

# Karakoram Highway

The Karakoram Highway is one of the world's highest paved roads.

The Karakoram highway, extending for approximately 800 miles, is one of the world's most well-known roads. The construction of the road was undertaken by the Chinese and Pakistani governments to link the two nations. The road is also referred to as the Friendship Highway. The road earned international fame, with some even referring to it as the eighth wonder of the world, because of the difficulties the workers faced in constructing it as well as the fact that it is one of the highest highways in the world. A section of the road goes through the Karakoram Mountains at a height of 15,466 feet.

## The Road's History

Construction of the Karakoram Highway began in 1959 and lasted for about 20 years. During its development, the two governments argued over some issues such as where to place the road. The government of Pakistan preferred having the road pass through Mintaka Pass while the Chinese government preferred the Khunjerab Pass. They finally agreed on the Khunjerab Pass after the Chinese proved that Mintaka could easily be affected by air strikes. A large number of workers, roughly 810 from Pakistan and 200 from China, died during the construction because of landslides. Many of the dead Chinese workers were buried in a cemetery at Gilgit. The government of Pakistan relied heavily on the Pakistan Army Corps of Engineers during the road's construction.

## The Karakoram Highway

The Karakoram Highway follows a route that in the past was part of the world-renowned Silk Road. It passes through towns such as Abbottabad, Dasu, and Upal. The section of the road in Pakistan is approximately 501 miles long and begins in the city of Abbottabad. In Pakistan, some famous physical features are visible from the Karakoram Highway such as the Indus River and Nanga Parbat. The governments have set aside vast sums of money to conduct upgrades of the road, particularly in the Pakistani section.

## Tourism Along the Karakoram Highway

The Karakoram Highway has emerged as one of the most popular tourist destinations as it attracts vast numbers of people looking to experience the adventure of traveling along one of the world's highest roads. Most of the tourists who use the highway are mountaineers and cyclists. The construction of the highway enabled adventurers to have easy access to several high peaks such as Rakaposhi and Diran. The biggest threat to tourism in the region was security, but the governments of the respective countries have put in place measures to improve the safety.

## The Impact of The Karakoram Highway

Since its construction, the road has contributed significant economic benefit to both nations particularly as it allows residents to move quickly across the border. The road has led to increased volumes of trade between the two states as goods can get to their destination quickly. The tourism in the region also has a tremendous economic impact as the tourist spend significant amounts of money boosting the local economy. Apart from the economic benefits, the Karakoram Highway gives Pakistan and China great military and strategic benefits particularly in regards to the Kashmir conflict.

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