manglawar. This huge image of the Buddha is also visible from the road, on the right side when one is on the way to Malam Jabba.

Description: The Buddha figure is about 7 meters in height and is certainly the most impressive piece of sculpture to be seen in Gandhara region. Unfortunately, it was damaged by miscreants in 2008.

Traces of this excellent figure of the Buddha remain, which is seated on a high throne in the altitude of mediation. The snail shell curls of Buddha are carefully rendered. His eyes are more than half closed. There is a prominent Ushnisha and long ear lobes. The folds of the robe are stringy, with a planned alteration of high and low ridges. Though the figure exhibits the Gandhara style in the drapery with pleats and the hair, the rather solemn, powerful form of the torso and representation of the folds of the robe are in agreement with the usual form adopted in the area for the other figures of the Buddha.

JAHANABAD BUDDHA (SWAT)



GUMBATUNA STUPA

Sir Aurel Stein in the Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India first mentioned the site of Gumbatuna in 1930. Berger and Wright who carried out small-scale excavations (Berger et al 1941). Professor G. Tucci followed it in 1955-56.

Location: The site of Gumbatuna (Gumbatuna is the plural form of "Gumbat", the Pashto word for "dome") is a Buddhist establishment situated on the right bank of the river Swat, 6 km west of Barikot village along the metalled road leading towards Nimogram in a wide valley. The valley is broadly drained by the Swat river which flows in several braided channels through the area. The archaeological remains are scattered over a range of 1500 meters north to south and 1000 meters east to west in wide terraced fields sloping into the hills behind, known as Shamozai range. A spring is located in the Picturesque gully, north of the sacred area.

Main Stupa: The lower zone comprises the main stupa encompassed by the votive stupa and columns bounded by the enclosure wall.

The main stupa stands on a square plinth measuring 17m each side with an offset projection 3.71m long by 3.82m wide. The huge stupa is probably the best preserved in ancient Udhyana consisting of a dome, upper and three lower drums, resting on a square podium and scale. The structure above the dome comprises harmika and umbrellas, which are now missing.

▼ Gumbatuna Stupa by: Sir Aurel Stein c. 1920s



RAM TAKHT (RAM'S THRONE)

Ram Takht is one of the sacred places in Hinduism. It is only second to Amarnath Cave regarding its sacredness and sanctity. Ram Takht is situated on the top of Mount Elum at an altitude of 9200 feet above sea level. This point is called Jogyano Sar(yogi peak).The dune of Barikot which is also famous for its sacred ruins is visible from here towards the North-West.

The Hindus believe that Ram Chandra Jee Maharajah spent three years of his BanBass (jungle life) here. The Hindu pilgrims visit this place once a year on first day of Sawan, to pray, worship and seek unity with Almighty. A holy spring flows near Ram Takht where most of the yogis came to seek union with the divine entity.

Ram Takht has also been demolished by treasure hunters in the hope of acquiring ancient treasures. Toorda Pacha whose family has resided here since time immemorial says that one of the yogis was killed by a nomad in the hope of acquiring wealth. Later the nomad lost his sanity and his whole family disappeared mysteriously from the place.

Ram Takht can be accessed through different routes of Karakar, Char, Dokada, Bezo Sar, Amlukdara and Marghuzar. One can reach the place in five hours from Marghuzar easily. Several cool streams adore the way while most of the dense forest has been chopped down by timber mafia. The way is well treaded and there is no fear of straying away. The exotic valley of Swat and the holy district of Buner are the spectacular panoramas visible from Ram Takht.

Mount Elum has a profound spiritual and holy past. The famous saints Peer Baba and Durrani Baba had visited this place, worshipped and meditated here. Today they are in their eternal slumber in the lap of Mount Elum.

www.kparchaeology.com

FAMOUS LAKES OF SWAT VALLEY

The valley can truly be called the Valley of Lakes, which not only feeds the emerald green River Swat but also provides ideal camping sites for adventurers and nature lovers. Most of these lakes are hidden from the world due to their far-flung locations and take three to seven hours trekking to reach from the last village on the road. Exploring these miracles of nature demand endurance, patience and courage and above all love for natural beauty. Only those who possess aesthetic sense and have a thirst for natural beauty venture to explore and unravel these extravagant bounties of nature.



▼ Kandol Lake



▼ Dhamaka lake

BISHIGRAM DAND (LAKE)

Bishigram Lake is situated to the east of **Bishigram** valley near Madyan. The road to this valley is partly metalled for vehicles. It takes almost forty to fifty minutes to reach this picturesque valley inhabited by simple and hospitable folk. From here, trekking of four to five hours, depending on professionalism and enthusiasm of the trekkers lands you in the realm of a serene and enchanting lake of **Bishigram**.

