A scenic view of the Bagrote Valley in the Himalayas. The background is dominated by a large, snow-capped mountain peak under a clear blue sky. The middle ground shows a wide, rocky riverbed with a river flowing through it. The foreground is filled with lush green vegetation, including trees and flowering plants. A small wooden bridge is visible in the distance. The overall scene is bright and vibrant.

Welcome to the Bagrote Valley

by Tim and Ruth Dunsby

Welcome to the Bagrote Valley

Ruth and Tim Dunsby

The purpose of this booklet is to help prepare volunteers for a stay in the Bagrote Valley. It is based on a 6-week visit by Ruth and Tim Dunsby in 2013 made in response to a request to Red Spokes Adventure Tours by the Board Members of the BASE School.

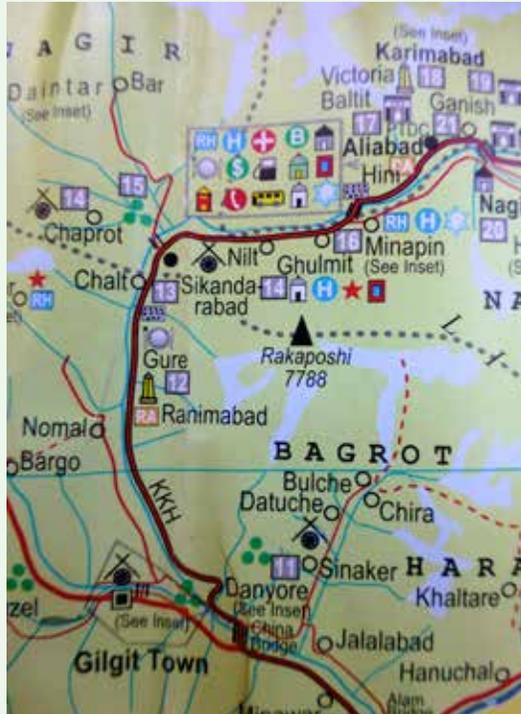
The Board Members are aware that there is a great need to improve the pronunciation of English in their school. One way in which this can be achieved is if first-language English speakers are prepared to come to the valley to work with the teachers and students.

Tim and I are the first volunteers and we hope that those who follow will benefit from our experience.

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Location



Gilgit-Baltistan is a disputed territory in the north of Pakistan. The Karakoram Highway runs through it on its way to China. Gilgit Town is the capital city and the entrance to the Bagrote Valley is roughly 17 kilometres from Gilgit. to the east. Once into the Valley it takes about 3/4 hr to reach the village of Datuche by jeep. The roads are precipitous and prone to rockfalls. It is an adventure in itself to travel in the Valley.

The BASE School is about 15 minutes walk north of Datuche on the way to Bulche. The village of Hopay is not marked on this map but is on the other side of the Bagrote River opposite Datuche. Another village, Farfooh lies on the same side of the river between Chira and Hopay.

The Sewing Centre, another initiative funded by Red Spokes, is in Chira and is so successful that women walk from Farfooh and Bulche to enrol on the 6-month course.

Below is a map of the valley created by two teachers from Farfooh. It shows Rakaposhi and the glaciers at the top right and from the left coming up from the bottom the first large green mass is Sinaker; followed by Hamaran then Hopay, Farfooh and Chira. The larger green mass to the right of Chira is a forest area accessible on foot. On the opposite side of the river are the villages of Bulche and Datuche.



The BASE School, close to Datuche on the way to Bulche

Sewing Centre, Chira

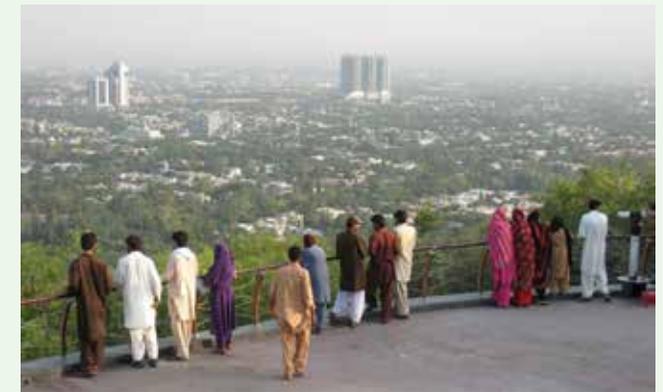
Getting There

Enter Pakistan via Islamabad, then take a short internal flight to Gilgit in the north. From Gilgit a jeep ride lasting about an hour and a half takes you to the heart of the valley.

