



# Islamabad

Photo: Shahid Khan/Shutterstock.com



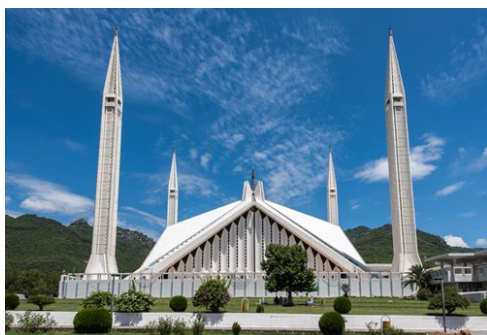
Shahid Khan/Shutterstock.com

The majestic Faisal Mosque stands against the backdrop of the lush Margalla Hills as a symbol of a Pakistan placed firmly in the modern day, while holding on to its history and traditions. The capital city of Islamabad is a forward-thinking metropolis nestled among the green base of the Himalayas, and though it has traditionally been thought of mainly as a diplomatic city, it has recently grown to become an important business and financial centre for the region, as well as an emerging travel destination, one which, together with its neighbouring sister city of Rawalpindi, gives travelers in-the-know a taste of all sides of contemporary Pakistan.

*NOTE: This Guide has been limited to 20 points of interest per section. For the full guide, please visit [ArrivalGuides.com](http://ArrivalGuides.com)*



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K\_Boonnitrod/Shutterstock.com

# QUIZ

*What Type of Traveller  
Are You Based on  
Your Travel IQ?*

**TAKE THE QUIZ**

## Top 5



**Shah Faisal Mosque**  
The stunning national mosque of Pakistan, designed to look like a Bedouin te...



**Pakistan Monument**  
This massive and breathtaking monument symbolises the country's cultural div...



**Lok Virsa Museum**  
This fantastic ethnographic museum showcases a large collection of tradition...



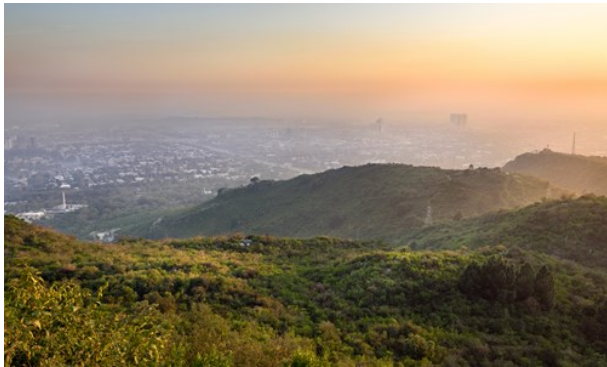
**Shakarparian**  
This huge national park located just south of the city's main urban area is ...



**Daman-e-Koh**  
The city is surrounded by the beautiful and lush Margalla Hills, and the cit...



## THE CITY



Shahid Khan/Shutterstock.com

Nowhere is the juxtaposition of the new and old of Pakistan better displayed than in Islamabad and its twin city of Rawalpindi, two distinct sides of the country as it is today. Islamabad is modern, sleek and classy, full of broad tree-lined avenues, square city blocks and suburban sprawl, expansive parks and green spaces, elegant government buildings and embassies, up-scale restaurants and of course the mighty Faisal Mosque overlooking it all. It has long been a popular travel destination among Pakistanis for its peaceful and quiet vibe and its beautiful greenery, and now international travelers are catching on.

In contrast, Rawalpindi (affectionately called "Pindi") is much more a South Asian metropolis, with the exciting and sometimes hectic bustle of people, traffic, rickshaws and outdoor markets, what many would refer to as "the real Pakistan". It is a fascinating city in its own right, and though it may not boast as many famous attractions as its sister city, it has a special feel of intimacy that makes it unique in the eyes of visitors.

## DO & SEE



Muhammad Kamran Akhlaq/Shutterstock.com

The Faisal Mosque is, naturally, Islamabad's most iconic and instantly recognisable landmark, but this is a city rich in historical sights, impressive monuments, fascinating museums, tons of green spaces for outdoor activities, and even some great entertainment options for children and families. There are also enough nearby sights and places of interest to warrant a few day-trips, including some fantastic archeological excavations.

### Shah Faisal Mosque



The stunning national mosque of Pakistan, designed to look like a Bedouin tent, is a beautiful mix of traditional and modern architecture that symbolises the aspirations of the country. It is one of the largest in the world, and can hold up to 100,000 in the hall and courtyard. Visitors are allowed, but non-Muslims should avoid prayer times.