DARAL DAND (LAKE)

Daral lake is situated to the northeast of Saidgai Lake and can be accessed through Saidgai after two three hour rigorous trekking. The trail to Daral is full of fun and amusement because it runs over sky touching heights of the mountain. It provides spectacular sights and panoramas. A close look towards the south will reveal the winding silhouette of river Swat disappearing in the distant horizon.

After walking and trekking for about two and a half hours on bare mountains, the trail start descending towards the East where Daral Lake is located. The descent towards the lake is tricky and treacherous: therefore, utmost care and precaution must be taken coming down the gully. Lake Daral is sprawled over a huge area like a giant amoeba. Large rugged and jagged boulders of various shapes and sizes surround it. Lush-green grass and exotic flowers blanket the edges of the lake. A rare leaping frog in the lake is a spectacle.

The magnificent Daral Lake is guarded and shackled from all sides by gigantic mountains and not even a trickle of water escapes the huge and sprawling lake. The widely held notion that Daral Lake is the origin of Daral river / torrent appears absurd, as the lake is literally land locked.

MAHODAND (FISH LAKE)

Often described as one of the most scenic spots on earth, the Mahodand valley, which lies in the North, 35 km from Kalam, is famous not only among nature lovers, and escapists but also the exotic trout fish hunters. The valley can be accessed through an un-metalled road from Kalam in a four by four (4x4) vehicle. After driving for about four to five hours from the vast valley of Kalam, you will enter the wonderful and spectacular valley of Mahodand where the small lakes, towering trees and sprawling pastures welcome you. Some temporary restaurants and hotels have been constructed by the locals, which provide essential facilities of food and accommodation. They also provide boating facilities in the lakes.



The valley is long and wide and touches the border of Chitral in the extreme North. There is a proper track through which trekkers can either reach Shandur Top or Ghizar in Chitral. The river here is divided into a series of small and large lakes, which once teemed with brown and rainbow trout fish introduced by the former ruler of Swat State.

The valley is a heaven for trekkers and provides several beautiful camping sites with abundance of cool water and firewood. But the trekkers are advised to arrange for their own gas cylinders, which will not only reduce the burden on the natural ecosystem but also preserve the deteriorating environment of the valley. Mahodand valley is a true artistic gift of nature for those who cherish such things.

SAIDGAI DAND (LAKE)

Saidgai Lake is situated in the Hindukush chain of mountains, interspersed by several small and large lakes, which runs from the western edges of the Pamir plateau, west of the Karakoram. The mountains have snow-covered tops and are crossed by some minor glaciers. Saidgai Lake is located in the peripheries of Swat and Dir mountain ranges and serves as a huge reservoir of water for Hushirai Khwar (Stream), Dir.

The lake can be accessed through three different trails and sides: Hushirai valley, Dir, Sulatan, upper Swat and Sakhra Lalko, upper Swat. The Lalko (name of village) trail to the lake is the easiest and breathtaking. A jeepable and unmetalled road ends in the beautiful and exotic valley of Lalko where your trekking and hiking chapter starts. From here, continuous trekking for almost seven to eight hours will lead you to your desired destination. On the way, dark green pine, conifer and cedar forests keep you cool and refreshed; and small scurrying streams quench your unappeasable thirst (Tip: Own bottled water advisable). On the way, you will come across a vast pasture, which is called Gabina Jabba (Honey marshes) in the local vernacular. The pastures wear a blanket of countless arid innumerable variety of flowers of different shades that tempt different species of rare birds and insects.

The best season to visit and explore the lake is during the months of July to **September**. In the remaining, a thick coat of snow covers the lakes and makes difficult for the observer to differentiate it from the surrounding landscapes. Saidgai is considered as one of the largest lake in the area and several adventure loving people swarm the area to discover and explore this spectacular jewel of nature.

KUNDAL DAND (LAKE)

Kundal (or) Kundol Lake is situated in the north of Utror valley. One can easily access it from Kalam via Utror from where a link road ends in a green valley called Ladu in the foothills of the lake. You can either hike to Ladu from Utror or it takes almost two hours drive to reach the beautiful valley of Ladu from Kalam. There is also a small hut in Ladu where you can take tea and grab something to eat. From Ladu, it takes almost three hours to reach the lake. Some locals can guide you and even take your luggage for a fee. The people are friendly and can provide you guidance if required.

