

TOURISM POTENTIAL AND PROBLEMS IN MOUNTAINS OF PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY OF HAZARA DIVISION

Prof. Dr. Sirjias Talat
Samraeera Punus Khan

Abstract

Pakistan is a country with varied topography, has lofty mountains, plains and deserts. Mountains of Pakistan represent all kinds of attraction for tourism including cultural, physical and religious. This paper deals with physical tourism, as viable and provided for in the northern mountains of Hazara division. The region consists of beautiful lakes, valleys and spurs with a blooming surfaces and sites in the summer season, in Kaghan Naran Valley and Galliat, which attract people of the plains for enjoying their vacations in cool areas for mental and physical relaxation. The government of Pakistan gives high priority to tourism, and has taken various measures to promote tourism in Pakistan. The promotion of tourism calls for safe and comfortable roads and ample provision of motels and hotels for tourists.

Introduction

Hazara Division lies between $33^{\circ} - 35^{\circ}$ N to $35^{\circ} - 44^{\circ}$ N, $72^{\circ} - 33^{\circ}$ E to $74^{\circ} - 07^{\circ}$ E. Total area of the division is 17103 sq. kms. It is divided into five districts namely Kohistan, Mansehra, Batgram, Abbottabad and Haripur. According to 1998 census of population Hazara division had a population of 3505581 persons. (Table.1 & Fig. 1) (Census of Pakistan. 1998) It is located in the north-eastern part of N.W.F.P. at the western extremity of Himalayan Mountains. The area reaches the highest elevation of 6257metres near the Swat Border.

Prof., Department of Geography, University of Karachi

" Lecturer, Government Degree College Malir Cantt, Karachi

Physical Features

The shape of the division is a long tongue extending 193 km from south-west to the north-east; its tip, the Kaghan valley, runs up between Kashmir and the mountain region that drains into the upper Indus. (fig.3) There are levelled tracks varying in size and character in between the ranges occupying this area. Pakhli plain in Manshera districts about 285 sq. km. in area attains the height of 9140 m. The Mangal tract is 116 sq. km. and Rash tract is about 16 km in length, its center is marshy. Both the plains are at 1219 meters in height.

Special physical features of the Hazara division are its mountain ranges which run generally from north-east to the south-west. Towards the east the main chain is a long ridge that flanks the right bank of the river Kunhar and Jehlum and terminates in the hills of Murree and Khanpur. At the northern end its peaks attain a height of 4572 meters. Nearer to the center it is known as Dungagali ranges having an average height of 2590 meters.

Another chain flanks the left bank of the river Kunhar and forms parts of the boundary between Hazara and Kashmir. Its highest peak is Malika Parbat, 5181 meters. The western ridge at the Musalla has a height of 4078 meters and black mountains attain 2438 meters before breaking into numerous spurs.

The important rivers of this division are the Siran, the Dor, the Haro and Kunhar or Kaghan. The Indus skirts it on the west for 48 km and the Jehlum on the east about 40 km. These rivers have innumerable tributaries, some with a permanent flow, while others with a scanty trickle from springs in their beds. The lakes in this division are confined to the Kaghan valley. The three famous lakes are Lalu Sar, Dudubat Sar and Saiful Maluk Sar. (Fig. 3)

Forests

Hazara is one of the richest areas of Pakistan in terms of forest wealth of Pakistan. Numerous small and big forest tracts on the mountain slopes and valleys are scattered all over the division. The forests have very high environmental, recreational and economic value. These forests generate substantial employment and income for the people of the region. Social Forestry Wing of Hazara division applying most of the programmes, such as intensive management programme for forests started in 1980 in the reserve forests of the Hazara division, Kaghan Valley, Siran and Agror Valley in Mansehra district.

Climate

The controlling factors of the climatic condition of the division are its varied topography and altitude. Climate varies from very cold in winter season to hot in summer season. The southern most district of Hazara division is Haripur which experiences hot summers and cold winters, but other districts like Abbotabad, Mansehra, Kohistan and Batgram have cool summers and mild winters. In areas with high altitude cool wintry conditions prevail. Rainfall is also dependant on topography. Haripur receives an average of 800 mm, Abbotabad 1200 mm, Mansehra 800 mm of rainfall in a year. Rainfall in Kohistan is low compared to southern districts. Two thirds of the rainfall occurs in the summer season and the rest in winter in the form of snowfalls. (K. M. Shamsad, 1985 & Climatic Norms 1990)

Tourism Prospects in Hazara Division

Hazara has a great potential of tourism possessing all kinds – cultural and physical resources. Hazara is rich in natural resources, attracts domestic as well as foreign tourists from all over the world. (Table. 2 & Fig. 2) Hazara division is blessed with basic infrastructure of tourist industry, of which the basic facilities which promote tourism are as under.

