PAKISTAN TREK
Building Narrative – Beyond the Headlines
The Fulbright Master’s scholarship program opened the doors for me to pursue my dream to go to Harvard!

Dear Sobia Maqbool,
This is to inform you that Harvard University has offered you admission for a Master’s degree program.

Final Placement Decision - Sobia Maqbool 2015

Dear Sobia Maqbool,

This is to inform you that USEFP, in consultation with IIE, has decided to place you at Harvard University for their Master’s Public Policy program. Please be reminded that we will now withdraw all your applications from other universities since this is USEFP’s final decision. Therefore, please plan to attend Harvard University this Fall. This is for your information and records.
From PHDs, to ex-military personnel to Government Officials and Development workers, I was surrounded by the brightest and the most learned and some very crazy people!

I was ready to immerse myself for two years in this new world – break new grounds – learn and engage!
At the same time, I was SHOCKED at the perceptions of Pakistan in the international community!

While I had previously traveled significantly, the negative perceptions had never hit home this badly!!
People travel on camels

Girls get married very early

It’s a war zone and you cannot step out of the house!

Pakistan is full of terrorists & no one’s life is safe

Pakistan is full of bearded men who run around brandishing swords

Girls can’t go to school
I could not stay put!

I could not pass on the buck to someone else to fix the situation!

I wanted to create an opportunity for students at Harvard to visit Pakistan and form their own opinion about the country.

And so we launched the Harvard Pakistan Trek!

What is Pakistan Trek?
Pakistan trek designed for people who.....

• Dream to explore destinations less travelled; people with open hearts and adventurous spirits

• Want to challenge the public narrative and develop perspectives beyond the headlines

• Like to engage with locals, get invited to their homes - break bread, dance to traditional music and make friends
Pakistan Trek was...

A voyage through a 5,000BC civilization - home to the tallest peaks in the world \( \text{there are 65 peaks higher than the Alps in Pakistan} \) and crystal blue lakes

A unique opportunity to be able to gaze deep into the soul of Pakistan and gain access to an insider’s look into the lives of the locals

A journey filled with diverse experiences - from the food you eat to the people you interact with and the landscapes you breathe in
Harvard Pakistan Treks

Harvard Pakistan Trek 2016
10 serious applications
9 people on the trek

Harvard Pakistan Trek 2017
More than a 100 applicants and impact expanded to multiple schools within Harvard and beyond;
22 people on the trek
Snapshots of Harvard Pakistan Trek 2017

• 3 domestic flights
• 4 cities
• 6 nationalities
• 8 days
• 22 Harvard students
• 35 independent activities
• And a wonderful host family
Exploring the country

The Mughal City – Lahore

- **Tour of ‘Walled City’;**
  Royal baths, fort, grand mosque, tonga & Rickshaw rides

- **Enjoy Polo match** and ride polo ponies – only for those who dare!

- Meet locals

- Witness **Military ceremony** along the **Indian border**
Exploring the country

The Cosmopolitan Center – Karachi
Sixth most populous city in the world!

- **Boat ride to Mangroves** – visit to WWF conservation site and contribute by planting saplings

- **Meetings with top business professionals**

- **Sightseeing** - Mohatta Palace, Clifton beach, Quaid’s mausoleum

- **Shopping, shopping & shopping** – local bazaars to high end malls
Exploring the country

**Home to the country’s Parliament – Islamabad**

- Treks through mountains in Islamabad
- Experience spirituality in Faisal Mosque - largest mosque in the world from 1986 until 1993
- **Parliament** visit – walking the paths of policymakers
- Visit to **Saidpur Village**
Exploring the country

Get ready to be mesmerized by raw beauty!

- **Air Safari** - flying in a twin engine plane between the tallest ranges in the world
- Stay in **heritage forts**
- Witness **shooting stars** in the sky
- Driving along the **silk route**
- **Trek** to the **glaciers** & through **valleys**
- Climb up the **Katpana desert**, a cold desert, located at the foot of snow-peaked mountains and towering over crystal blue lake
Navigating through the geo-political narrative

Dialogue with policy makers in charge with the country’s political and military aspirations

- Senior officials in office
- Opposition leaders
- Army generals
Identifying the path to development

Visit to institutions leading the country’s journey to sustainable development

- **Edhi Foundation** – managing the world’s largest ambulance network; caregivers to orphans and homeless people

- **The Citizens Foundation** – providing education to over 200,000 children for anywhere between a few cents to $3 a month

- **DAMEN** – a grassroot not-for-profit organization engaged in women empowerment through loans and helping them establish home schools & maternity clinics
A taste of Higher Education in Pakistan

Providing trek participants an opportunity to experience student life in Pakistan
Meeting the visionaries behind these institutions, interacting with the faculty & students, eating in the cafeteria

- **National College of Arts** – the premier arts college in Pakistan; opportunity to explore the creative talent in Pakistan engaged in dance, music, paint, etc.
- **Lahore University of Management Sciences** – a multi-discipline grad school imparting highest standards of education
Exposure to Family life in Pakistan

Learning about family life in Pakistan

● Experience the lifestyle of your host family
● Meet people from different age brackets living under the same roof and what joint family dynamics look like
● Indulge in home cooked food
● Take charge of a kitchen & run the show!
Food!!!

