



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

General Information:

Capital: Islamabad

Language: Urdu (official, national) 8%, English (official, government), Punjabi 48%, Sindhi 12%, Siraiki 10%, Pashtu 8%, Balochi 3%, Hindko 2%, Brahui 1%, Burushaski and others 8%

Religion: Muslim 97%, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikhs and others 3%

Currency: Pakistani rupee (PKR)

GMT: (+) 5 /6 in summer

Country Overview

The presence of several foreign and indigenous terrorist groups poses a danger throughout Pakistan (not in The Capital). Across the country, terrorist attacks frequently occurred against civilians, government, and a very few foreigners. Attacks have included armed assaults on heavily guarded sites, including Pakistani military installations and airport(s). The Government of Pakistan maintains heightened security measures, particularly in the major cities, and these measures may vary from day to day. Terrorists and criminal groups regularly resort to kidnapping for ransom.

Pakistan (Urdu: پاکستان) is a large country (1.5 times the size of France) in South Asia. Located along the Arabian Sea, it is surrounded by Afghanistan to the west and northwest, Iran to the southwest, India to the east, and China to the northeast. It is strategically located astride the ancient trade routes of the Khyber and Bolan passes between Central Asia and South Asia.

The history of Pakistan traces back to the beginnings of human life in South Asia. Pakistan is home to the Indus Valley civilization, which is amongst the oldest in the world. The earliest archaeological traces of ancient Pakistanis are from 7000 BC in Mehrgarh, which grew to be the "Indus Valley Civilization". By 3300 BC, this civilization had well-planned towns and well-laid roads, but gave no evidence of weapons or fortifications. This declined and disintegrated around 1900 BC, possibly due to drought and geological disturbances. Most historians say that the Vedic people, or Aryans, were later migrants, who encountered a civilization in decline and perhaps hastened that decline. According to this view, the Vedic people eventually occupied most of North India, while the descendants of the Indus Valley cultures moved south and gave rise to the Dravidian culture. The minority view challenges this Aryan Migration theory, claiming that the Indus Valley people were in fact the ones who compiled the Vedas.



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

Prior to the 1900s the area of Pakistan was the area from which the Muslims ruled over Central and Southern Asia for over 300 years. Because Pakistan used to be part of India, both the countries share the same history especially in the Indic provinces of Punjab and Sindh. The provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa share more affinities with neighboring Iran and Afghanistan, and thus share less an Indic influence.

The official name of Pakistan was used after the partition of (British) India into the two nation-states of India and Pakistan in 1947. However, the word Pakistan was first used by Ch. Rehmat Ali back in 1933 in his declaration, Now or Never - calling for its separation from the Empire. Afterwards, British-ruled India was divided into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (with two sections West and East) and India. A third war between these countries in 1971 resulted in East Pakistan seceding and becoming the separate nation of Bangladesh. A dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir is ongoing between India and **Pakistan**.

The current issues facing modern Pakistan are conflict with India, corruption and a negative view of democracy.

Crime

Be aware of the risk of street crime and take sensible measures to protect yourself and your belongings. Take particular care of your passport, bankcards, bags, jewellery, laptop and mobile, especially on public transport, when travelling to and from the airport and in crowded areas including markets. There is an active black market in forged and stolen passports. Credit card fraud is common.

British nationals of Pakistani origin have been targeted by criminals, including kidnapers, as they are often perceived as being wealthier than locals.

Much of Balochistan, rural Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Agencies, have a high level of lawlessness.

Political situation

Public demonstrations and civil disorder are common. Protests can occur with little warning and while most remain peaceful, they can turn violent quickly. Avoid getting caught up in demonstrations, large crowds of people and public events.

Local travel

The Pakistan authorities currently advise that "all foreigners, including diplomats may not move out of their city of residence without proper security and without prior co-ordination with the law



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

enforcement agency". This requirement has not been rigorously enforced, but you should consider informing local authorities of any travel plans, and be prepared to be stopped and challenged by officials, who may instruct you to turn around.

If you travel to any of the regions listed below, you or your travel company should contact the local authorities in advance to check the local security situation. They may arrange police protection as necessary and will advise whether you need a No Objection Certificate issued by the Pakistani Ministry of Interior.

