



U.S. Department of State
 Bureau of Consular Affairs
 Washington, DC 20520



Consular Information Sheet

This information is current as of today, Thu Jun 19 11:22:06 2003.

Pakistan

May 23, 2003

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Pakistan is a developing country. In October 2002, Pakistan held the first national and provincial assembly elections since the October 1999 coup. A new Parliament and Prime Minister took office, although President General Pervez Musharraf and the military continue to play a significant role in the government.

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS: All U.S. citizens traveling to Pakistan for any purpose are required to have valid U.S. passports and Pakistani-issued visas. Other information on entry requirements can be obtained from [the Embassy of Pakistan](http://www.pakistan-embassy.com), 2315 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC, 20008, telephone (202)939-6295 or 6261, Internet home page: <http://www.pakistan-embassy.com>. Travelers may also contact one of the Consulates General of Pakistan located at 12 East 65th St., New York, NY 10021, telephone (212)879-5800, fax (212)517-6987, or 10850 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1100, Los Angeles, CA 90024, telephone (310)441-5114, fax (310)441-9256. If a traveler plans to stay longer than the time listed on the visa, he or she must extend the stay with the local passport office of the Ministry of Interior.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian if not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

DUAL NATIONALITY: In addition to being subject to all of Pakistan's laws affecting U.S. citizens, individuals who also possess the nationality of Pakistan may be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on citizens of that country. For additional information, see the Consular Affairs home page on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov> for our Dual Nationality flyer.

SAFETY AND SECURITY/AREAS OF INSTABILITY: Sectarian and separatist terrorists within Pakistan continue to target American and other Western interests, as well as those of certain indigenous groups. Bombings and assassinations continue to occur throughout Pakistan. For example, two Americans were killed and several more were injured in a bombing at an Islamabad church frequented by Westerners on March 17, 2002 and an American news reporter was kidnapped and killed in Karachi in January 2002. The U.S. Consulate General in Karachi sustained attacks in June 2002 and February 2003. There is evidence of a potential threat to American citizens and other westerners in Pakistan from terrorists posing as street vendors or beggars on busy streets. Americans are urged to avoid congested areas where these individuals could approach their vehicles. Rallies, demonstrations and processions occur from time to time throughout Pakistan on very short notice and have often taken on an anti-American or anti-Western character. Karachi and the southern parts of Punjab province have experienced protracted political or sectarian violence that poses a potential danger to American travelers. During the Islamic religious observance of Moharram, sectarian rivalry and violence often increase. Family feuds are frequently fatal and may be followed by retaliation. Women do not walk out alone and it is not wise to travel in the streets late at night. Travelers to Pakistan should attempt to maintain a low profile, blend in, and seek security in the traveler's family or sponsoring organization.

Updated information on travel and security in Pakistan may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and from overseas, 1-317-472-2328. For the latest security information, Americans abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov> where the current [Worldwide Caution Public Announcement](#), Travel Warnings including the current warning for Pakistan, and [Public Announcements](#) can be found.

Northern Areas - Visitors wishing to trek in Gilgit, Hunza, Chitral and the upper Swat valley should use only licensed guides and tourist agencies. There have been occasional assaults.

Northwest Frontier Province - The Government of Pakistan requires all citizens of countries other than Pakistan and Afghanistan to obtain permission from the Home and Tribal Affairs Department prior to visiting these tribal areas, which lie outside the normal jurisdiction of the Government of Pakistan. Substantial areas within the Northwest Frontier Province are designated tribal areas and are outside the normal jurisdiction of government law enforcement authorities. If visitors must enter the tribal areas, a permit from the Home and Tribal Affairs Department is required. The permit may stipulate that an armed escort must accompany the visitor. Even in the settled areas of the Northwest Frontier Province, there is occasional ethnic, sectarian, and political violence as well as anti-foreign rhetoric; foreigners should avoid demonstrations and areas in which violence is known to occur.

Kashmir: Military operations continue along the Line of Control in Kashmir and military exchanges between Pakistani and Indian forces often result in deaths and injuries on both sides. A number of militant and terrorist groups, some of which are anti-American and have attacked Americans and other Westerners, are active in the area. Many areas are restricted. Americans planning travel in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir should contact the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad prior to travel in the area and ensure that they have taken appropriate security precautions. However, we recommend that Americans particularly defer travel to Kashmir and the Pakistan/India border areas at this time. The Wagah border crossing into India near Lahore remains open (from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm) for travel to and from India if the passport holder has a valid visa for both countries. Travelers are advised to confirm the current status of the border crossing prior to commencing travel.