Photo: K\_Boonnitrod/Shutterstock.com

Address: Faisal Ave, Islamabad



### Pakistan Monument



This massive and breathtaking monument symbolises the country's cultural diversity and national unity. It is shaped like a blooming flower with four main petals, each representing the four major provinces, and three smaller ones, meant to represent smaller regions, such as Kashmir.

Photo: Shahid Khan/Shutterstock.com

Address: Pakistan Monument Rd, Islamabad

Opening hours: Daily 9am-10pm

Phone: +92 514345490

### Lok Virsa Museum



This fantastic ethnographic museum showcases a large collection of traditional Pakistani handicrafts, including wood carvings, jewellery and textiles. It offers a unique glimpse into the artistic and artisanal past of the country. Be sure to visit the gift shop and pick up a souvenir.

Photo: Ibnazhar (image cropped)

Address: Garden Rd, Islamabad

Opening hours: Daily 9am-2pm and 3pm-7:30 pm

Phone: +92 51 9201651

### Shakarparian



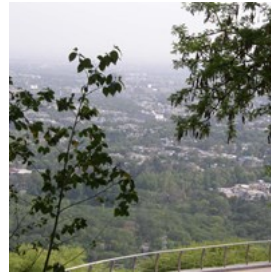
This huge national park located just south of the city's main urban area is a lush expanse of gardens and trees that provide a welcome escape from the city streets for both locals and visitors. The area also houses many monuments and museums, and

has hill lookouts just a 20-minute walk uphill.

Photo: Ahmed Sajjad Zaidi (image cropped)

Address: Shakarparian Rd, Islamabad

### Daman-e-Koh



The city is surrounded by the beautiful and lush Margalla Hills, and the citizens of Islamabad like to enjoy them.

Daman-e-Koh is a splendid picnic spot about a 30-minute walk up the hills just north of the zoo that offers breathtaking views of the city, and specifically of the Faisal Mosque.

Photo: Farhan Chawla (image cropped)

Address: Daman-e-Koh Rd, Islamabad

### Taxila Excavations



The archeological excavations in Taxila make for a great day-trip from Islamabad. The sites can be thoroughly explored in about 6 hours of walking, if the oppressive heat allows. The sites and museum display Buddhist sculptures, metal artifacts and coins, and other interesting finds from times gone by.

Photo: Guilhem Vellut (image cropped)

Address: Sirsukh Excavations, Taxila

Opening hours: Daily 8am-12:30pm and 2:30pm-5:30pm

Phone: +92 51 9314270

### Pakistan Army Museum

One of the more unique museums found in Islamabad, the Pakistan Army Museum offers a historical tour through military development in the region, displaying arms and weapons through the ages, from prehistoric axes, to

swords and rifles, to modern-day missile systems.

Address: Iftikhar Rd, Islamabad

Opening hours: Wed-Mon 9am-3pm, Tue 9am-12pm

Phone: +92 51 56132608

Internet: [www.pakarmymuseum.com](http://www.pakarmymuseum.com)

### Saidpur

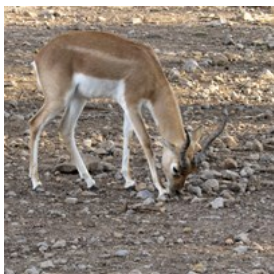


For a whirlwind tour of the cultural history of Pakistan, a visit to Saidpur, located just one kilometre from the city, is in order. This former Hindu village was famous for its skill in pottery, and it now holds a Model Village which shows off handicrafts from different regions in the country.

Photo: Xubayr Mayo (image cropped)

Address: Saidpur Rd, Islamabad

### Islamabad Zoo



The Islamabad Zoo is a great place to spend an afternoon, especially for those traveling with children. The Zoo is home to a wide array of

beautiful animals, including bears, elephants, baboons, and many more. Especially impressive is the huge collection of wild and exotic birds.

Photo: kami rao (image cropped)

Address: Pir Sohawa Rd, Islamabad

Opening hours: Daily 9am-5pm

Phone: +92 51 9205644

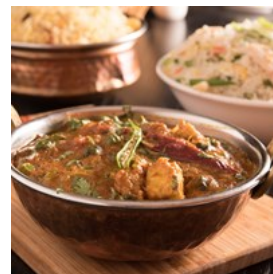
## DINING



*neil langan/Shutterstock.com*

Islamabad's restaurant scene has exploded in recent times, in part to accommodate the high standards and tastes of the many international diplomats that call the city home. The city now boasts a wide selection of fine dining, local family-run restaurants, cool diners and cafes and plenty of international options for traveling foodies.