Balochistan

There is a heightened risk from kidnapping and militant activity in much of Balochistan. There are frequent sectarian attacks in and around Quetta. If you intend to visit these areas, make sure you have the necessary permission from the authorities and proper security arrangements in place.

Border areas

Except for official border crossing points, foreigners are not allowed to travel within 10 miles of Pakistan's international borders and the Kashmir Line of Control, or within 30 miles of the Afghan border in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Gilgit-Baltistan

On 22 June 2013, 10 foreign climbers and their Pakistani guide were killed in a terrorist attack at the Nanga Parbat base camp area. The terrain in Gilgit-Baltistan is mountainous, with remote and isolated locations that are difficult to police effectively. You are strongly advised to obtain and follow local security advice and make appropriate personal security arrangements in advance of any visit. There are also occasional outbursts of sectarian violence in and around Gilgit.

All foreign nationals must register with the local authorities when visiting Gilgit-Baltistan. You may need a permit for mountaineering or trekking, in particular for mountains over 6,000 metres. The process can take up to 2 months and is best organised through a travel company. The validity of your travel insurance policy may be affected if you don't have the correct permits.

Use reputable trekking agencies, stay on established routes, and always walk in groups. Don't trek alone. Be aware of the risks of altitude sickness.

Islamabad



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

In line with the safety and security advice in this travel advice, British High Commission staff have been advised not to spend longer than necessary at retail and fast food outlets, coffee bars, shopping centres, sports venues and events, and live music venues, and to remain vigilant for suspicious objects or activity.

British High Commission staff are advised to avoid:

- the area around the Lal-Masjid Mosque in sector G/6 including Aabpara and Melody markets
- sectors G7 to G10 and F10 (with the exception of Idrees Market - F10/2 – which is deemed safe to visit)
- religious services outside the diplomatic enclave

The following areas are currently out-of-bounds to British High Commission staff:

- the cinema in Centaurus Mall

Karachi

There are high levels of violence in Karachi. The city is vulnerable to serious violent ethnic conflict between different communities. Criminal and political violence is also common including armed carjacking, robbery, kidnap and murder. Strikes called by various religious and political parties cripple the city and regularly produce violent civil unrest.

It's difficult to predict the safety of daily activity. The districts of Clifton and Defence, and the parts of Saddar which include government offices, major hotels and the financial district are generally regarded as more stable, though there remains a risk of violence. All other districts, and the areas of Saddar immediately around and to the north of the US Consulate General, are at greater risk of violence. You should carefully plan any travel within the city taking into account all the threats. If you intend to move outside the more stable areas you should take advice from hosts or trusted contacts and be prepared to cancel or curtail your plans.

In addition to taking comprehensive security measures for all moves around the city, British Deputy High Commission staff are advised to avoid:

- areas where vaccination programmes are taking place, especially in the Orangi Town area where 7 policemen protecting polio workers were shot dead on 20 April 2016.

The following areas are currently out of bounds for British Deputy High Commission staff:

- the Marriott Hotel in Karachi and nearby locations on Abdullah Haroon Road (eg the Sind Club)

Karakoram Highway

The Karakoram Highway runs from Hasan Abdal in north Punjab towards Gilgit and the Chinese



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

border. MASC Executive advise against travel on the Highway between Islamabad and Gilgit. You should avoid travelling on the Highway at night - the road can be narrow with sudden steep drops. All sections of the Highway north of Batagram up to the Chinese border have experienced landslides.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

There is regular military or militant activity in the districts of Swat, Buner, Malakand, Nowshera, Swabi and Lower Dir. Localised curfews may be imposed at short notice. The Kalesh Valley, Bamoboret Valley and Arandu District to the south and west of Chitral in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have seen an increase in militant activity, which has included abductions, violent armed robbery and murder.

Pakistan Administered Kashmir

Make sure you have the necessary permissions to travel. Specific requirements can change and you should check the latest requirements before travelling. A No Objection Certificate is always required for foreign nationals to travel within 10 miles of the Line of Control or to enter Kashmir via Muzaffarabad.