Punjab Province - Sectarian violence decreased considerably in recent years, although there continue to be isolated attacks on places of worship of all faiths. Christian churches, particularly in Punjab, have been targeted; two Americans were killed and several more were injured in a bombing at an Islamabad church frequented by Westerners on March 17, 2002, 3 people were killed in Daska on Christmas Day, 2002, and 17 were killed in Bahawalpur in October, 2001. As a precaution against possible dangers resulting from sectarian violence, U.S. citizens are cautioned to avoid public transportation and crowded areas.

Sindh Province - In the areas of Karachi and Hyderabad there has been recurring violence characterized by random bombings and shootings as well as several incidents of kidnapping for ransom. Americans and other Westerners continue to be the target of violence. In January 2002, a U.S. news reporter was kidnapped and murdered. Karachi has been the site of several recent high-profile terrorist attacks, including a car-bomb attack against a bus near the Sheraton Hotel in May 2002, and another car-bomb attack against the U.S. Consulate General in June 2002. In February 2003, the Consulate General was attacked by a lone gunman wielding an AK-47. In May 2003, Pakistani security disrupted terrorist plans to launch an aerial attack on the U.S. Consulate in Karachi. Additionally, there have been many protests against U.S. foreign policy. In several instances, crowds at these protests reached approximately 100,000 people. Due to security concerns, the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi closed its public operations indefinitely. See Section on Registration/Embassy and Consulate Location regarding how to contact that office for emergency assistance.

In rural Sindh Province, the security situation is hazardous, especially overland travel. The Government of Pakistan recommends that travelers limit their movements in Sindh Province to the city of Karachi. If visitors must go into the interior of Sindh Province, the Government of Pakistan requests that travelers inform police authorities well in advance of the trip so that necessary police security arrangements can be made.

Baluchistan Province - The province of Baluchistan, which borders both Iran and Afghanistan, is notorious for cross-border smuggling and has more recently been infiltrated by former members of the Taliban and Al Qaida operatives. Armed battles between clans are frequent. Because the provincial police presence is limited, travelers wishing to visit the interior of Baluchistan should consult with the province's Home Secretary. Advance permission from provincial authorities is required for travel into some areas. Local authorities have detained travelers who lack permission. Quetta, the provincial capital, has experienced serious ethnic violence that has led to gun battles in the streets and the imposition of curfews.

Returning Americans of Afghan origin are sometimes targets for harassment or extortion by the local populace and even by police, local immigration and customs officials, especially if they do not have a well-established family structure in Pakistan.

CRIME: Crime is a serious concern for foreigners throughout Pakistan, with violent crime increasing faster than any other category. Carjackings, armed robberies, house invasions and other violence against civilians have increased steadily in the major urban areas. Petty crime, especially theft of personal property, is common throughout Pakistan. Lahore and Karachi, in particular, experience high levels of crime. They are large cities beset by poverty, high unemployment, and underpaid, under-manned police forces.

American travelers to Pakistan are strongly advised to avoid traveling by taxis and other forms of public transportation from the airport to their destinations, and vice versa. Americans are also urged to be met at the airport by members of their host organizations or families.

The loss or theft of a U.S. passport abroad should be reported immediately to local police and to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Pakistan for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

U.S. citizens may refer to the Department of State pamphlets "[A Safe Trip Abroad](#)" and "[Tips for Travelers to South Asia](#)" for ways to promote a trouble-free journey. The pamphlets are available by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, via the Internet at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov>, or via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at <http://travel.state.gov>.

MEDICAL FACILITIES: Adequate medical care is available in major cities in Pakistan but is limited in rural areas. With the exception of the Agha Khan Hospital in Karachi, Doctors' Hospital in Lahore, and Shifa International Hospital in Islamabad, Americans may find hospital care and cleanliness below U.S. standards. Medical facilities often require prepayment and do not accept credit cards.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. However, many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the U.S. may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, "[Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad](#)," available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page or autofax: (202) 647-3000.

OTHER HEALTH INFORMATION: The water is not potable anywhere in Pakistan and sanitation in many restaurants is inadequate. Stomach illnesses are frequent and dangerous. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers from the United States at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via [CDC's Internet site](#) at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult [the World Health Organization's website](#) at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>.