### The Monal



Offering what is beyond a doubt the best view of any restaurant in Islamabad, The Monal is nestled up among the lush Margalla Hills, away from the city noise, but providing a breathtaking panoramic view of its urban area. It is a bit out of the way, but the view and the mix of European and Asian specialties make it well worth a visit.

Photo: grey color/Shutterstock.com

Address: Pir Sohawa Rd, Islamabad

Opening hours: Daily 9am-1am

Phone: +92 515837220

Internet: [www.themonal.com](http://www.themonal.com)

### Kabul Restaurant



This is more of a rugged, local restaurant than the fine dining that can be found in more expensive places, but locals keep coming back to Kabul for the fantastic Afghan specialties, particularly the barbecue and the dumplings. The place itself is simple and no-nonsense. They let the food do the talking.

Photo: Alexslim/Shutterstock.com

Address: College Road, Jinnah Market, Islamabad

Opening hours: Daily 12pm-12am

Phone: +92 51 2650953

### Andaaz



Located on the road to Saidpur, Andaaz offers a truly unique experience. It combines traditional local flavours with a classy and elegant

surrounding, subdued lighting and a relaxing and intimate feel. There are pictures of famous Pakistani singers hanging on the walls along with traditional instruments, which only adds to the experience.

Photo: vm2002/Shutterstock.com

Address: Saidpur Rd, Islamabad

Phone: +92 301 8445511

Internet: [www.andaazrestaurant.com](http://www.andaazrestaurant.com)

Email: [ahmed@andaazrestaurant.com](mailto:ahmed@andaazrestaurant.com)

### CAFES



joannawnuk/Shutterstock.com

There is an abundance of fantastic Western-style cafes in Islamabad at the moment, all offering high-quality coffee and a surprising range of snacks, meals and freshly made desserts and pastries. They are a great way to take a break from sightseeing and escape the afternoon heat, and some offer truly unique experiences either for their inventive decor or the views from their terraces.

### Rakaposhi International



Located in the Serena Hotel, this luxurious cafe is elegant and sleek and very welcoming with its subdued lighting. Guests can enjoy hot coffee or tea and sample some of the delicious snacks, like samosas or sandwiches, and pastries made from scratch.

Photo: SAM THOMAS A/Shutterstock.com

Address: Ramna 5, Khayaban-e-Suhrawardy, Islamabad

Opening hours: Daily 8am-11pm

Phone: +92 512874000



### Mocca Coffee



Walking into Mocca Coffee, you might think you stumbled into a cafe somewhere in Stockholm or Copenhagen. The minimalist design,

organic ingredients and relaxed environment could easily fool anyone. The level of specialisation here is impressive, as the coffee and fruit smoothies are expertly prepared and the flavours are wonderful.

Photo: Awais T/Shutterstock.com

Address: Shop I, Koshar Market, F-6/3, Islamabad

Phone: +92 512823723

Internet: [www.mocca.pk](http://www.mocca.pk)

### 1969



As the name suggests, this groovy cafe transports guests back to the 1960s with its brightly-coloured decoration and furniture

and the appropriately anachronistic newspaper pieces visible throughout. The offer of food is simple, but the flavours are authentic.

Photo: Satvic Life/Shutterstock.com

Address: Shakarparian, Islamabad

Opening hours: Daily 12pm-12am

Phone: +92 512607263

### Atrio Cafe and Grill



Atrio specialises in two things: coffee and barbecue. The meat dishes range from Mexican to Italian specialties and never

disappoint. If you're not that hungry, then sit back and enjoy a hot cup of coffee from the

outdoor rooftop terrace, and marvel at the view of the Margalla Hills in the background.

