

# PAKISTAN

I wanted to share with the board the sum of my experiences over 13 months in Pakistan, based on places to stay and visit mostly. This was written May 06 and is based on occurrences throughout 2005. This is only intended as a guideline. Places are not in any particular order and contact details are given along side. Please remember that things do change so treat this info as a guideline only.

You may also notice a tendency towards Non Government Organisations (NGOs). Much of my time was spent working with schools across Pakistan. Visiting schools can give one a unique insight into a community or region. Do try and visit some of these as the children would love to see you. You may not have another chance!

## LAHORE

Pakistan's cultural capital. Spent many a month here!

### **Places to Stay:**

Regale Internet Inn – Mallick shams (go to Mallick he'll sought you out. His enthusiasm after six years is undented. I don't care about your opinion of the joint. Go there and then tell me that you didn't stay there longer than you intended!). Make sure you catch an audience with the eclectic Sain Mohammad Ali, the folk singer who often performs at the Regale Inn. The Haleem is good behind the cinema.  
**Tel:** +92 42 7311987 **Email:** regale\_internet@hotmail.com

There's another hotel just off Anakoli whose name alludes me. None the less it's apparently popular with Japanese tourists (according to the Lonely Planet). If you do decide to stay here, be prepared for a matchbox room and a prostitute at your door.

### **Transport:**

If you're travelling anywhere go: Daewoo is the best but you pay for it. Triple the fare but with airline style service. Alternatively try Skyways.

### **Must See:**

Sufi night – Even if you don't see it, visit the Shah Jamal shrine anytime. The tiny complex has a fantastic atmosphere any day of the

week. Remember it's the second entrance on the left (the first one leads into a mosque, not the shrine).

#### Food street:

There are two Food streets. One directly off the Mall opposite Anarkali, (not far from the Regale) and the other one in the old city. Both are slightly different so ask the locals.

#### Icecream street:

Virtually opposite the Regale Inn is Icecream Street and the popular Chaman Icecream. Best smoothies (especially the Mango – although homemade is nicer if you can try it).

#### Lahore's Passport extension office:

Not far from Icecream street. Just walk to the end, turn right and ask directions. Takes 10 mins from the Regale Internet Inn to walk there.

#### Regal Cinema:

The inspiration for the 'Regale' Inn, but you've got to watch an English movie in this colonial style theatre. English films on Friday's only. But just go for the experience. It's not expensive.

#### Jinnah Gardens:

15 mins walk down the Mall (away from the centre) is a popular spot with shady trees and Jinnah library. Jinnah Library has a decent selection of English magazines (make sure you don't buy membership if you only intend staying for a few hours). The gardens are a well-known secret.

#### Godh Gypsy schools:

Godh run 9 schools (perhaps more now) around Lahore catering to Lahore's 'Khana Badosh' migrant community. These people live in tent camps around the city and move on when work dries up. Godh are always on the look out for English teachers so if you have a few weeks spare in Lahore do look them up.

**Tel:** 0092-42-5896701 **Email:** godh1@hotmail.com

#### Shahdara:

I kept horses in Shahdara for seven months. Beautiful place. Make sure you visit the [Brooke Hospital](#) for Animals Clinic there. The Brooke care for many of the sick working equines that still drive much of the city's engine. Their work is fascinating so tell everyone you know about them. Take a walk around the area and you'll find, Jahangir's tomb & Nur Jahan's tomb. You can walk down by the Ravi river in

Winter when the river is low. Make sure you also feed the kestrels off Old Ravi bridge. One bag of meat costs 5 Rs (no more!!). Locals hurl the meat off the bridge to the birds to "throw away their troubles". The circling kestrels then dive in incredible acrobatic swoops to snatch the bags in mid-air. Try to throw the meat, rather than the bag as well though!

Lahore Zoo:

Recently renovated supposedly. Don't try pretending to be Afghani to get inside as lots of foreigners do. The staff just look at you stupidly and ask to see your national ID card. You might get lucky though.