Flights to Islamabad are made by a number of operators but at the time of writing Emirates offer the most reasonable rates. The flight from Islamabad to Gilgit is an internal flight with PIA (Pakistan International Airways). You cannot buy a ticket from Islamabad to Gilgit in London. Our flight was arranged by Mr Nasir Hussain but you could do it yourself at the airport when you arrive or go to the PIA office in Gilgit. Flights from London to Islamabad are approximately £600 return and from Islamabad to Gilgit £90 single.

Arriving in Islamabad is made more comfortable when you are being met by Mr Nasir Hussain, Director of Karakorum Trekking and an agent of Red Spokes. Nasir met us at the airport and took us to the hotel he uses for his tours. He is also available for tourist services in Islamabad if you decide to spend a few days there sightseeing. The Faisal Mosque is definitely worth a visit and although it was impossible for us to go inside we could see the huge golden chandelier and the spacious area for worship by looking through the large glass doors and windows..

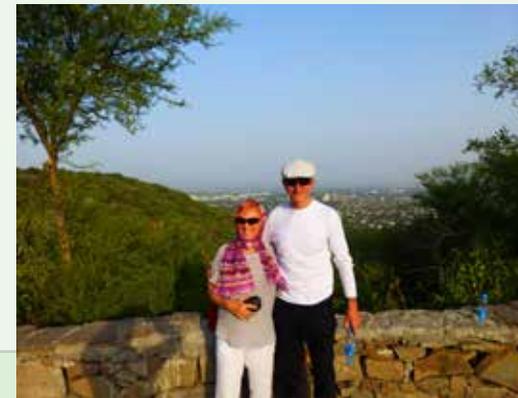
The mosque was a gift to Islamabad from King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. The architect was German and he based his design on the shape of a tent. The interior has no pillars for support relying upon the triangular structure of the design.



Islamabad is a relatively new city and is laid out on a grid system. It is built next to the old city of Rawalpindi. This view is from gardens looking back over Islamabad.

Feeling a bit travel weary we limited our afternoon tour to the mosque and views from the gardens. Despite Islamabad being a cosmopolitan city I took my scarf with me so that I could show respect, especially in the area around the mosque.

The temperature was around 40-45 and the heat lay like a blanket over the city. A few weeks later it hit 50 and I was very pleased that I was up in the Bagrote Valley. We decided that we would leave the city as soon as we could. Sightseeing is no fun for us in that extreme heat.



Islamabad to Gilgit



It is not so straightforward to get to or return from the town of Gilgit.

Flights are more often cancelled than fly due to the weather in the mountains so it is best to come prepared to stay in Islamabad until you can leave. You will be expected to tip anyone who does you a service so make sure you have plenty of rupees handy - 50 or 100 rupee notes are very useful.

You can change sterling or dollars at the airport or use an ATM - those attached to an international bank are more reliable. We were advised to withdraw money in Islamabad rather than wait until we reached Gilgit because the exchange rate is better in the city.

To get to Gilgit you are flying over the foothills of the Himalaya and it can be turbulent. The weather is variable in the mountains and it can be very British-like in May - rain and cloud, or it can be hot. So come prepared with waterproofs and warm jackets.

Flights to Gilgit leave early in the morning and must be confirmed the day before. If there is a backlog from a previous day's cancellation it is worth going to the airport just in case someone made other arrangements and does not turn up for their flight. We learnt this from our return experience when the previous day's flight was cancelled, and, after the event, we were asked why we hadn't turned up on the off chance of a no-show.

