



Deosai : Land of the Giant

By Salman Rashid, Nadeem Khawar

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Deosai has long kept an aura of mystery. Long before the first European explorers ventured into this high altitude plateau, vague knowledge of its existence was current in the plains of the Indian subcontinent. Thence the word had been carried by the nomadic Gujjar cow herders who fattened their animals on the rich summer grasses of this vast uninhabited tableland. The Gujjar accounts wafted from person to person to become a confused tale of a plateau stretching flat, unbroken and treeless from the mountains north of the capital of Kashmir all the way to the deserts of Tartary. The myth was finally broken in the 1830s. The earliest Europeans, both Britons, William Moorcroft and Godfrey Thomas Vigne, were over-awed by its sheer desolation. Both also noted that Deosai was inhabited by large numbers of Tibetan brown bear. Though the elusive snow leopard, fox, wolf and ibex prowl across it, it was the easily seen bear that became the signature species on the plateau. But over the years all was not well for the bear. It became commonly believed that a diet of some of the bear's body parts could cure sexual impotence, or that its body fat rubbed on arthritic joints could rejuvenate them no matter how worn out they might be. The result was a slow but systematic purging of the species. By the late 1980s, only a handful of bears survived. That was when the protagonists of this book began the conservation effort to bring back this precious animal from the brink of extinction. Their efforts paid and there has been an increase in the bear population. But even though programme is now in the hands of the government, the bears still look ahead to an uncertain future. Deosai: Land of the Giant tells the story of Deosai, its geography and history as well as the heroic effort of bear conservation and the establishment of a national park on the plateau. This publication of this book symbolises the hope that the effort begun in the late 1980s will not go waste and that future travellers will see groups of bears roaming on Deosai without persecution.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Salman Rashid is Pakistan's most widely travelled travel writer with few places in the country that do not carry his footprint. Acclaimed as the most erudite travel writer of the country, he is the author of eight books that include anthologies of his newspaper articles. This book is the outcome of nearly a quarter century of the Deosai romance over several visits to the plateau. Nadeem Khawar studied photography in Japan over a period of six years. Returning home to Lahore in 1995 he turned his passion into his profession. His work has since been displayed and printed as calendars and posters both within Pakistan and abroad. His first book was *Sights in the Sands of Cholistan* (Oxford University Press, 2007). His photography also appears in *Governor's House* complimentary book (2008). Khawar worked in southern Nepal with the German writer Gilbert Kolonko for his book *Auf in mein Lieblingsreisland, auf nach Pakistan*. Two decades of experience in landscape and portrait photography now bring you *Deosai: Land of the Giant*.

Users Review

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