Basic Infrastructure

- ❖ Means of communication and transport
- ❖ Social installations
- ❖ Basic installations
- ❖ Telecommunications

Receptive Facilities

- ❖ Hotel, guest houses
- ❖ Condominiums
- ❖ Complimentary residence
- ❖ Residence for reception personnel
- ❖ Food and beverage installations

Entertainment Facilities

- ❖ Recreational and cultural facilities
- ❖ Travel agencies

Hotels and Local Promotion Offices

- ❖ Information offices
- ❖ Car rentals
- ❖ Guides, interpreters (Hall & Page, 1991)

Tourist Zones

Hazara division can be divided into three tourist zones on the basis of infrastructure.

1. Galliat
2. Kaghan valley
3. Along KKH (Korakoram Highway) to Hunza and Gilgit

Abbotabad city is the center or the gateway to all three zones, a transit point for the tourists. It is a junction from where one can go in all directions, like Gillgit, Hunza via Korakoram highway (KKH) and to Kaghan valley Babusar pass. Abbotabad is a historical city founded in 1853 and named after Major James Abbott, the first deputy commissioner of Hazara. At a height of 1256 meters, it is a pleasant spot with bracing climate. The city is encompassed by hills. Towards the east are the wooded hills of Thandiani (2021 meters). Towards the north east of Abbotabad is a charming station having all kinds of services and facilities. Other important cities of the division are Haripur, Mansehra and Dasu.

Haripur is the headquarters of the Haripur district situated 1.6 km to the west of the left bank of the Dar River. It was founded by Sardar Hari Singh after whom it is named. It has over the years developed into an important industrial city of the district.

Mansehra is the headquarters of Mansehra district, with an elevation of 1122 meters. It offers beautiful view of Pakhli plain, and has lot of scenic beauty.

The other two beautiful sites, are the Tarbela dam and the Khanpur dam.

Tarbela dam is note-worthy for one of the two storages built under the Indus basin settlement program. Situated on the River Indus, it is the largest earth and rock filled dam in the world.

Khanpur Dam constructed across river Haro near Khanpur is meant mostly for irrigation but also supplies water for drinking purpose to Islamabad, Wah and Taxila.

Galliat

Various names are given to the gullies in a series of connections starting from Abbotabad via road to Baragali (2469 meters), Miranjuni (1886 m), Nathiagali (2499 m), Dungagali, Changlagali (1560 m), Khairagali, Sawargali, Barian, Khanaspur, Goradhaka. These areas have well kept National Parks, Wild Life Sanctuaries and Game Reserves at Qalanderabad, Makhnial, Rakhsardar and Bagra. (Govt. of NWFP)

The Baragali summer campus of the University of Peshawar at 2469 meters is a scenic spot north of Murree. As summer campus the place has necessary facilities for holding seminars, symposia and conferences during summer.

Nathiagali at an elevation of 2560 meters consists of levelled spurs, green slopes of Miranjani (2886 meters) from where one can see the Nanga Parbat on bright sunny days. This hill station is known for its scenic beauty and hot water springs.

Dungagali is another hill station with scenic spots about 3 km from Nathiagali. Changagali is located at an altitude of 2526 meters. Khairagali is at an elevation of 2347 meters with beautiful scenes of varied terrains, while Barian is a cantonment. Khanpur has a cliff on one side and pine tree forests wild animals on the other side. Ayubia (2652m) is a place where lift chairs were first installed, at Goradhaka, providing great attraction to this place.

Kaghan Valley

Kaghan valley is a 160 km long scenic wonderland. It is an unspoiled paradise of Himalayan peaks, lakes, waterfalls and glaciers. It is a very popular holiday resort. The valley extends from Balakot at a height of 884meters to Gittidas as a height of 366 meters, beyond which the valley closes at Babusar pass (at 4267 meters).

Along the river Kunhar, a main road runs meandering and not too far from the bank of the stream except in the very first state. It is 160 km having tourist stoppages at Kawai (1463 m), Shogram (2362 m) Mahandri (1524 m), Kaghan (2038 m), Naran (2405 m), lake Saiful Maluk (3200m), Batlakundi (2713m), Lalazar (3200 m), Burawai (2926 m), Basel (2804 m), Gittidas (3658 m) to Babusar pass (4145 m). (Fig. 3)

The valley has beautiful pine forests sheathing up to Naran, where they come to an end. The valley is also known as "The Botanists Paradise" due to a wide variety of plants found in it.

Near Gittidas is a lake Lalusar, surrounded by snow capped hills, its reflection of green blue water is one of the most beautiful phenomenon to be seen in the valley, from where river Kunhar issues with redoubled strength and flows as a roaring torrent until it joins the river Jhelum.

3. Tourist spots along KKH (Korakoram Highway) to Hunza and Gilgit

Before the construction of KKH, the district of Kohistan was not quite well known. Along the river Indus there was just one jeepable road. Now, it is converted into an all-weather road, the KKH (connecting Islamabad with China's Sinkiang province through Hazara and Northern areas) which was completed in June 1978.

