

## All cricket, curry & terrorism?: UK students share lessons from Pakistan Young creatives on educational tour to challenge perceptions

Six aspiring British creatives are embarking on an educational tour to share their experiences of journeying to Pakistan with Offscreen Expeditions.

The team of 18-21-year-olds spent two weeks in October exploring Pakistan beyond the headlines. Going beyond 'cricket, curry and terrorism' – the three words they used to describe the perceptions of Pakistan in the UK – their views and visions can be explored through a series of online videos, photos and blogs at [www.offscreenexpedition.com](http://www.offscreenexpedition.com).

The students undertook the expedition with a focus on creating positive change in their own communities. Now back in Britain, they are engaged with spreading the messages of diplomacy and tolerance through their communities. By giving workshops and presentations to schools and youth groups, the Offscreen creatives share skills and knowledge that they gained in Pakistan, including how to explore how social narratives are constructed and find innovative solutions to current and challenging issues.

This educational tour builds on two successful programs in which students from the UK and Pakistan each toured the other's country in 2010. Offscreen Expeditions, a UK-based not-for-profit organisation, worked in partnership with the British Council to give young people in Britain and Pakistan a space to debate and explore solutions to some of the most challenging issues they face today such as access to education and employment, terrorism and gang culture.

Offscreen Expeditions Director Jamie Buchanan-Dunlop explains: "This year Pakistan has seen a lot of media attention, from the floods, to the cricket scandal to the devastating impact terrorism has had on its people and culture. The expedition gives tomorrow's community the chance to form their own views and helps to build understanding between young people in both countries."

The group travelled the country participating in activities including creating art with truck painters, debating with a religious scholar about how Islam is being manipulated to justify violence, meeting a documentary filmmaker working to improve civil rights, and scrutinising the role of the media with students from the National College of Arts. In Mirpur, a region with strong links to the UK, the six visited a number of social-based action projects run by the British Council to learn how young Pakistanis are establishing projects and helping to make a difference in their own communities. Now that the expedition has finished, the youths are working to implement the ideas that they learned in their home neighborhoods.

Imran, a student from Birmingham said: "There are lots of people setting up projects to improve things in their communities. Terrorism does exist but there are people here doing a lot to help end it. I hope I can implement my new ideas that will inspire change in my own community." He and the expedition students aim to do just that with their upcoming educational assemblies and speeches in the UK.

Check out their stories online at: [www.offscreenexpedition.com](http://www.offscreenexpedition.com)!

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For downloadable high-res images of expedition highlights and participant headshots, please visit:  
[offscreenexpedition.zenfolio.com](http://offscreenexpedition.zenfolio.com).

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

### **About Offscreen Expeditions**

Offscreen Expeditions is an expedition-based education programme run by UK-based educational social enterprises Offscreen Education Programme and Digital Explorer. Since the first Offscreen Expedition in 2007, the programme has garnered international praise and awards for its much needed work in developing greater understanding between young people in the UK and the Middle East.

See our previous expeditions at:

[www.offscreenexpedition.com/2010\\_uk](http://www.offscreenexpedition.com/2010_uk)

[www.offscreened.com/expedition/2007](http://www.offscreened.com/expedition/2007)

[www.offscreened.com/expedition/2008](http://www.offscreened.com/expedition/2008).

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### **About Digital Explorer**

Digital Explorer is a pioneer in educational expeditions where pupils are at the centre. We take select groups of talented young communicators on curriculum-based expeditions, kit them up with the latest recording and communications equipment, facilitate their experience with teachers and broadcast their experiences to a global online audience – it's direct pupil-to-pupil education LIVE from one corner of the world to the other. Unsurprisingly, pupils find it far easier to relate to someone their own age compared to adult presenters, 'experts' or politicians.

[www.digitalexplorer.co.uk](http://www.digitalexplorer.co.uk)

### **Expedition Itinerary:**

Day 1: *What is my idea of Pakistan?* Arrival and visit to **tailor**.

Day 2: *Is the media right?* All day workshop with students of the **National College of Arts**, Rawalpindi, examining media views of Pakistan and the UK, and personal views of Pakistan and the UK. Dinner with **Samar Minallah**, documentary film-maker focussed on civil and human rights.

Day 3: *What does art mean to you?* All day in a **truck-yard in Rawalpindi** on the edge of a slum, helping paint a truck and talking to the men and children who worked there. Evening visit to Khaadi (<http://www.khaadi.com.pk/>) to choose our attire for the final celebration.

Day 4: *How do we view our past?* Visit to Taxila museum and spoke with curator, followed by trip to Jaulian monastery and the ruins of the **oldest university in the world**. Dinner with **Humayun Khan**, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Pakistan High Commissioner to the UK, Ambassador to Bangladesh and Ambassador to India.

Day 5: *What does faith mean now?* Question/answer discussion with a student of **Dr Javed Ahmed Ghamidi**, a moderate Islamic scholar and founder of Al Mawrid Institute (<http://www.al-mawrid.org/>), followed by an afternoon workshop with students of St Mary's Academy, Rawalpindi with **interfaith NGO FACES Pakistan** (<http://www.facespakistan.com/>). Evening visit to **Faisal Masjid**, Islamabad.

Day 6: *How has my city changed?* A full day walking **tour of the Rawalpindi backstreets** with artist and photographer Aasim Akhtar, taking in hidden architectural gems as well as everyday life.

Day 7: *What is life like in a madrassa?* All day visit to a **boys' madrassa in Mirpur, Kashmir**, meeting the imam and students for discussions and a tour, and an impromptu game of cricket with the students! Dinner with the participants of the Active Citizens programme in Mirpur.

Day 8: *How can I make a difference?* Visits to two social action projects in Mirpur set up by the British Council's Active Citizens programme – a teacher training programme to **improve student interaction** and participation, and a **school set up for underprivileged, orphaned and refugee children** unable to afford education.

Day 9: *What will I do?* A day of reflection in the Murree hills; **hiking in the Ayubia National Park** and individual quiet time to **make pledges** for implementing lessons learnt on arrival back to the UK.

Day 10: *How has my idea of Pakistan changed?* Revisit thoughts of Day 1 and preparing speeches for the final celebration at the **Pakistan National Council of Arts**, which the **UK Foreign Affairs Committee attended**.

Day 11: *What have I learnt?* Departure day and **reflection on trip** as a whole.