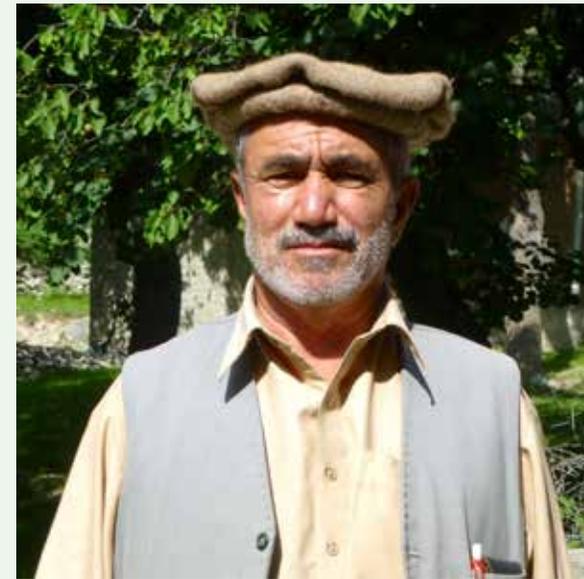


Whatever you do you need to plan in a possible delay going to or leaving Gilgit. If you have a flight booked from Islamabad on your return you need at least 4 days. Two for flight cancellations then another two for travelling to Islamabad by road if necessary. It actually costs a little less to go by road and there are a range of options from public transport to private jeep. But this must be balanced against comfort and the risk of travelling on a road that was always risky for Shia Muslims and is now just as risky for foreigners, since the terrorist atrocity at Nanga Parbat Base Camp.

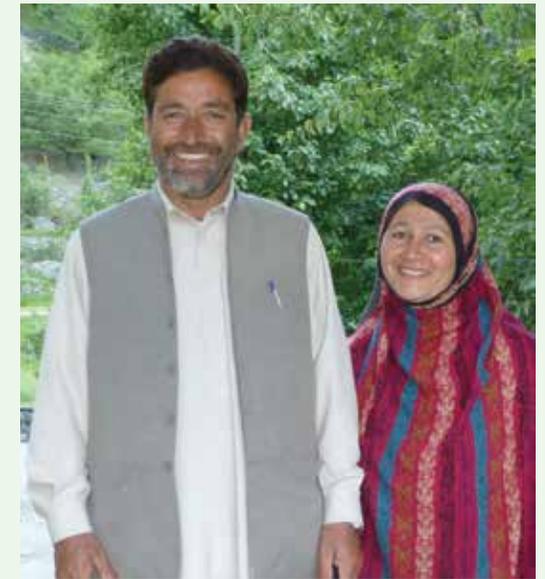
We felt quite safe in the Valley but exercised caution in Gilgit. Ahmad Ali and Hashim Ali both took our safety very seriously and took care that we were escorted whenever possible.

Arriving in Gilgit

Mr Hashim Ali, the Headmaster of the BASE school met us at the airport and would probably be the person to meet any volunteers if he is able. He took us to the home of his father-in-law, Mr Ahmad Ali, a few miles away in Danyore. Mr Ahmad Ali is a significant figure in the history of education in the Bagrote Valley. His eldest daughter, Musrat, Mr Hashim Ali's wife, was the first girl ever to be educated in the Valley. She is now a teacher in the NEF primary school for girls in Hopay. Girls' education has come a long way in the Bagrote Valley since Musrat was taught at home and enrolled at the Boys' School so that she could sit the examinations there.



Mr Ahmad Ali



Mr Hashim Ali and his wife Musrat

There are two options for travelling to the Bagrote Valley from Gilgit or Danyore. One is public transport which means a jeep that is tight-packed but a lot cheaper than the second option which is a private jeep. Hashim has a cousin who is prepared to do the return journey for 3000 Rupees (about £20). Other private jeeps cost 5,000 - 6,000 depending on your negotiating skills. Once in the Valley it will depend upon where you are staying as to how long the journey takes.

The advantage of a private jeep is that you can do your shopping in Gilgit or Danyore and load up the jeep as you go. You also get taken all the way home which, when you are staying in Hopay, saves you a 45 minute fairly strenuous walk. Staying in Datuche is fine because that is the end of the journey. I believe there are a number of other jeeps that travel between the six villages in the Valley but we did not use them. My usual mode of transport was on the back of a motorbike and Tim used his mountain bike.

Hashim Ali used his motorbike to travel between Hopay and Danyore which takes a lot less time than the jeep but limits the amount of shopping you can carry.

Driving into The Bagrote Valley

Once you have adjusted to the road conditions you can sit back and enjoy the journey from busy Danyore to the relative quiet of the Valley. Poor in financial terms, rich in so many other ways the Bagrotis are in the main farmers. The Valley provides fertile ground for a wide variety of crops, both vegetables and fruit trees, and with Rakaposhi and Dinar towering in the background presents an idyllic picture to visitors. There are, however, few visitors now that the fear of terrorism is ever-present in Pakistan. But once you are in the Valley be assured that you are safe.