The trail to the lake from Ladu is easy to follow as a huge stream flows down from the lake, which mingles with River Swat in Kalam valley. It goes beside the stream and leads you to the lake. The mountains around the lake have scarce trees scattered far and wide but grass and thick vegetation pervade the surrounding landscape that reinforces the beauty of the lake. Two other lakes, Khapiro (Fairies). and Spin Khwar (White Stream) are located in the peripheries of Kundal Lake and can be accessed through the lake in five to six hours. Visit all the three lakes in one go takes almost four days and nights, which can be rather fatiguing. The length and width of the lake is one kilometer. During full moon, the dim and cool light of the bright moon transforms the whole atmosphere like magic. The panoramic galaxies of stars twinkle and sparkle in crystal clear skies.

▼ Kandol Lake



IZMIS DAND (LAKE)

The name Izmis means caves in Kohistani and as the lake is surrounded by several natural caves, the people have named the lake after these caves. Izmis Lake is located to the North-east of Utror valley at a high altitude above the tree line. A small jeepable link road from Utror leads towards the location of the lake which ends in a valley called Loypanrghalay. The lake can be accessed from here after trekking for almost two hours. A small hamlet called Kalam Banda is located on these eye-soothing highlands where the grazers welcome everyone in their own special rustic style. The grazers who go to the pastures mostly belong to Utror valley. The signs of technological arrival can be observed here as the grazers have built a Hydro Power Plant to avail the water and electricity in these awesome heights. The lake lies almost at a distance of one hour from this heavenly locale.

Izmis is a huge lake with shallow depth and little water. Most of the water which feeds the lake comes from the surrounding glaciers and small springs. Izmis lake shows clear signs of ecological decline which if not timely tackled will result in the extinction of this important source of fresh drinking and irrigation water; and will destroy an important temporary and vital residing ground for the migratory birds. The lake needs urgent attention from environmentalists due to the natural and human-made threats: otherwise this important lake will become a fragment in the unending annals of history.

PARI/KHAPIRO (FAIRY) LAKE -1

Pari Lake is one of the lakes in Swat region which is located at a very high altitude at the foot of the tallest peak in the range with a considerable depth. The name Pari or Khapiro is given to the lake due to the widespread belief that the lake is the

abode of fairies where they live and bathe in the cool, pure and clear water of the lake. It is located North-east of Utror valley and can be accessed only by trekking. Trekking to the lake needs endurance and love for nature as the trail is exasperating as well as dangerous therefore, utmost care should be taken while trekking on the narrow bends and turns leading to the lake. The lake is accessible from both Izmis and Kundal lakes. Two ascending tracks lead to the lake from Kundal and Izmis lakes taking almost five hours to reach this 'rooftop of Swat'. The trail very steep on both sides. So watch your step!

The lake is surrounded by sharp jagged rocks and peaks with scanty grass and flowers growth. Pari Lake I is a small lake which feeds the greater Pari Lake located below it. The lake is triangular in shape and is surrounded by tall mountains with western face opening to the greater Pari Lake. Several white gushing waterfalls from the surrounding peaks and glaciers feed the lake with crystal clear water.

PARI / KHAPIRO (FAIRY) LAKE -2

Pari Lake II is located at the highest altitude in the mountain ranges of Swat near Pari Lake I. It is comparatively greater in size and depth than the other lake situated in its vicinity and remains open in the months of July till September. The western face of the lake is open and its water flows down to the gigantic Kundal Lake which is situated in the foothills down. The towering mountains surrounding the lake are a safe haven for the bulky Snow-cock and brightly colored Monal pheasants. Therefore, a tent must be taken if someone wants to stay for a night here. (Tip: Due to the sheer altitude of the lake's location, no fire-wood can be found. Therefore, a gas cylinder must be on top of your trekking list).

The lake is almost quarter a kilometer in length and is surrounded by steep pastures where the grazers take their livestock. Pari or Fairy Lake II is a place worth visiting not only due to its ecological importance but the immense natural recreational potential the lake possesses.

PARI (FAIRY) LAKE



SPIN KHWAR (WHITE STREAM) LAKE

Spin Khwar is a beautiful lake hidden in the lap of mountains towards the north of Kundal Lake and east of Utror valley. The name Spin Khwar has a clear significance as a small white stream in the east flows down to the lake from the surrounding mountains and is a major source of water for the lake. The lake is accessible through two tracks, one from Kundal and the other from Ladu valley. The track from Ladu is comparatively easy to walk and less tiring while the track from Kundal is not only difficult but alarmingly dangerous although it is short and links Kundal and Spin Khwar. The grazers in the area have built small huts and a mosque where one can stay but a personal tent is more recommendable as these huts are in a poor condition due to lack of maintenance.