It's SPICY & SPICY but so DELICIOUS!
Treat your palette throughout the trek

- From high end restaurants to select roadside cafes
- Home cooked meals
- Traditional to local versions of international cuisines
Pakistan Trek...

• Fast paced, packed with some 30+ events with extreme diversity in experiences.

• From changing weathers - spring to summer to winter as the trek participants hopped between 4 cities, wandered into villagers’ homes, trekked on glaciers and walked through valleys surrounded by some of the tallest peaks in the world.

• Visited the mysterious forts of the years past and historic sights preserved from the Mughal dynasty.

• Indulged in deep conversations about politics and war with army generals; socialize with the movers and shakers of the Pakistani society - policy makers, leaders, artists, entrepreneurs, musicians and philanthropists.

• Met people engaged in social development projects in the fields of poverty alleviation, education, health, etc. to help build an understanding of the geopolitical nature of the country and the trial and tribulations of the nation.
What did the trek participants have to say about the trek?
Testimonials

Samantha Joseph  
Harvard Kennedy School (MPA), 2017  
USA

Visiting Pakistan was a highlight of my time at the Harvard Kennedy School. As future global leaders, it's very important that we explore the world and go beyond the headlines to form our own perspectives. The 8 days I spent in Pakistan gave me the chance to do that. Sobia and Adnan designed an itinerary that exposed us to all aspects of the country - culture, politics, and business. We visited some of the most interesting and beautiful places I have ever been. I would highly recommend this trip to other students - it's a once in a lifetime opportunity to see this country guided by people who are deeply invested in its future. Thank you so much to Sobia, Adnan and everyone else who made this experience possible!

Emily Wang  
Harvard Kennedy School (MPA), MIT Sloan (MBA) 2017

Pakistan Trek was the opportunity of a lifetime. Having never been to that region of the world, I gained a much deeper appreciation for the culture, history, politics, and beauty of Pakistan. From meetings with senior government officials to city tours to the surprise modern and hip National College of Arts in Lahore to the gorgeous landscapes of Hunza Valley - the 8 days were a whirlwind of learning and fun. Sobia and Adnan were able to provide us access to perspectives in the country that we never could have accessed ourselves. In addition, their hospitality and dedication made the trip even more special. It's one thing to go on a well-organized tour. It's something else entirely to be brought to see someone's homeland through their own eyes.
Testimonials

Nelson Ortiz  
Harvard Kennedy School (MPA), Wharton Business School (MBA), 2017  
Venezuelan

When I decided to visit Pakistan I felt I was stepping out of my comfort zone. I was headed for a place very far from home to explore a country and a culture I knew nothing about except what I had seen on the news and some movies.

As we began exploring Lahore, our first destination, I was quickly impressed by what I saw: yes there was a culture that in many ways was unknown to me through its language, cuisine, fashion, and customs. But at the same time I discovered a culture that really made me feel at home through its kindness to strangers and focus on family values. It was at this moment I realized I would have a completely different vision of Pakistan by the end of the trip.

Christoph Nedopil  
Harvard Kennedy School (MPA), 2017  
German

The opportunity to experience many faces of Pakistan during this 8-day trip through an insider's view, was extremely rewarding, enlightening and mind-changing. The organizers went to great lengths to give us not only a personal perspective of their country, but to show us many facets of political, social, business, artsy and environmental life in Pakistan - from the old fortress and city in Lahore, to a private audience with Punjab’s ministers, from the mind-blowing valleys and glaciers of the Karakorum mountains, to the busy streets and unique mangroves of Karachi. This was the perfect teaser of Pakistan for me and there is no doubt that I will be back to explore this fascinating, beautiful and often misunderstood country more!
Ignacio Quintana
Harvard Kennedy School (MPA), 2017
Spain
What’s next?
Co-founding a startup to continue this journey!

Adnan Afaq  
CEO, Pakistan Credit Rating Agency  
- Chartered Accountant from England by qualification, banker by profession  
- An avid traveler who loves the outdoors and meeting interesting people  
- Deeply engaged in the arrangements for the 2016 & 2017 Harvard Pakistan Treks  
- Adnan’s family was the host family in both the treks. At his residence, the students experienced home cooked food and true Pakistani hospitality while also having the opportunity to interact with people from different walks of life

Sobia Maqbool  
Head of Research, Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company Limited  
- Alumna of the Harvard Kennedy School and also a CFA charterholder  
- Professionally interested in financial inclusion and education  
- Instrumental in initiating the Pakistan Treks at the Harvard Kennedy School  
- Success of the first Harvard Pakistan Trek manifested in more than 100 applications received from Harvard alone for the 2017 trek in addition to creating interest in other universities, including Fletcher, Cornell & LBS
Perceptions have changed.
The narrative has begun to change.

Today students from 4 of the world’s top schools are eager to go on this journey with us!
This is PAKISTAN