This view presented itself as we drove higher into the Valley. The Bagrote River runs through the Valley and villages are perched on either side. We were to be staying in Hopay, one of the 7 villages in the Valley. Hashim Ali lives there with his family. However, as it is so far from the BASE School as to require transport there and back in the heat of the day, it is not really the best accommodation for volunteers. There is accommodation nearer in Datuche which is only 15 mins walk from the school and would allow a volunteer to be more independent. The house is called Monika's house (see page 14) by everyone as it was the first place that Monika stayed in 1991. It is not a house but an extension to a house. that was the home of Ahmad Ali. It has a wonderful view across the Valley to Hopay.

Who Lives in the Valley?

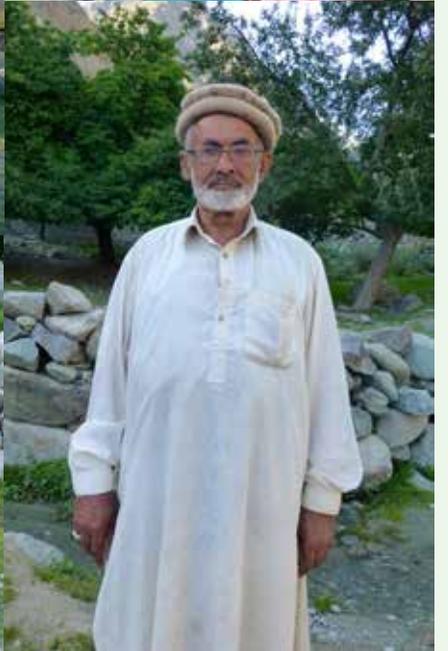
The people of the Bagrote Valley are Shia Muslims. In Gilgit Baltistan Shia are in the majority but in the whole of Pakistan the majority are Sunni. Generally Shia and Sunni live comfortably side by side but there are small elements who incline towards the fundamentalist Taliban and whose intent is to instil fear into the population.

The Bagrote Valley community is spread out among 7 villages, Datuche, Hopay, Bulchi, Farfooh, Chira, Sinaker and Hamaran and consists of about 900 households. Most of the families are related and tend to live in family groups within a village. For example, in Hopay, there are 10 family groups making up a community of 120 households.



Higher up there are 6 summer villages where people go from May until September to graze cattle and cut wood for the winter. It is hard physical work and it is not uncommon to see quite old men and women carrying huge loads of wood or branches on their backs. In the summer they travel long distances to collect wood because the wooded area around the lower villages has been exhausted. A teacher at the BASE School, whose parents make the annual journey to their summer home, told me that it was impossible for young people to carry out this strenuous work. I think he meant that he wouldn't contemplate it rather than couldn't as working on the land is something that most young Bagrotis want to leave behind.

If you are able to watch Gabriella's 52 minute video of the Karakorum Highway you will see community leaders telling their children to aspire to becoming Doctors, Teachers and Engineers, The incentive used is that they will no longer have to spend their lives working on the land.



The History of Education in the Bagrote Valley

In 1991 a young German anthropologist came to the Bagrote Valley to undertake her first study. No one in the Valley spoke German or indeed English and the sewerage system would not be in place until the following year. Monika Schneid stayed for 18 months in the home of Ahmad Ali, the Headmaster of the Boys' School, learnt to speak Shina, the local language and in partnership with Ahmad Ali, started to transform the face of education in the Valley.

Ahmad Ali shared his vision with Monika for the education of girls. He had, in 1986 already started to teach Musrat, his eldest daughter, at home and enrolled her at the Boys' School so that she could take examinations there. Ahmad Ali went literally knocking on doors to find parents keen to send their girls to school. But it was an uphill struggle and for a long time Musrat and one other girl, Dilara, were the only students.