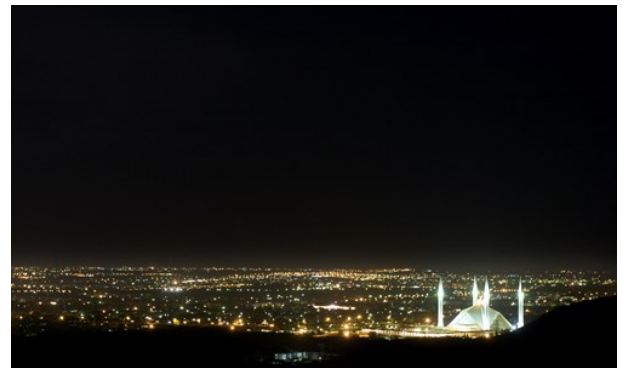
Photo: Tanawat Chantradiokra/Shutterstock.com

Address: Unit 20B, block 12B, Islamabad

Opening hours: Sun-Thu 11am-12am, Fri-Sat 11am-1am

Phone: +92 518319999

### BARS & NIGHTLIFE



Lichtmeister/Shutterstock.com

Alcoholic beverages are officially forbidden for Muslims (who make up roughly 97% of the population) in Pakistan, and as such, there are no places that could really be called "bars". However, visiting foreigners are allowed to order and consume alcohol at restaurants and hotels, so travelers hoping to have a drink in the evening in Islamabad will do best by visiting the restaurant in one of the luxury hotels in town. Other entertainment is available in the form of cinema and other cultural activities.

### Nadia Restaurant



Located in the Islamabad Marriott Hotel, Nadia offers good selection of international dishes as well as a buffet. It is a popular place for

business meetings and casual evening meals for its relaxed vibe and the live music that can be heard almost every night of the week.

Photo: Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock.com

Address: Aga Khan Road, Shalimar 5, Islamabad

Phone: +92 51 2826121

Internet: [www.marriott.com/hotels/hotel-information/restaurant/isbpk-islamabad-marriott-hotel](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/hotel-information/restaurant/isbpk-islamabad-marriott-hotel)

### Best Western Islamabad Hotel



The wonderfully located Best Western in Islamabad (right by the Shakarparian Park) offers two options in terms of nighttime entertainment.

The Mashal restaurants is open 24 hours a day and offers great ala-carte dining, while the Reem Bar-B-Que restaurant is the place to go for juicy steaks and meat dishes.

Photo: JerHetrick/Shutterstock.com

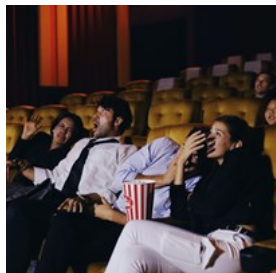
Address: 6 Islamabad Club Road, Islamabad

Phone: +92 51 2277460

Internet: [www.bestwesternisb.com](http://www.bestwesternisb.com)

Email: [mail@bestwesternisb.com](mailto:mail@bestwesternisb.com)

### Centaurus Cineplex



The Centaurus Mall is not only a great place for shopping and eating, with its wide selection of shops and restaurants, but it can also be a nice

place to spend an evening at the cinema. The Centaurus Cineplex shows all the latest Hollywood megahits and local productions on four screens.

Photo: little star/Shutterstock.com

Address: Centaurus Mall, 1 Jinnah Avenue, 4th Floor

Centaurus, F 8, Islamabad

Phone: +92 51 27014207

Internet: [www.centauruscineplex.com](http://www.centauruscineplex.com)

### Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium



More national obsession than national sport, cricket is huge in Pakistan. And there's no better way to have an authentic Pakistani

experience than to join the crowd at the cricket stadium and cheer for the local team. You can catch international matches at the Rawalpindi Stadium for an entertaining day out.

Photo: Mike Flippo/Shutterstock.com

Address: Stadium Rd, Rawalpindi

Phone: +92 321 2410410

### SHOPPING



*shaziafolio/Shutterstock.com*

Shopping in Islamabad-Rawalpindi can be as varied as the cities themselves. Spend the afternoon browsing, shopping and eating at one of the many large modern shopping malls, which contain everything a shopper could need, or head to one of the more traditional open-air markets to pick up some local handicrafts or traditional garments. Some real unique finds await the patient shopper who takes the time to explore the city's many shopping possibilities.

### Rajah Bazaar



For an authentic, albeit chaotic, shopping experience in Islamabad, you can hardly do better than Rawalpindi's Rajah Bazaar. Spreading out from Fowara Chowk, you can find vendors, shops and stalls in every direction selling everything you can think of, from clothing to daily needs. Towers remain of old Hindu temples in the area.

Photo: M Selcuk Oner/Shutterstock.com  
Address: 6 Lane 6, Rawalpindi

### Centaurus Mall



Massive, modern, sleek, imposing, the Centaurus Mall is truly impressive. Combining a shopping centre, a hotel and residential housing, it is a beacon of modernity in Pakistan for which Islamabad is a symbol. The mall has all you could need in terms of shopping, entertainment and restaurants, and visitors can easily spend a whole day exploring its many floors.

