

ASIA · MOUNTAINS · HIKING · HISTORY · CULTURE · FOOD · ROAD TRIPS

 Pakistan

Pakistan holds some of the most dramatic mountain scenery on Earth: the Karakoram Highway climbs past the apricot orchards of Hunza towards China, and Nanga Parbat towers over Fairy Meadows. Further south, Lahore's Mughal monuments and food streets, the Indus Valley city of Mohenjo-daro and Sufi shrines show another side. Costs are low and the hospitality is famous.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Pakistan.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 13 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Islamabad	 CURRENCY Pakistani rupee (PKR) £1 ≈ PKR 370	 LANGUAGE Urdu, Punjabi Pashto, English	 BEST TIME Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £25–£140 £ Budget-friendly	 PLUGS Type C, D 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h direct ~£500–£1,000 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+5 standard time

Pakistan divides neatly into mountains and plains. Most first trips centre on the north: fly or drive from Islamabad to Gilgit, then follow the Karakoram Highway up the Hunza Valley towards the Khunjerab Pass, adding Fairy Meadows, Skardu or the Kalash Valleys of Chitral. The plains hold the cultural heart: Lahore's Walled City, Fort and Badshahi Mosque, the Gandharan Buddhist ruins of Taxila near Islamabad, and in Sindh, Mohenjo-daro and the shrine town of Sehwan. Summer suits the mountains and winter the plains, so most trips focus on one or the other.

Pakistan is one of Asia's cheapest countries for travellers, and the hospitality can be overwhelming: invitations to tea, refused payments and selfie requests are part of every day. Mountain roads are slow, flights to Gilgit and Skardu depend on the weather, and landslides can close the Karakoram Highway in summer. Domestic tourism has boomed, so Hunza and Naran fill up on holiday weekends. First-time visitors are often surprised by the quality of guesthouses in Hunza and by how much English is spoken. Check the FCDO travel advice, which differs sharply from region to region.

Top 5 highlights

1

NATURE

Hunza Valley

Terraced orchards, views of Rakaposhi and Ultar Sar, and the restored Baltit and Altit forts make Hunza the high point of the Karakoram Highway. Visit in April for apricot blossom or late October for autumn gold.

2

SACRED SITE

Badshahi Mosque and Lahore Fort

Completed under Aurangzeb in 1673, the red-sandstone Badshahi Mosque faces the UNESCO-listed Lahore Fort across the Hazuri Bagh. Come at sunset, then eat on the rooftop restaurants of Fort Road Food Street.

3

ADVENTURE

Fairy Meadows and Nanga Parbat

A pasture at about 3,300 m facing the Raikot Face of Nanga Parbat, the world's ninth-highest mountain. Reach it by a hair-raising jeep track from Raikot Bridge and a few hours' walk, then hike on towards base camp.

4

HISTORY

Mohenjo-daro

One of the largest cities of the Indus Valley Civilisation, built around 2500 BC with grid streets, covered drains and the Great Bath. The UNESCO site in Sindh is best visited in the cool months from November to February.

5

CULTURE

Kalash Valleys

Three valleys near Chitral (Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir) are home to the Kalash, a small community with their own polytheistic religion, embroidered black dresses and seasonal festivals. Stay in family-run guesthouses.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Karachi

≈ 20 million people

Pakistan's vast port city and economic engine, with colonial buildings in Saddar, the seafront at Clifton and superb street food on Burns Road; most visitors pass through rather than linger.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Lahore

≈ 13 million people

The cultural capital: the Walled City, Lahore Fort, Badshahi Mosque, Mughal gardens and a food scene Pakistanis rate as the country's best. Allow three days, including the Wagah border ceremony.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Faisalabad

≈ 3.7 million people

Pakistan's textile capital, laid out by the British around a clock tower with eight bazaars radiating in a Union Jack pattern. Interesting markets, but few travellers make a special trip.