Eventually, with Monika's help a small school was opened in Datuchi in a building vacated first by a Boys' Primary School and then a short-lived school for girls. This school taught up to 5th Class but Musrat and Dilara were already past that stage and so continued to study at home. As girls reached 5th Class it was obvious that some provision should be made



for them to continue. Monika, returning every year to her Bagrote family, continued to support the school and, after much planning and fundraising, Monika's High School for Girls was opened and now sends girls regularly for Higher Education to Gilgit, Danyore and Oshikandas. Many of these girls return to contribute to the education of people in the Valley,

In 2002 the community elders decided that an English medium school was needed in the Valley. Government schools were not considered to be offering a good education. Their one advantage was, and still is, that they are free but the medium of teaching is Urdu. Participation in the modern world is more successful with good English. The Bagrote Association for Social Enhancement was created and The BASE Public School came into being. As well as using English as the teaching medium The BASE School broke with tradition again by offering places for girls to be taught alongside the boys in the same classroom. The boldness of this move was revolutionary in itself and is vindicated by the fact that in the annual position holders awards girls feature in equal numbers to the boys.

The BASE Public School was opened on rented ground with teaching under the shade of the trees. Within a couple of years 5 tents were purchased with donations and then the rented land was purchased. This was nothing short of miraculous because the only income was from fees, kept very low so that parents could afford them, and donations. Loans from the bank attract high rates of interest and are best avoided. The next step, in 2005, was a block of three classrooms and a toilet block, followed by 5 small classrooms along the east wall built with local labour.



During the past 8 years many difficulties have been overcome and this year (2013) a new 9-classroom block was completed on the site of the original 3-classroom block. Further donations from Red Spokes have enabled plans to go ahead for a proposed further 3 classrooms, new toilet facilities and a large hall and kitchen. It will no longer be necessary for students to crouch in the playground to complete tests and examinations.

The main school is at Datuche and there are 4 other outposts teaching Nursery to Class 1 and at Sinaker, Nursery to Class 5. Students are then able to continue their studies at the main site. Another goal is to extend classes up to Class 12 so that students can complete this stage of their education without having to leave home.

Government schools operate in the morning from 8-12.30. The BASE School starts at 2 in the afternoon and runs until 6 pm. Most of the teachers at BASE School work in both schools and have a very long, hard day.

Opposite - (left) a view of the Headmaster's office/staff room, with Headmaster, Hashim Ali, and teachers Seema Batool, Salima and Sajida Hussain Baig (right) Class 2 with teachers Muhammad Aqil Baig, Muhammad Hussain Baig, Seema Batool and Sadiq Shah, Above - (left) the entrance to The BASE School and (right) Class 4 with teacher Sarim Below - (left) teachers in front of the the new nine-classrooms block and (right) Ibrar teaching logarithms to 9th Class in the shade,



Working at The BASE School

At the outset we had no way of knowing what sort of support would be most suitable for the school. Our plan for the 6 weeks was to find out how volunteers could work best with students, teachers and the community. The request had been for help with spoken English, not reading or writing and, as the majority of teachers have degrees, understanding was not really an issue. I took some postcards of London for conversation pieces and we bought a couple of TEFL books that we thought might help. In addition I collected a New Statesman on the way out for current affairs.

Our eventual pattern of working evolved over the first two weeks. It was difficult to refuse teachers who were hoping that we would come in and teach their classes but with no idea about local teaching styles, what lessons had gone before or where the lesson was to lead and no text book to look at before hand, this task was beyond me certainly. Tim found it easier in Maths because the process of teaching Maths seems to rise above nationality.

In discussion with Hashim we arrived at a workable plan. From 1.30-2.30 we would work with teachers and then when they had started to teach, after a later start than usual, we would make our own arrangements to support them. I offered to observe and work on pronunciations that caused difficulties. Tim was more interactive and did do some teaching. The most effective arrangement was to work with those teachers who were not teaching, in small discussion groups. I used the London postcards and an article about Pakistan and the elections to good effect.

Some of the teachers were keen to speak out in our lessons, others not so keen. The small group discussions worked well for those shy teachers and it was not long before many of them overcame their reluctance and became engaged. Some were still reluctant at the end of our visit. I think more focussed sessions with selected teachers would work well as opposed to self-selected groups. At the start the men and women seemed to prefer to separate and I was dragged off to talk with the women about gender related issues while Tim was engaged by the men who were more interested in agriculture and politics. Mixed groups seemed to work better if they were more tightly structured with teachers taking turns to input.