Non- Government Organisations:

Check out any of the following: [ActionAid Pakistan](#), [SPO](#), [SPARC](#), [CARITAS Pakistan](#) or [CAP](#).

## KARACHI

Pakistan's business capital with quite a metropolitan feel.

### **Where to stay:**

I stayed in many many 'backpacker' hotels in Karachi and the only one I'd recommend is Hotel United. For two reasons. A) they charge 300 Rs/night, the rooms are semi decent and I had the best experiences there. B) They have pretty pictures of Nepali mountains and shrines on the walls.

### **Must See:**

I didn't spend too much time 'sight-seeing' around Karachi but Jinnah's tomb is certainly impressive. What really appealed to me was getting out of the city onto the beaches up/down shore from Karachi to see the real Karachi... i.e. traditional fisherman's villages. They still hollow out their boats by hand. Awesome. There's also a semi- interesting WWF turtle conservation project that can be tied in with a visit out of the city.

'Horse' riding

Some local enterprising locals believe that severely whipping undead looking horses around a beach is fun for 30 Rs one way. If you see this one I advise to ignore it.

[The Citizens Foundation \(TCF\)](#)

If you have the opportunity to visit any school run by TCF do visit as their work spreading literacy in Pakistan has won international acclaim.

**Tel:** +92 21 111823823 **Email:** citizens@cyber.net.pk

## PESHAWAR

### **Where to stay:**

Tourist Inn (100Rs +) – Great to meet other backpackers only. The proprietor can be sneaky. Taking a 'taxi' to the Khyber pass with this man costs 1500 Rs for a 4x4 wheel drive. You should *definitely* be able to bargain a taxi for around 600Rs. Better to arrange a permit also as you can get turned round.

Rose hotel (400Rs) - I've heard good reports back from this one. Good rooms with decent showers. It's also the leaving point for the early 6am Toyota Hi-Ace vans to the Afghanistan border.

Afghanistan is also well worth a visit.

## GULMIT

### **Where to stay:**

[Marco Polo inn](#) – sit and have tea with the Mir of Gulmit. What more could you want. His son Shahbaz also bought two mares off me, so do check up on them if you see them and let me know!

**Tel:** +92 5822 50227 **Email:** rajahussainkhan@yahoo.com

## SUST

### **Where to stay:**

Khunjerab Hotel – located a little South of New Sust, the Khunjerab hotel is run by a charming family who seemed to me a little brisk at first but really nice after a day. This family has some of the smallest sheep in the world...

**Tel:** +92 5823 51006

### **Must See:**

[AKES](#) – Aga Khan Education Service run schools across North Pakistan, mainly for the Ismaeli community. There is an AKES office in Sust and

the director will surely arrange a school visit if you're interested. He probably doesn't get many visitors. Their teaching style is at the forefront of Pakistan and seeing a school really opens your eyes to another world. Highly recommended.

**Tel:** +92 5811 54191-2 (Gilgit Head Office)

## CHAPURSON

Most likely you'll run into Alam Jan Daryo if you spend any length of time above Gilgit. A charming bloke who has a guest house high in the [Chapurson valley](#) near to the Afghanistan – Wakkan border. Ask him about horse-rides there. Nudge nudge.

**Email:** pamirtrails@yahoo.com

## RAWALPINDI

### **Where to stay:**

Al Asam hotel – run by Gilgit wallahs, super friendly bunch of people. Hotel is run down but it's an excellent experience staying here. At around 100 Rs + per night whose complaining. Nice place to stay if you want some culture. If you want peace and a little coolness in the Summer heat, Islamabad is undoubtedly better (though pricier).

**Tel: Email:**

## ISLAMABAD

### **Where to stay:**

G7 & G6 Markaz - have some of the best hotels to stay in. All priced from 250 Rs upwards.