Punjab

On 27 March 2016 a suspected suicide bomb killed a large number of people in the Gulshan Iqbal Park area of Lahore. Travellers to Lahore should avoid the Gulshan Iqbal Park area, and should follow the advice of local authorities. Travellers are reminded to avoid crowded areas in Pakistan, as these can be targeted by terrorists.

If you travel to southern Punjab take advice about the local security situation in advance. There are frequent reports of criminality and public order incidents.

Sindh

There is a very high risk from crime and kidnapping in Interior Sindh. There are reports of increased criminality in Hyderabad.

Air travel

On 9 March 2016 the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority announced the closure of the runway at Benazir Bhutto International Airport Islamabad from 8am until 11am and from 1pm until 3pm every day from 14 to 22 March 2016 inclusive. The runway will also close from 8am until 11am



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

on 23 March 2016. Contact your airline or travel company for more information about potential disruption to international and domestic flights.

Security has been tightened at Pakistan's airports following a number of terrorist attacks on key airports/aircraft in 2014. In Karachi vehicles aren't allowed access to pick-up and drop-off areas. Security at all airports was enhanced in 2015. Allow yourself enough time to get through enhanced security checks, but don't linger unnecessarily at airports. Be vigilant, follow instructions from security and airport personnel, and contact your airline in the event of any disruption.

On 1 July 2015, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority attempted to suspend the operations of local airline Indus Air for safety and security reasons. The airline is still flying after challenging the suspension on legal grounds.

On 2 February 2016 protests at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi resulted in 2 deaths.\

Rail travel

Avoid using the railway network, which has been subject to frequent attacks and derailments. There have been attacks on railway stations in Punjab, and militants have planted bombs on the rail network in Balochistan and Sindh.

Road travel

Take particular care on long road journeys and when travelling cross-country. Local driving standards are erratic, especially at night. Road conditions are poor and there is a risk of carjacking.

Avoid using street taxis. Only use taxis from reputable companies which are radio-controlled.

For security reasons, you should avoid using public transport, including the Metro Bus which operates between Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Sea travel

The threat from piracy within 12 nautical miles of the Pakistani coastline is low, but you should be aware of the significant threat piracy poses in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.

Terrorism

There is a high threat from terrorism and sectarian violence throughout Pakistan. The main



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

terrorist threat comes from Tehrik-e Taleban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella organisation of groups primarily based in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), who have a mainly anti-state focus but also maintain, and have stated an intent to launch attacks on western interests. TTP conducts attacks throughout Pakistan and has claimed responsibility for 27 March 2016 bombing of Gulshan Iqbal Park in Lahore. Their attacks mostly involve using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), including suicide attacks.

Further attacks could be indiscriminate including in places visited by foreigners. Previous methods of attack have included grenades, shootings, bombings and suicide bombs. Militants can launch complex and deadly attacks. Be vigilant, keep a low profile and vary your routes and timings if you make any regular journeys. Avoid crowds. Public places and public gatherings are often targeted, including courts and government buildings, hotels, airports, markets, shopping malls, restaurants, educational institutions and religious shrines. Take care if you're planning to attend sporting events or live music venues. Attacks have previously targeted places that could be considered by militants to be un-Islamic. You should avoid 'western' fast-food outlets. CD/DVD shops and barber shops have previously been targeted.

Pakistani government personnel and institutions, and the security forces are prime targets for attacks, especially given the ongoing Pakistan military action in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) which may lead to retaliatory attacks. You should avoid key government installations and gatherings of uniformed personnel. Places of worship, including churches, religious sites, minority religious sects and shrines are often targeted. You should avoid religious events or gatherings and limit movements on Friday afternoons. You should also be vigilant in areas around diplomatic premises throughout Pakistan. The US closed its consulate in Lahore following a specific threat in August 2013 and remains closed to the public.

Areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, especially Peshawar, suffer particularly frequent terrorist attacks with a high rate of casualties. There are threats of attacks in Karachi and almost daily violence. There is considered to be a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

Kidnapping

You should be alert to the threat of kidnapping throughout Pakistan. The number of kidnappings for ransom of westerners has increased over recent years. The most recent cases have been in the Punjab and Balochistan. Kidnappings can be for financial or political gain. British nationals of Pakistani origin are at particular risk of kidnap for ransom. British and other foreign national kidnap victims have faced extended periods of detention. While some were ultimately released by their captors, others have been killed.