Our conclusions were that the teachers are the key people to work with, followed by students in the lower classes. The teachers are communicating new vocabulary and ideas in English and it is very important that they pronounce it correctly. The young students are learning English from scratch and pronunciation learned correctly at the outset will be established. Pronunciation difficulties we encountered were: rhythm/intonation – Pakistanis speak more quickly and with a sing-song lilt. We worked on slowing speech down, pausing after commas and sentences and separating syllables; mispronouncing consonants, for example saying F for P and W for V. We worked on this a lot but with limited success. We pointed out the confusion that could arise, for example “She was wearing a veil (whale)”, “She walked past (fast)” but it is very difficult to alter mislearned pronunciation in a short time.

Our major limiting factor was that there is no means of reproducing material. With no textbooks we had to write out enough copies of text for teachers to share. It was not always appropriate to have text written on the board. This meant that we had to plan and prepare materials for 6 1-hour sessions each week for between 13 and 20 teachers.

We would advise any volunteers to have some work prepared before coming so that you are not tied down as much as we were. Focussed 15 - 20 minute lessons with younger children, general discussion and strategies to engage even the shyest of teachers worked well for us but are not everyone's preferred approach.. BASE School Teachers love to be involved and love to act. We prepared scripts of Jack and the Beanstalk and Hansel and Gretel and wrote scenarios 'At the Doctor's', 'In the Restaurant', etc which were very well received and entertaining.

You will be working with educated, qualified teachers. Understanding the written word is not the problem. The structure of everyday speech in English, the rhythm of the language and pronunciation are the issues.

Communications

Bring an old mobile phone and charger with you so that you can put a local network SIM card (ESCON) in it for use in the Valley and Gilgit area. It is relatively cheap to phone Europe and the line is loud and clear. We found difficulty sending and receiving texts. Credit can be bought in 100 Rupee scratch cards in Hopay or Datuche. The ESCON network operates between 7 am and 10 pm and does not work in Islamabad. so make your phone calls before you get on the plane in Gilgit.

Currently there is no internet connection available in the valley but there are two internet cafes in Danyore. It costs about 100 Rupees an hour but on some days availability is unreliable. The service itself is unreliable, too - once I couldn't upload any photographs to my blog and then I was told that I had no Yahoo account so couldn't send any emails. Be prepared.

There is electricity in the Valley, again unreliable, but usually for some hours every day. You can charge up your laptop, camera, Kindle, mobile phone, etc if you bring the right connectors.

People get about by walking, motorbike and jeep. Tim was the only cyclist either of us saw - Red Spokes brings a tour up the Valley to camp and then return every September. Public service jeeps go daily to Danyore and Gilgit. For more comfort a private jeep can be hired.

Accommodation

We stayed in Hopay, at the home of Mr Hashim Ali, about 45 mins walk away from the BASE School. Because of the heat in the middle of the day, Hashim did not want me walking to school, so had either to return and take me to school after lunch or arrange for someone to come and collect me. This is clearly not a good arrangement in the long term. If, however, volunteers came with bicycles it would be a possibility. Tim locked his bike away in Hashim's garage in the village.

Alternative accommodation would be at what is universally known as Monika's house in Datuchi. It is where she stayed when she first came to the Valley and is a 15 min walk from the BASE School. Volunteers staying in this extension to Ahmad Ali's house would be independent. For cooking there would be a 2-ring gas cooker. I have not come across an oven either in Danyore or Bagrote. As the arrangement is that volunteers would be provided with accommodation and food, there would be some arrangement whereby supplies would be made available.



Monika's house

Monika's house is a self contained extension to the house where Ahmad Ali lived in Datuchi and which he still owns. It consists of one airy room for living and sleeping, one washroom with toilet and one area for storage, which could be converted into living space by putting mats on the floor. Cooking would be on a small 2-ring gas cooker and water is available from a tap outside. Basic foods would be provided.

It takes about 30 minutes to walk to the BASE School on an undulating unmetalled road. Datuche has a small shop, a mechanic and a tea shop for simple refreshment.

Climate

Weather in the mountains is difficult to predict but there is a general pattern. The winter months of December, January and February are very cold at night. Snow falls on the upper Valley to a depth of about 1-2 ft and stays on the ground. Lower down in Chira, Bulchi and Farfooh snow is less and does not stay for long. In Datuche, Hopay and below there is a sprinkling and some ice underfoot. Spring and Autumn are cool and pleasant. The summer months of June, July and August are hot by UK standards. Despite asking several people it was impossible to get a temperature range.

