

PAKISTAN

Pakistan is a great country for travellers. Hospitality and friendliness is, even for a Moslem country, incredible. Most people will go out of their way to help travellers.

FOREIGNERS REGISTRATION FOR A STAY LONGER THAN 1 MONTH

Go to the police headquarters in one of the major towns and bring along three passport size photos.

OTHER VISAS

Chinese visas can easily be obtained in Islamabad. Their cost depends on the relations your country has to China. See the Rawalpindi section for details.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Taking pictures in Pakistan is great. Most people love to have their picture taken, when you ask for permission.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Trains are a good means of getting around the country, except the mountain region.

Pakistan Railways offers a 25% reduction (50% for students) for tourists. In order to get that you first need a certificate from a tourist office, that you are in Pakistan as a tourist. With that certificate you will then proceed to the railway administration, where you will be issued a sort of a voucher for all your desired specific trips. With those vouchers in your hand you can finally go to the railway station and make your reservations or buy your tickets. Allow a couple of pleasant hours for this procedure, during which you are likely to meet a lot of officials and be offered a lot of tea.

First class is upholstered, but still very spartan. No A/C, just fans that usually don't work. If you are a "married" couple you are entitled to a

double cabin in the sleeper, which usually is located at the end of the carriage next to the toilets (European and Pakistani style). Note, that you will always have one or two holes in the adjoining wall for all those horny Pakistanis.

A/C is much more expensive, but offers enjoyable and comfortable double compartments with a private toilet. I didn't believe that I really would need A/C on a train, but riding from Multan to Rawalpindi in the daytime in June was like baking in hell!

There is also a class called "A/C Lower", which apparently does not have compartments, but couchette style bedding.

Make reservations well ahead as trains tend to get crowded!

There is a company called "Flying Coaches". They have buses painted blue and white. Their services include A/C and video (feature film plus live Indian music videos). "Flying Coach", however, has grown to a synonym for small Japanese passenger vans, which are considerably cheaper than the original Flying Coaches and don't include their services. Buses by NATCO, Mashrum etc. are the cheapest buses.

ACCOMODATION

A clean double room with a bathroom and a fan in a decent hotel should cost about 200 to 300 Rupees. Cheaper, but dingy and run down places are available around 100 Rupees. More expensive hotels (400 to 600 Rupees) offer the same accommodation as the middle class hotels, except that you get A/C instead of a fan.

If not otherwise mentioned the room fees quoted in this guide book include a private bathroom with shower (hot water) and a loo.

KARACHI

Karachi is one of the noisiest cities I have come across on my travels.

The Tourist Information at the airport has free, but useless town maps as well as brochures on various tourist sites around the country. There are two Tourist Information Centres in town, one in the Hotel Intercontinental, the other one near (not in) the Hotel Metropol. Ask around!

A minibus from the airport to town will cost you Rs 4, a ride in a yellow (normal) cab Rs 100 and the private taxis charge Rs 300. You should not pay more than Rs 10 for an auto-rickshaw from the city centre to the Cantonment (Cantt) Railway Station.

Places to Stay

Hotel Ambassador off Dr. Daud Doda Rd. (where it changes from double to single lane) offers clean rooms with a fan, bathroom and balcony. The rooms facing the road are unbelievably loud. Even ear plugs don't help much! If you are afraid of cockroaches this is the place to go, as room service sprays the rooms every second day. The price for a double room is Rs 170.

Places to Eat

There are good places to eat around Empress Market.

Things to See, Things to Do

The tomb complex of Chaukoundi is worth while a visit. To get there take a bus from Lea Market. The journey takes about 1 to 1 1/2 hours and costs about Rs 6.

Don't miss the fish market. In the summer business is rather slack. You can catch an auto-rickshaw to get there, but make sure you don't end up in the yacht harbour.

MULTAN

Horse carriages cost 2 Rs. per person for short rides, more for longer ones. Its is easy to get ripped of by their drivers, so you are better (and faster) off with a motor-rickshaw. They charge 10-15 Rs. for ride within the town depending on the distance.