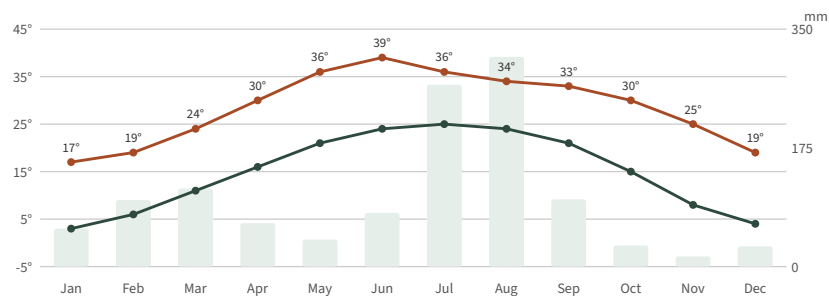
Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Pakistan

Best time: **Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

**Average climate in Islamabad**

— High °C
 — Low °C
 ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

May	Chilam Joshi The Kalash spring festival in mid-May, with days of dancing, singing, milk-sharing rituals and flowers in Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir; visitors are welcome but should ask before taking photos.
Jul	Shandur Polo Festival Teams from Gilgit and Chitral play fast, freestyle polo on the Shandur Pass at about 3,700 m in early July, with a tented camp, folk music and huge crowds.

How much does Pakistan cost?

SHOESTRING £25 per person / day ≈ PKR 9,254 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £60 per person / day ≈ PKR 22,209 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £140 per person / day ≈ PKR 51,820 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Nihari Beef or mutton shank slow-cooked overnight into a rich, spiced stew, finished with ginger, chilli and lemon and eaten with naan for breakfast, especially in Lahore and Karachi.	Karahi Chicken or mutton cooked fast in a wok-like karahi with tomatoes, green chillies and ginger, eaten straight from the pan with hot naan at a roadside dhaba.	Chapli kebab Flat, spiced minced-beef patties studded with pomegranate seeds and tomato, fried until crisp; a Peshawar speciality now found across the country.
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Getting around

PIA, Airblue and Serene Air fly between the main cities, and to Gilgit and Skardu when the weather allows. Comfortable coaches such as Daewoo Express link cities along the motorways, and Pakistan Railways covers the plains slowly but cheaply. In the north, hire a car with driver or use NATCO buses and shared jeeps. inDrive and Yango work in larger cities.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  C D 230V — bring a UK-to-C/D adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 1122 (ambulance, fire) Police: 15 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +92	TIME ZONE UTC+5 (standard time)
TAP WATER Not safe — drink bottled or treated water	DRIVING On the left
TIPPING Tip 5–10% in restaurants, small change to porters and hotel staff, and a fair sum to drivers and trekking guides at the end of a trip.	

ETIQUETTE

Dress modestly, with long sleeves and loose trousers for everyone and a scarf for women at mosques and shrines. Eat and pass things with your right hand, and ask before photographing women.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Islamabad International Airport (ISB), Islamabad; Allama Iqbal International Airport (LHE), Lahore; Jinnah International Airport (KHI), Karachi

Visas & entry for Pakistan

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You need a visa to visit Pakistan and you must apply in advance.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A Tetanus Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya Dengue Hepatitis B Japanese encephalitis Measles Polio Rabies Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

Low risk of malaria

- There is a low risk of malaria in areas of Pakistan below 2,000m: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Pakistan

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Mon 9 Nov 2026	Iqbal Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Quaid-e-Azam Day
Fri 5 Feb 2027	Kashmir Solidarity Day
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Thu 11 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)

Fri 12 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Tue 23 Mar 2027	Pakistan Day
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Tue 18 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Wed 19 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Fri 28 May 2027	Youm-e-Takbeer
Tue 15 Jun 2027	Ashura (date may shift)
Wed 16 Jun 2027	Ashura (date may shift)
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Independence Day
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Urdu

ENGLISH	URDU	SAY IT
Hello	السلام علیکم	<i>as-sah-LAAM oo-ah-LAY-kum</i>
Thank you	شکریہ	<i>SHUK-ree-yah</i>
Please	مہربانی	<i>meh-her-BAA-nee</i>
Excuse me	معاف کیجیے	<i>maaf KEE-jee-ay</i>
How much is this?	یہ کتنے کا ہے؟	<i>yeh KIT-nay kaa hai</i>

Know before you go

Buy a local SIM from an official Jazz or Zong franchise, where registration needs your passport and fingerprints; mobile data is cheap and essential for maps and ride-hailing.

Build buffer days into any northern itinerary: flights to Gilgit and Skardu are often cancelled in bad weather, and landslides can block the Karakoram Highway for hours or days.

Check the FCDO travel advice, which varies sharply between regions, and use a reputable local operator for remote areas, as access arrangements for foreigners can change.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.