For me the heat in the middle of the day made it uncomfortable to walk about, because of the clothes I was wearing. I longed for short sleeved T shirts and shorts but had to cover up and perspire. If I had tried to wear a scarf as well I think I would have exploded.. In the Valley there is relief from the sun quite early on the Datuche side of the Valley and the mornings and evenings everywhere are very pleasant.

Diet

Eating times seemed fairly consistent. Breakfast early - Hashim and Musrat usually ate about 6.30, lunch between 11 and 12, then a long gap until dinner at 8.30 pm. Obviously variations are necessary for people working in school where the morning sessions finished at 12.30 and we were allowed to breakfast whenever we liked, which tended to be nearer 8 am.

Staples are rice and potatoes and the community produces a very wide range of vegetables and fruit. However, in June, there are no locally grown fruits ripe and few vegetables so anything that is not seasonal in Bagrote has to be bought in from Danyore or Gilgit.

For breakfast there was usually some type of bread and we usually had eggs. Lunch was often rice with lentils or the stew of the previous evening. Our main meals consisted of bread, some sort of hot stew with or without meat, rice, onion and tomato (sometimes mixed with yoghurt and mint). There are 6 different types of flat bread. We both found it difficult to digest the bread that was oily and found that blander meals suited our western systems. We were both ill on and off during the first 2 weeks so worked out with Hashim and Musrat a more suitable diet.

We eventually found some cereals in Gilgit, porridge and weetabix so that became our breakfast of choice - me with boiled milk, cooled, for the weetabix, and Tim with boiled water for the porridge. We had some honey from Hunza to add a bit of sweetness. For lunch we both enjoyed some form of eggs with sliced bread, again bought from Gilgit or Danyore. We introduced Musrat and Mujtabar to the concept of a fried egg sandwich, but Mujtabar preferred one with jam. Dinner was usually ok, but occasionally, when we went out, the meat was a bit undigestible for me. Apart from the lack of fresh fruit we benefitted from our diet, which had very little sugar (apart from in tea), very little saturated fat and not a lot of flour - I ate very little bread apart from 2 slices at lunchtime for my sandwich.

We bought some chocolate bars in Gilgit but they lasted a long time as the craving for chocolate had disappeared. We did enjoy Marie and Digestive biscuits, however, and kept a supply to enjoy with tea in the afternoon.

Fruit juice, home made yoghurt and mineral water to drink. No alcohol. The local water is not good for Europeans. Do not drink it, do not clean your teeth or food with it. Be very vigilant. Do not rely upon boiling it - I think we fell foul of thinking that boiled local water was ok for tea - IT IS NOT - only use mineral water. I would also be wary of boiled milk, cooled now that I reflect upon the effect on my system which took over a month to settle down on our return (with the help of anti-acid medicine).

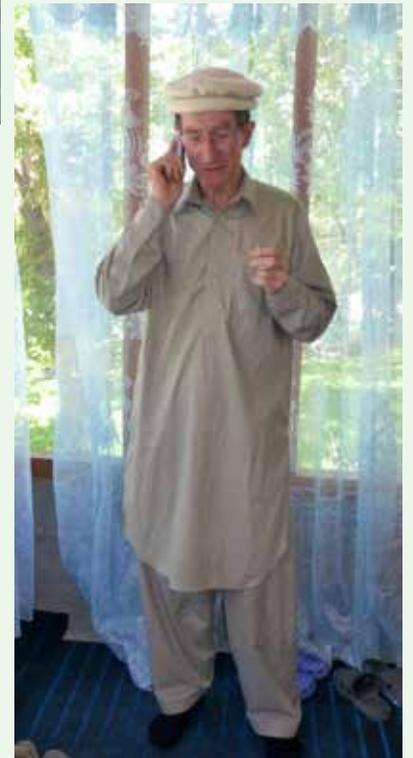
Dress and Conduct

Women can, of course, wear western clothes but they must cover their arms and legs and, out of the home, a scarf should be worn so that it can cover the head if necessary. In order to be respected at work it is advisable to get some kameez made cheaply and quickly in Danyore or Gilgit. You will wear these when working or visiting. I found it too hot to wear a scarf most of the time so I draped it around my shoulders and that was acceptable.