Multan is very widespread and you are likely to loose your orientation.

Places to Stay

Guilt Hotel on Sher Shah Rd. offers double rooms with fan and bath for Rs 130, but they are not worth even half of that. The hotel is rather run down and looks more like a dump.

For a nice and quiet hotel try *Prince Hotel* on Nishtar Rd., which has doubles with fan and bath for Rs 200. If you need a room with A/C and bath you will have to pay a hefty Rs 600. The service is rather slack. The hotel has a beautiful garden to sit in the evenings. Many people gather there in the evenings.

Hushiana Hotel (Tel. 43536, 32676) offers rooms that are better than Prince Hotel, but they are equipped with central A/C. Doubles with

bathroom are from Rs 600 and up. Very friendly staff, especially Ali, who runs the place.

Hotel Alsana on Sher Shah Rd also offers doubles with bathroom and A/C for Rs 600 and up. The staff is friendly.

Places to Eat

Things to See, Things to Do

The old town of Multan is completely encircled by a wall and can be accessed by a number of gates. To get the most out of it you should walk along the wall around the old city. Then dive in to its basar and get lost.

RAWALPINDI

Multan to Rawalpindi:

Buses between Rawalpindi and Islamabad charge Rs. 4.

Places to Stay

Al-Azam Hotel on Adamjee Rd has doubles for Rs. 100. On Kashmir Rd the *New Kamran Hotel* (Tel. 582040, 566420) offers nice and comfortable doubles for Rs. 200 including a fan and a private bathroom with hot water. The restaurant is poor value except for the breakfast. *Hotel Kashmir Inn* off Bank Rd. Is new and offers small, but clean doubles for 160 Rs., but no hot water. Doubles with air cooler (not A/C) are available for Rs. 190.

Places to Eat

The *Kyaban Restaurant* offers excellent chicken dishes for Rs. 40. A good *Chinese restaurant* is on the Mall.

Things to See

The basars of Rawalpindi a worthwhile visit. Take a stroll through the narrow streets of Rajah Bazar. Perhaps you will be invited into the interior of one of the houses, which are nicely renovated and usually have a patio. Beautiful views from the roof at sunset!

Mosque

Lake

China Visa

A one-month, single entry Chinese visa valid for one month takes four working days. Visas for German or US American citizens for instance cost Rs 250.

Express visas are issued on the spot for an additional fee: Rs 900 (same day at 5 pm), Rs 600 (next day), Rs 300 (two days), Rs 150 (three days).

Bring your passport and one passport-size photo to the Chinese Embassy, which has moved to a new location just after the French Embassy. The visa office is open from 9 am to 12 am daily, except Fridays and major Chinese holidays. To get there from Aabparacatch a passenger Suzuki for 3 Rs. direction "University". Get there early, as there are long queues.

PESHAWAR

Hot and choking in summer.

Auto-rickshaws around town are generally 10 to 15 Rs. depending on the distance. Taxis are slightly more expensive, but good value if there are three people or more.

Places to Stay

Habib Hotel at the Kyber Bazar offers doubles with bathroom (shower) and fan for 220 Rs.

Places to Eat

The *restaurant in the Habib Hotel* offers good food for a reasonable price.

Things to See

The huge basar is one of the best I have ever seen, better than those in Africa and much better than those in Turkey or the Middle East.

If you ask around the Habib Hotel you will be able to find out about a guide to arrange a day trip to the Khyber Pass and Deraa.

MIANDAM

Peshawar to Miandam: Take a bus to Mingora first. At the General Bus Stand in Mingora you will find occasional busses for Rs 10 per person.

Mingora to Besham: There are no GTS buses running along this route anymore. Instead take a Japanese passenger van for Rs 30. The fantastic, but hair-rising trip over the Shangla Pass takes about 4 ½ hours.

This little mountain town is a popular resort for local tourists. Especially people from Southern Pakistan come here to escape the heat.

Places to Stay

The *PTDC Hotel* is very nicely located, but charges the usual high prices (Rs 650 for a double in this case). You can, however, have a cup of tea or a coke in their garden with nice shade and good views.