Along the KKH there are stoppages providing scenic views to the tourists; these are Shinkiari, Battal, Batgram, Thakot, Pattan, Jalkot, Dasu, Banda-i-Sazim, Sazim and Harban. From there the road enters the Diamir district of Gilgit.

Shinkiari in Mansera district is famous for its tea gardens. Battal and Batgram have their unique scenic beauty. Thakot is the place from where the road runs along the river Indus. Some parts of this road also cross the Swat district. Then it enters the Kohistan district where the river runs through gorges with maximum depth of the gorge reaches to 3000 meters. Pattan, Dasu (the headquartera of the Kohistan district) and Sazim is attractive place. Then after Harban, the KKH enters the Gilgit.

Problems

The Hazara district currently faces some serious environmental problems especially landslides and avalanches. Domestic tourists are scared, being either students or traders. They do not want to risk their lives. The other problem is the inadequate provision of public transport, which is comparatively cheaper than chartered transport. Chartered transport is available at Balakot, Abbotabad, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. These regions have had an approx. of 13000 tourists in 1996, but the number increased to 15000 including foreign tourists after 1998, when the road was widened. The number of foreign tourists declined in 1997 and after (Table: 2, Fig.2). In this region, the number of tourists is increasing gradually due to easy access by the broadened road and availability of chartered transport from the main cities, especially from Balakot which serves as the point of entry to the Kaghan valley.

Conclusion

Hazara division has beautiful scenic places which attract tourists not only from the country itself but from all over the world, despite the threat of landslides and avalanches, which can cut off Kaghan valley from the rest of the country though for a very short period since Frontier Works Department is always alert and ready to remove landslides in the shortest

possible time. National Highway Authority has completed a road in Kaghan Valley, namely Mansehra-Naran-Jhakhad road which is 175 kilometers in length. Government of Pakistan has made an agreement with Chinese Government for survey and design of different bridges on Korakoram Highway (KKH). From Nathiagali onwards, the road faces threats of landslides. Abbottabad-Nathiagali-Barian (57.5 Km) road has been widened and improved, it has been extended by 8 kilometers towards Murree. (Economic Survey 2000-2001).

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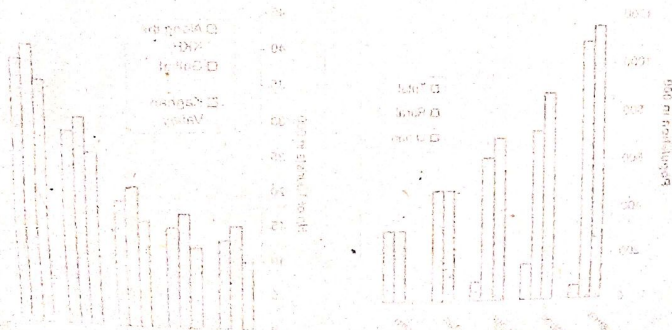


Table. 1 Hazara: Population by Districts				Table. 2 Tourists Population Projection			
1998				1997-2010			
Districts	Total	Rural	Urban	Years	Number of Tourists		
	Population	Population	Population		Along the KKH to Hunza, Gilgit	Galliat	Kaghan Valley
Kohistan	472570	472570	00000	1997	10,000	15,000	13,000
Batagram	307278	307278	00000	1998	12,000	17,000	15,000
Mansehra	1152839	1091463	61376	2000	16,000	21,000	19,000
Abbottabad	880666	722762	157904	2005	26,000	31,000	29,000
Haripur	692228	609493	82735	2010	36,000	41,000	39,000
				Approximate Values			
Census of Population, 1998				Collected by Author			

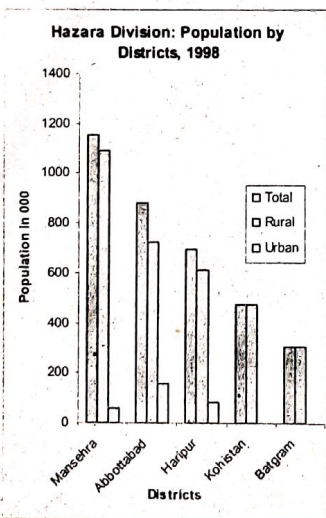


Fig. 1

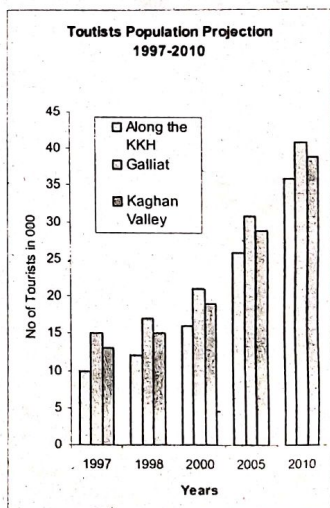


Fig. 2