Photo: Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock.com  
Address: Jinnah Avenue, Sector F-8, Islamabad  
Opening hours: Daily 10am-9:30pm  
Phone: +92 300 9468593  
Internet: [www.thecentaurus.com](http://www.thecentaurus.com)  
Email: [info@thecentaurus.com](mailto:info@thecentaurus.com)

### Jinnah Super Market



Jinnah Super Market is where the wealthy citizens of Islamabad come to shop. The stores here sell the latest fashion from international designer brands and traditional Pakistani

garments for men and women, as well as household items, furnishings and decorations.

Photo: ChameleonsEye/Shutterstock.com  
Address: College Rd, Islamabad  
Phone: +92 333 4751997

### Beverly Center



Beverly Center is another modern shopping centre where local families and groups of friends often go to shop for essentials, or spend an afternoon browsing the many designer shops, sampling some delicacies at the numerous restaurants and cafes and enjoying an afternoon out.

Photo: Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock.com  
Address: Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad

### Al-Janat Mall



For some shopping in the Rawalpindi area, try Al-Janat Mall. In operation since 1974, this large shopping centre specialises in clothing, cosmetics, bags, perfumes, jewellery, shoes and any type of accessory you can think of, all at quite competitive prices.

Photo: gpointstudio/Shutterstock.com  
Address: Trunk Bazar, Saddar, Rawalpindi  
Phone: +92 51 4414800  
Internet: [www.aljanatmall.com](http://www.aljanatmall.com)  
Email: [commercial\\_market@aljanatmall.com](mailto:commercial_market@aljanatmall.com)



## TOURIST INFORMATION



*willmetts/Shutterstock.com*

### Islamabad International Airport



The Islamabad International Airport commenced operations in 2018 and replaced the defunct Benazir Bhutto International Airport.

Taxis are readily available outside the airport, but be sure to agree on a price before stepping into a cab, as they are seldom metered. There are also a number of local buses which can transport visitors to and from the airport, but the number of routes can be overwhelming and confusing, so unless you know exactly what to take to get where you are going, it might be best to stick to taxis.

Photo: Juan Garces  
Address: Airport Rd, Rawalpindi

### Public Transport



Islamabad recently unveiled its brand new network of metro buses, much to the delight of the citizenry. These modern, air-conditioned and

WiFi-enabled accordion-style buses have

dedicated lanes to help commuters skip traffic jams, and they connect the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Probably the best way to get around the city is by a combination of the metro buses and taxis. Other options for getting around include pedal- and motor-rickshaws.

Photo: Pierre-Luc Auclair  
Internet:

[www.islamabadguide.pk/islamabad-public-transport-routes](http://www.islamabadguide.pk/islamabad-public-transport-routes)

### Taxi



Taxis are a cheap and efficient way to get around the city. You can usually find them hanging around busy areas, like the airport or train

station, or at busy intersections. Be sure to agree on a price before hopping in, as they are seldom metered. One reputable company in the city is Metro Radio Cab.

Photo: ArrivalGuides  
Phone: +92 111222787  
Internet: [www.metrocab.com.pk](http://www.metrocab.com.pk)

### Post Office

Pakistan Post Headoffice



Photo: Andy Fuchs  
Address: G-8/4, Islamabad  
Phone: +92 51 9261571  
Internet: [www.pakpost.gov.pk](http://www.pakpost.gov.pk)

## Pharmacy



Shaheen Chemist

Photo: Gemma Garner  
Address: F-11 Markaz, Islamabad  
Opening hours: Daily 8am-1am  
Phone: +92 51 2228011

## Telephone



Country code: +92 Area  
code: 51

Photo: Jardson Almeida

## Electricity



Voltage: 230 V  
Frequency: 50 Hz Power  
sockets: type C / D

Photo: Stirling Tschan

## Population

2,000,000

## Currency

1 Pakistani rupee (PKR) = 100 paisa

## Opening hours

Generally speaking, the workweek is Mon-Fri, with Friday being a half-day. Sometimes Saturday is also a half-day, but Sunday is always off. Government offices operate from 8-9am to 5-6pm, while private businesses tend to start operations at about 10am. Restaurants and cafes tend to stay open later, until about 9-10pm.

## Newspapers

The Express Tribune

Daily Pakistan

## Emergency numbers

Ambulance: 115  
Police: 15  
Fire brigade: 16

## Tourist information

Tourist Information Centre  
Agha Khan Road, Markaz F-6 (Super Market), Islamabad  
+92 51 920276