### **Must See:**

Murree – fantastic hill station that still has a lot of charm despite what the guide books say. Especially nice in the Summer and only two hours bus ride from Rawalpindi/Islamabad. Check out the work of NRSP who work in Murree to develop local communities.

Company Bagh – Small village before Murree where a British lady runs a huge orphanage called [Sirat ul Jinnah](#).

**Tel:** +92 51 3460091 **Email:** sirat@isb.paknet.com.pk

Shah Faisal Mosque – Just see and you'll know why I mentioned it.

Major NGOS – Islamabad has one of the highest concentrations of NGOs in Pakistan. Major ones I worked with are; [SPO](#), [ActionAid International](#), [RSPN](#), [NRSP](#), [DAMAAN](#), [READ Foundation](#), [SUNGI](#).

Friendship House – A tiny school located in G8/1, Charles Colony, a Christian slum colony of mostly migrant workers. A Finnish lady is running a tiny school here. If you want to see a different side of Islamabad and feel you can help then do contact her.

**Tel:** +92 301-5582050 **Email:** maire64@yahoo.com

M. Mustaq's Horseback riding school – a well-kept secret that foreign residents like to keep. Mushtaq offers riding lessons and lovely serene rides around the area. Reasonable price and many horse enthusiasts from the British Embassy ride here also.

**Tel:** +92 300 5570220

## GUJRANWALA

### **Must See:**

Mud wrestling – The oldest mud-wrestling pit in Punjab is situated here. One of the few places left in Pakistan. I know because I tried it and wasn't very good...

Hamida Shokat girls school – A small middle school for girls supported by ActionAid Pakistan. It is the ONLY school in the area that gives girls a chance at a limited independence.

**Tel:** +92 300 4433729 **Email:** sarwat@nexuslinux.net.pk

[PTSA schools](#) – Schools run to benefit the working children of brick kilns across the country.

## GILGIT

### **Where to stay:**

Medina hotel – There's only one place really. In fact many travellers classify the Medina as one of the best they've ever stayed in. The owner is called M. Yacoob.

### **Must See:**

Shandur Polo Tournament – Without doubt one of the highlights of my four years away from the UK. One of Michael Palins too!

Christian cemetery - watch out for the famous grave of George Hayward. Very well preserved cemetery. Almost as good as Calcutta's though far smaller.

Ceena welfare services – run an orphanage and rescue abandoned babies. Their work is well applauded nationwide.

Christian Chapel - if you can find it there is a tiny chapel here.

[Pakistan Tourist Development Corporation PTDC Motel](#) – Just stop by and talk to Raja Ahmad Khan who is really a mine of information and would really love to talk (especially about Polo!).

[Fairy Meadow Tours](#) – Highly recommended and reasonably priced trekking agency. They also run the famous Fairy Meadows resort near the base camp of Nanga Parbat.

**Tel:** +92 5811 54310 **Email:** fmtours2000@yahoo.co.uk

## JHELUM

### **Must See:**

[Al Qasim Institute](#) for Mentally Retarded Children – What these people have achieved in 20 years is nothing short of amazing. Their sole philosophy is to give a mentally retarded child his/her independence from his parents so that they can live out a full life. In Pakistan you don't know how much that counts.

**Tel:** +92 544 623439 **Email:**

## QUETTA

### **Where to stay:**

[Muslim Hotel](#) - all backpackers seem to stay here. Cheap and reasonable.

### **Must See:**

A Pashtun movie – All 3 hours of Pashtun action, 'comedy' and large females who like to jiggle!

Khojak Pass – the pass has a wild feel to it. The border town of Chaman sits near by. Kandahar is only a stones throw away.

## GENERAL

Passport info – in Gilgit if you overstay your visa by up to 3 months you can appeal to the Deputy commissioner who will fine you a reasonable amount for every day spent over. You then have to apply for an additional extension. This should at least see you out of the country.

For further info on my experiences feel free to visit my website <http://www.r4e.org>. Further info on the above ngos [here](#).

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