The long-standing policy of the British government is not to make substantive concessions to



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

hostage takers. The British government considers that paying ransoms and releasing prisoners increases the risk of further hostage taking.

Local laws and customs

Local laws reflect the fact that Pakistan is a Muslim country. You should respect local customs and sensitivities at all times, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or if you intend to visit religious areas.

In 2016, the holy month of Ramadan is expected to start on 6 June and finish on 5 July.

You should dress modestly at all times. Men and women should cover their shoulders and legs when in public. Women should cover their heads when entering mosques or other holy places, and when travelling in rural areas.

Importing alcohol and pork products is illegal. Homosexuality and co-habitation by an unmarried couple is illegal.

If you or your father were born in Pakistan, you might be considered a Pakistani national by the local authorities even if you don't hold a Pakistani passport, and the British government may be prevented from providing the full range of consular assistance.

You should carry some form of photo ID at all times.

Possession of even small quantities of illegal drugs can lead to imprisonment. A number of British nationals have been arrested on drug trafficking charges and face long periods in detention on remand as their cases make their way through the Pakistan legal system. Drug trafficking can attract the death penalty.

The death penalty can and has been imposed for crimes including blasphemy, murder, rape and unlawful assembly.

Don't take photographs at military establishments, airports or any infrastructure, including bridges and dams including from aircraft. In the past British nationals have been arrested on suspicion of 'spying'. Seek permission from any official, especially in border areas.

Visas

If you are travelling to Pakistan on a British passport, you will need to get a visa before you travel. Visa violations can be treated as a criminal offence and could result in a fine or detention. Journalists' visas often have additional travel restrictions, which you should observe. For further



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

information consult the High Commission for Pakistan in London.

Passport validity

Your passport should be valid for a minimum period of 6 months at the time of your visa application.

UK Emergency Travel Documents

UK Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs) are valid for entry into Pakistan. Holders of an ETD entering Pakistan will need to have either a valid visa or an identity card issued by the Pakistan government (either an NIC - National Identity Card - or an NICOP - National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis).

Yellow fever

Yellow fever vaccination is required for travellers arriving from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission.

Travelling with children

A single parent or other adult who is not the child's parent may need to provide documentary evidence of parental responsibility, particularly if the child is of Pakistani origin, before the immigration authorities will allow the child to leave the country.

Exit requirements

All passengers leaving Pakistan must have a valid visa, a Pakistani national identity card or a valid Pakistani passport. If you are travelling on a British passport and your visa has expired you may not be allowed to board your flight. In these circumstances you should contact the Ministry of Interior to get an exit visa. A fine may also be payable.

Health

Visit your health professional at least 4 to 6 weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures.

Dengue occurs in Pakistan, especially during and just after the monsoon season.

Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 15 and ask for an ambulance. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.

Take care when purchasing bottled water. A recent government report found a number of bottled water brands to be contaminated.

Natural disasters

The monsoon season in Pakistan is from late June to early October. Heavy rains can cause severe flooding, particularly in Sindh and Punjab Provinces.

Check local forecasts and news reports and be aware of the risk of landslides and road blockages, particularly in hilly and mountainous regions. Take extreme care crossing swollen rivers.

Earth tremors are common and mountainous areas regularly experience floods and landslides.

On 26 October 2015, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake affected Pakistan. According to local authorities, over 220 people died and at least 1,600 people were injured as a result. The districts of Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Shangla and Buner were particularly affected.

Vaccinations/ Medications

Recommended: Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio, Hepatitis A, Typhoid Fever

To Be Considered: Hepatitis B, Rabies, Cholera, Japanese Encephalitis (JE), Tuberculosis (TB)

Malaria is present and antimalarials may be recommended for travel to Pakistan please seek medical advice 4-6 weeks before travel.

