



mountainwilderness Asian Desk

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PRESS RELEASE

This evening, Mehrosh Althar, Maria Rahim and Mehwis Sayed - three young mountaineers from the high valleys of Swat and Chitral - will fly back to Pakistan from Venice's Marco Polo Airport. Their departure marks the end of a month-long, three-part internship in the Aosta Valley and Piedmont, organised by the Asian Desk of Mountain Wilderness International together with the Italian Academic Alpine Club, the Italian Army's Alpine Training Centre, the Mountaineering School of CAI Padua, the Montagna Sicura Foundation and Italy's National Research Council (CNR).

The course, titled *Girls in Action!*, opened with a week dedicated to advanced rock-climbing techniques, self-rescue skills and ice-climbing progression. It continued with a week of theoretical and field-based training on the impacts of the climate crisis on the cryosphere, combined with instruction in first aid and high-altitude medicine. The final week was spent as guests of the Gran Paradiso National Park Authority, where the three trainees followed experts studying the behaviour of ibex, chamois, marmots and bearded vultures, were introduced into the use of camera traps to monitor wildlife, explored highly fragile high-altitude ecosystems like the park's wetlands, practised orienteering and learned the fundamentals of managing a large protected natural area.

Organisers say the internship exceeded even their most optimistic expectations, thanks to the enthusiastic involvement of numerous mountaineering instructors - most of them women - and the high-level contribution of scientists and specialists who volunteered their expertise to give the three Pakistani guests a formative experience with lasting impact.

Mehrosh, Maria and Mehwish were selected from a wider group of Pakistani women who, in recent years, received basic outdoor training from Mountain Wilderness in their home regions, preparing them for responsible light mountaineering, hiking, environmental stewardship and even archaeological fieldwork. The three young mountaineers, who leave Italy with visible regret, are among the most committed advocates of a new all-female association, designed to help Pakistani women break free from rigid, predetermined social roles through direct engagement with the mountains. The association, named *Sheen Alpine Association*, was

officially recognised just days ago by the government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa - a milestone within an already significant achievement.

On the eve of their departure, during a well-attended event hosted by the Padua section of the Italian Alpine Club, the three trainees received certificates of participation from the Franco Piovan Mountaineering School, the CNR and the Gran Paradiso National Park Authority.

The internship was made possible thanks to the support of Banca Sella Holding, Epitech, the Italian Academic Alpine Club, the CNR, the Montagna Sicura Foundation, the Italian Army, the Gran Paradiso National Park Authority, the Franco Piovan Mountaineering School of CAI Padua, the CAI sections of Pisa and Chivasso, and numerous donors who contributed to a dedicated fundraising campaign. Special thanks go to SCARPA, Ferrino, Grivel, Rock Experience and Hdry for providing essential equipment and technical gear.

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