Hotel Miandam Palace has friendly staff and offers fairly clean double rooms with bathroom and fan for Rs 200. The place can get noisy with Pakistanis staying for a night of fun. Having breakfast on the terrace overlooking the valley is lovely.

Places to Eat

Not much of a choice unfortunately.

Things to See

Take a walk on the road towards the mountains. One path leaves from the left side of the PTDC Hotel. You will have a good view over the surroundings.

GILGIT

Besham to Gilgit: Most of the buses to Gilgit are coming from Rawalpindi and are usually full, so your best choice will be a small passenger van originating in Besham. Besham is one of those lousy places you encounter now and then, where you are forced to spend more time than you want, waiting for transport. This place is notorious for its flies and the heat!

Hang around the Petrol Station to get a seat on Japanese passenger van for Rs 120. Don't expect them to leave on time! They won't even leave when they are full, but only when they are stuffed!

Map of Gilgit

Places to Stay

The former villa of the Mir of Nagar on Bank Rd now houses the *New Golden Peak Inn*. Doubles are Rs 100 without a toilet, but it does not look very inviting. *Mt Balore Motel* does not exist anymore! The *Lahore Hotel* in lower Hospital Rd has dingy, small and dark double rooms for Rs 100 or Rs 120 without a toilet. *JSR Hotel* (Tel. 0572/2308, Reservations 2697) has doubles with fan, bathroom (cold water from the showers only), wall to wall carpet and TV for Rs 150, which can be negotiated down to Rs 100. The place is clean, well maintained and you can have food from the restaurant served on your room at no extra charge. The manager will keep your luggage, if you go hiking for a couple of days.

Tourist Cottages

Medina Hotel at the NLI Chowk offers very spartan rooms with damp bathrooms or communal washing facilities for ???. On the other hand there is a huge garden, where you can sit and the staff is very friendly.

Places to Eat

Avoid eating at the *New Golden Peak Inn*. We met a lot of people who got sick eating there. The *JSR Restaurant* serves good food at moderate prices. MTV is on most of the time, with a huge male Pakistani crowd watching it!

Tourist Cottages

Madina Hotel

Treking Guides

They will approach you sooner or later, but here are some we met and seem to be reliable:

Hidayat Hussain (Mountain Guide and Treker) c/o Medina Hotel

Ahsan Ali (Mountain Guide) c/o New Golden Peak Hotel

Abdul Wageel (official guide)

FAIRY MEADOWS

KARIMABAD

Gilgit to Karimabad: Buses only go up to Ganesh. Japanese Passenger vans will take you there for Rs 32. If there are enough passengers wanting to go to Karimabad, which is just 2 or 3 km further on a dead end road, that will cost about Rs 40.

Map of Karimabad

Places to Stay

Karim Hotel has grotty doubles at Rs 120, but they are not worth that money. Try the *Golden Lodge Hotel* which is beneath the Hunza lodge on the main road. Its very new, thus clean, and offers doubles with bathroom for Rs 200 to 250. Some rooms have running hot water, otherwise you can get a bucket with hot water. Breakfast is available and you can enjoy it on the huge veranda with a perfect view of Rakaposhi.

Kisar Inn (Tel. 47041) is located in Altit, a village next to Karimabad. The manager Ali is a very friendly person trying to help visitors in any way he can, even if you do not stay at his place. His hotel is a quiet place with a nice garden. Room rates range from Rs 80 to 200 and you can also sleep in a tent with beds for Rs 15.

Places to Eat

Utar Restaurant serves good food, especially Hunza style food. Latter should be ordered in advance and will cost around Rs 50 per person. Sit in their garden overlooking Altit. Breakfast is also available.

Things to Do

PASSU

SUST

TO CHINA

Buses to China leave daily, but if too many people pile up in Sust NATCO will organize extra transport for you.

Even in July you are likely to encounter snow at the Khunjerab pass. We actually crossed it in the middle of a snow storm and fog.