- **Cholera:** spread through consumption of contaminated water and food. More common during floods and after natural disasters, in areas with very poor sanitation and lack of clean drinking water. It would be unusual for travellers to contract cholera if they take basic precautions with food and water and maintain a good standard of hygiene.
- **Diphtheria:** spread person to person through respiratory droplets. Risk is higher if mixing with locals in poor, overcrowded living conditions.



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

- **Hepatitis A:** spread through consuming contaminated food and water or person to person through the faecal-oral route. Risk is higher where personal hygiene and sanitation are poor.
- **Hepatitis B:** spread through infected blood and blood products, contaminated needles and medical instruments and sexual intercourse. Risk is higher for those at occupational risk, long stays or frequent travel, children (exposed through cuts and scratches) and individuals who may need, or request, surgical procedures abroad.
- **Rabies:** spread through the saliva of an infected animal, usually through a bite, scratch or lick on broken skin. Particularly dogs and related species, but also bats. Risk is higher for those going to remote areas (who may not be able to promptly access appropriate treatment in the event of a bite), long stays, those at higher risk of contact with animals and bats, and children. Even when pre-exposure vaccine has been received, urgent medical advice should be sought after any animal or bat bite.
- **Tetanus:** spread through contamination of cuts, burns and wounds with tetanus spores. Spores are found in soil worldwide. A total of 5 doses of tetanus vaccine are recommended for life in the UK. Boosters are usually recommended in a country or situation where the correct treatment of an injury may not be readily available.
- **Typhoid:** spread mainly through consumption of contaminated food and drink. Risk is higher where access to adequate sanitation and safe water is limited.
- **Polio:** spread through the poliovirus, a highly contagious virus specific to humans. The virus usually enters the environment in the faeces of someone who is infected. In areas with poor sanitation, the virus easily spreads through the faecal-oral route, via contaminated water or food.
- **Tuberculosis:** spread through bacteria that spread from person to person through microscopic droplets released into the air. This can happen when someone with the untreated, active form of tuberculosis coughs, speaks, sneezes, spits, laughs or sings. Although tuberculosis is contagious, it's not easy to catch.

Current Travel Advice

MASC Executive advise against all travel to:

- the Federally Administered Tribal Areas
- the districts of Charsadda, Kohat, Tank, Bannu, Lakki, Dera Ismail Khan, Swat, Buner and Lower Dir in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa
- the city of Peshawar and districts south of the city, including travel on the Peshawar to Chitral road via the Lowari Pass
- northern and western Balochistan
- travel on the Karakoram Highway between Islamabad and Gilgit
- MASC Executive advise against all but essential travel to:
- the Kalesh Valley, the Bamoboret Valley and Arandu District to the south and west of



Pakistan Risk Rating **4**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

Chitral in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

- the city of Quetta
- the city of Nawabshah in Sindh Province, and areas of interior Sindh to the north of Nawabshah

Pakistan is in a major earthquake zone and remains at risk from further earthquakes, aftershocks, landslides and flooding. You should familiarise yourself with safety procedures in the event of an earthquake.

There is a high threat from terrorism, kidnap and sectarian violence throughout Pakistan. There is a heightened threat of terrorist attacks, and kidnapping against western nationals in Pakistan. You should be particularly vigilant and take appropriate security precautions.

A terrorist attack in the Gulshan Iqbal Park area of Lahore on 27 March 2016 resulted in a large number of fatalities. You should follow the advice of local authorities and avoid crowded areas, as these can be targeted by terrorists.

Security forces in Pakistan remain on high alert following previous attacks. There may be increases in security force presence and restrictions on movement may be put in place at short notice.

In response to the World Health Organisation's emergency recommendations about the spread of polio virus, the government of Pakistan now requires all departing travellers who have spent more than 4 weeks in Pakistan to produce a valid vaccination certificate at the time of their departure. This certificate should show that either Oral Polio Vaccine or Inactivated Polio Vaccine has been administered between 4 weeks and 12 months before departure from Pakistan.

The Overseas Business Risk service offers information and advice for British companies operating overseas on how to manage political, economic, and business security-related risks.

Take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before you travel.

Around 270,000 British nationals visit Pakistan every year. Most visits are trouble-free.

Safety and security