Men can wear western clothes with no adjustments - however I did not see anyone in shorts - but will probably be more comfortable in local clothes when it comes to eating. Food is served on a table cloth on the floor, which requires one to sit cross-legged.

Tim is wearing local dress and a Bagroti hat made from felt. The cloth was bought and the clothes made in an afternoon in Danyore and the hat was made to measure by Ahmad Ali in a few hours.



Tim says that his local clothes are cool and comfortable, although they are not suitable for a bicycle!

When you are invited for a meal do not expect to see the women of the house. You might be introduced when you arrive and you might see them clearing away the meal but they will not join you in eating unless it is the home where you are staying. There you will be part of the family and eat with everyone.

When meeting people it is usual to shake hands. Men who know each other will hug. Some men find it difficult to shake hands with a woman but are often too polite to refuse an outstretched hand. Religious people do not shake hands with women at all and prefer not to acknowledge them in any way.

Traditionally, food is eaten using the right hand to scoop up the rice, meat, vegetables with pieces of parota or chapatti. However, the use of spoons seems to be widespread. Sitting on the floor can be hard on the knees if you are old and less flexible. Our hosts were very kind in Danyore, providing us with a table to eat from and in Hopay we could sit on a raised section and flex our legs any way we needed. We also had a table to work on during the day when we were preparing work.

What to Bring With You

These are suggestions only and relate to our experience which was in the summer. In the winter there is often snow and it is very cold at night.

Clothes - male	Waterproof jacket Light clothing that you feel comfortable in Trousers that allow you to sit crossed legged on the floor Good walking shoes Sandals, crocks are useful too Sun hat of some sort
Clothes - Female	Waterproof jacket Tops that have long sleeves Trousers that are full length Scarf Locally made kameeze for working and for comfortable sitting Shoes (as above)
Medicines	Painkillers, sickness and diarrhoea tablets Rehydration sachets, Rennies or milk of magnesia
Other	Camera, suntan cream, sunglasses, Kindle loaded up
Treats for yourself	Favourite snacks, eg chocolate, biscuits
Gifts	Chocolate, keyrings, stickers, handcream, containers eg small jewellery boxes, seeds (vegetables and flowers)

YOU CAN BUY BOTTLED WATER IN DANYORE. IN 6 PACKS OR SINGLY IN DATUCHI

Local water is safe for local people. You will suffer if you drink it, clean your teeth with it or eat food that has been rinsed in it. **We cannot stress this enough.**

You can buy toilet rolls, fruit juice and sliced bread in Danyore - check first if it is sweet or not sweet according to your preference.

You can have clothes made in an afternoon if you are a man - it might take a bit longer for a woman, especially if you want anything other than a plain design.

We did spot tins of Heinz baked beans and weetabix in a grocers shop in Gilgit for those who cannot do without.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Red Spokes for giving us this opportunity to travel to the Bagrote Valley and meet the students and teachers of the BASE School. It has been an unforgettable experience and we will take away many warm memories and, we hope, enduring friendships.

We would also like to thank Monika for being so cheerfully available to us, patiently answering questions, finding out answers and generally keeping us positive. Her contribution to the education of girls in the Valley cannot be described in normal terms Only superlatives will do.

Thanks, too, to all the teachers and BASE School Board members who opened their hearts to us, offered us hospitality and made us feel so welcome.

And finally very special thanks to Mr Ahmad Ali, Roqia, Mr Hashim Ali, Musrat and Mujtaba who gave us their homes for 6 weeks, looked after us and showed us, with warmth and humour, what it was to be Bagroti.

Centre - top row across both pages - gentlemen of Hopay, Musrat's aunt, spinning, Mujtaba (Hashim Ali's youngest son) with his cow, the teacher at the Sewing Centre - middle row - little girl from Hopay, boys from the BASE school, sister of Sadat (Mujtaba's friend), gentleman from Bulchi, Sadat with his sister and mother - bottom row - young men playing volleyball at the Boys' High School, road workers up the valley, notables from Datuche, gentleman of Datuche

Back cover - view of the BASE Public School from the other side of the Bagrote River, descending from Farfooh