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning traffic safety and road conditions in Pakistan is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance

Safety of Public Transportation: Poor
 Urban Road Condition/Maintenance: Good to Poor
 Rural Road condition/Maintenance: Poor
 Availability of Roadside Assistance: Poor

Traffic in Pakistan moves on the left, opposite of that in the U.S. In addition to this source of potential confusion, travel by road in Pakistan has a variety of other risks. Roads are crowded, drivers are aggressive and poorly trained, and many vehicles, particularly large trucks and buses, are badly maintained. Roads, including most major highways, also suffer from poor maintenance and often have numerous potholes, sharp drop-offs and barriers that are not sign-posted. Extreme caution should be exercised when traveling at night by road since many vehicles do not have proper illumination or dimmers nor are most roads properly illuminated or sign posted. Driving without experienced local drivers or guides is not recommended.

For additional information about road safety, see the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at http://travel.state.gov/road_safety.html

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Pakistan's civil aviation authority as Category 1 -- in compliance with international aviation safety standards for oversight of Pakistan's air carrier operations. For further information, travelers may contact the Department of Transportation within the U.S. at 1-800-322-7873, or visit [the FAA's Internet website](http://www.faa.gov/avr/iasa) at <http://www.faa.gov/avr/iasa>.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) separately assesses some foreign carriers for suitability as official providers of air services. For information regarding the DOD policy on specific carriers, travelers may contact DOD at 618-229-4801.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS: Pakistani customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Pakistan of items such as firearms, pornographic material and alcohol. An import permit and health certificate are required for animals. There are also restrictions on leaving Pakistan with antiquities or animals. It is advisable to contact the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, DC or the nearest Pakistani consulate for specific information regarding customs requirements.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Pakistani laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are strictly enforced. Long jail sentences are frequently imposed and large fines are assessed in some cases. Legislation passed in 1994 makes trafficking offenses punishable by death.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Pakistan is largely a cash economy. Personal checks are not commonly accepted. Most Pakistanis do not use checking accounts for routine transactions. Only a few establishments in the larger cities accept credit cards and traveler's checks and there have been numerous reports of credit card fraud. There are bank branches as well as registered money-changers in all international airports. ATMs can be found in major airports. English is widely spoken by professional level airport staff. It is best to avoid public transportation. Currently, for security reasons, U.S. Embassy employees are restricted from using taxis.

CHILDREN'S ISSUES: For information on international adoption of children and international parental child abduction, please refer to our Internet site at http://travel.state.gov/children's_issues.html or telephone the Overseas Citizens Services call center at 1-888-407-4747. The OCS call center can answer general inquiries regarding international adoptions and abductions and will forward calls to the appropriate country officer in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-317-472-2328.

REGISTRATION/EMBASSY AND CONSULATE LOCATIONS: American citizens living in or visiting Pakistan are encouraged to register at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Pakistan and obtain updated information on travel and security within Pakistan. They are located at the following addresses:

-- [The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad](#) is located at Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5, telephone (92-51) 2080-0000; consular section telephone (92-51) 2080-2700, fax (92-51) 282-2632, website <http://www.islamabad.usembassy.state.gov>.

-- [The U.S. Consulate General in Karachi](#), located at 8 Abdullah Haroon Road, closed its public operations indefinitely due to security concerns. U.S. citizens requiring emergency assistance should call the consular section in Karachi. The telephone is (92-21) 568-5170 (after hours: 92-21-568-1606), fax (92-21) 568-0496, website <http://www.usembassy.state.gov/karachi>.

-- [The U.S. Consulate in Lahore](#) is located on 50-Empress Road Sharah-E-Abdul Hamid Bin Badees, (Old Empress Road) near Shimla Road, telephone (92-42) 636-5530, fax (92-42) 636-5177, website <http://usembassy.state.gov/lahore>. Email address: amconsul@brain.net.pk

-- [The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar](#) is located at 11 Hospital Road, Cantonment, Peshawar, telephone (92-91) 279-801 through 803, fax (92-91) 276-712, web site <http://www.Peshawar.usconsulate.gov>.

The normal workweek in Pakistan is Monday through Saturday, with a half-day worked on Friday. The U.S. Embassy and consulates are open Monday through Thursday, with a half-day on Friday.

This replaces the Consular Information Sheet for Pakistan dated April 4, 2002, to add or update sections on Country Description, Dual Nationality, Safety and Security/Areas of Instability, Crime, Medical Facilities, Other Health Information, Traffic Safety and Road Conditions, Customs Regulations, Children's Issues, and Registration/Embassy and Consulate Locations.

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