Spin Khwar Lake has formidable size and depth surrounded by tall mountains on all sides except the western face from where a stream of water is invisible under the rocks and boulders flows down to River Swat. It is a rarely visited lake due to lack of publicity and popularity. The lake can become a famous recreational spot if proper tracks and other necessary facilities are made available to the visitors.

NEEL SAR LAKE

This lake is located at a distance of roughly 10 kilometers from Mahodand and takes one day to reach here. The hike is gentle and the trek ascends gradually. There is a camping area near the lake where tourists can pitch their tents and spend a day or two comfortably. A little further is the Katchikuni Top or Pass which leads into neighboring Chitral.

GODAR LAKE

Another beautiful site roughly 6 kilometers beyond the Kundol Lake. It is located roughly between Kalam and Kandol in Upper Swat.



GODAR LAKE

CLIMATE

The best season to visit Swat is from March till October amidst pleasant weather. April is the green and flowery month of spring while October is the golden month of autumn, June, July' and August are the months when dwellers of hot plains of the country swamp the valley to escape the heat of summer. It is the time when the valley welcomes all kinds of tourists amidst its magnificent mountains, meadows, forests and streams providing them perfect retreat.

LANGUAGES

Pashto and Kohistani are the commonly spoken local languages, while Urdu and English are also spoken or understood by the people.

SHOPPING

Decorative household articles and colorful embroidered items are trademark of Swat valley. Embroidered table cloth, ladies shawls, mats, handicrafts, caps, wood furniture and honey are the popular items. Swat is world wide famous for its precious and semi-precious stones particularly its emerald.

HOW TO GET THERE

Linked with Peshawar, Islamabad/ Rawalpindi and Lahore by road, Swat can be easily reached from all the main cities. Its distance from Peshawar is 151 km. The distance from Rawalpindi via Nowshera-Mardan and Malakand Pass is 270 km. It can be reached by road from Gilgit via Bisham, the main town located on Karakoram Highway passing through mighty Karakorum. **Daewoo Bus Service** (scheduled departures, advance booking, onboard hostess/snacks) connects Swat directly with Lahore, Islamabad/ Rawalpindi. Mardan, Peshawar Ph: (0946 or local area code) 111 -007-008.

HOTELS

Swat Serena Hotel: 55 Rooms/ Double/Single/Suites with Restaurant/ Swimming Pool. Quality Service A/C heating Tel/Internet Ph: 0946-711637-41) at Saidu Sharif.

PTDC Motel: Double/Single. Good over all facilities with a Tourist Information Centre Ph: 0946-9240157-8) at Saidu Sharif.

White Palace: 13 Km from Saidu Sharif Double/Single Rooms Ph: 0946-865270-3/ 711594

Swat continental: Midway between Mingora Saidu Sharif) Ph: 0946-711399-799
These are quality places of stay in Swat. The first two places also arrange transport facilities for their clients.

Hotel Rock City: It is situated in Fizagat on the outskirts of Mingora on main Mingora-Kalam road. PTDC Motels at Miandam and Kalam can be booked at any PTDC centre across the country. Kalam provides many hotels of high standard. Note: There are dozens of other cheaper hotels and guesthouses. Complete hotel list is available on TCK P Web Site: www.kptourism.com (or) by calling TCKP or PTDC.

RESTAURANTS

(There are several but following offer standard services. Always ask for sealed bottled water)

Zeba Restaurant (Nighat Chowk. Mingora Ph: 0946-712940)

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

PTDC Tourist Information Centre	946-9240159
DCO Office	0946-9240339/9240470
Police Station, Mingora	0946-9240384,
Police Station, Saidu Sharif	0946-9240385
Rescue 1122	0946-9240262/7225505



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Tourists Information - Facilitation Centre, at Peshawar Museum, Peshawar Cantt.

Tourists Information - Facilitation Centre, Allama Iqbal Road Jalal Baba Auditorium Abbottabad Cantt.

Tourists Information - Facilitation Centre, Dungagali Main Chowk, Murree Road.

Tourists Information - Facilitation Centre, Near Mountain Inn Hotel Chitral.

Tourists Information - Facilitation Centre, SIDB Plaza, Opp: Hill View Hotel Jinnah Super Market, F7/4 Islamabad.

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