Pakistan

Location

Pakistan is located in Southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea. It is strategically located between India on the east, and Iran and Afghanistan on the west. China borders it to the North. It lies at 30° N and 70° E. Relative in size, it is just a bit less than twice the size of California.

Geography

Pakistan runs a total of 803,940 sq km, of which 778,720 sq km is land, and 25,220 sq km is water. In the east, there are flat Indus plains. There are mountains in the north and northwest, of which K2, which is part of the Himalayan Mountain Range, is the highest point. The Indian Ocean is the lowest point, which is sea level. There is the Balochistan plateau in the west of Pakistan. There is a traditional invasion route that runs between Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent. The Indus River runs North and South through the country.

Climate

The climate of Pakistan varies widely from place to place. It is mostly hot, dry desert. It experiences heavy rains (a monsoon season) during July and August, where there is flooding along the Indus River. In the mountain regions of the north and west, temperatures fall below freezing during winter. In the Indus Valley area, temperatures range between about 32° and 49° C (approximately 90° and 120° F) in summer, and the average in winter is about 13° C (approximately 55° F).
History

Pakistan and India started as one entity. In 1947, British India separated and formed the Muslim state of Pakistan. It was divided into two sections, East and West. It separated from the largely Hindu India and this separation was not taken so well. There are disputes to this very day! There was another war in 1971 between Pakistan and India which resulted in Eastern Pakistan seceding and becoming a separate nation, currently Bangladesh. There is a dispute of the beautiful natural resources and land of Kashmir that is ongoing, although there are currently peace talks taking place. On May 28th 1998, Pakistan detonated a nuclear device.

Important Dates

The most important date on the Pakistani calendar is August 14th 1947, when it gained its independence from Great Britain. March 23 is Republic Day.

Population

The population of Pakistan as of July, 2003, is approximately 150 million. The population growth rate is 2.01%. The life expectancy at birth is 62.2 years, for males and 61.3, for females. The country has a total fertility rate of 4.1 children born per woman.

Currency

The official currency of Pakistan is the Pakistani Rupee (PKR). The current exchange rate, as of March 2004, is $1.00 = 57.46 PKR. The Rupees are in
denominations of PKR1000, 500, 100, 50, 10, 5, 2, and 1. Coins: Paisa – 1, 5, 10, 25, 50, and 1 rupee.

**Education**

The number of young people seeking higher education continues to grow sharply each year. Today, Pakistan has 32 public and private universities and over 100 affiliated colleges, technical training institutes, teacher training schools, and other specialized institutions. Higher education is taught mostly in English. 45.7% of the population is literate, over 15 years of age.

**Language**

The official language of Pakistan is Urdu. It is ironic however that being the official language, dating back to the Moghul Kings, Urdu is spoken by only 8% of the population. 48% speak Punjabi, a regional language.

**Religion**

The official religion of Pakistan is Muslim (97%). A small percentage of the population is Christian and Hindu.

**Agriculture**

Some major agricultural products of Pakistan include wheat, sugarcane, sunflower, rice, cotton, maize, fruits, vegetables and soybean. Milk, beef, mutton, and eggs are also very common.

**Trade**
The majority of Pakistan’s trade is done through the United States, United Arab Emirates (UAE), UK, Germany, and Saudi Arabia. Most exports consist of textiles, rice, leather, sporting goods, carpets, and rugs. The largest quantity of exports is to the United States. Most imports consist of petroleum, machinery, chemicals, transportation equipment, iron and steel, and tea. The largest quantity of its imports comes from United Arab Emirates (UAE).

**Food**

The majority of the population consumes large quantities of rice and bread. The population also eats lamb, vegetables, curries, rice, and chicken. Kebabs (different kinds of minced and roasted meat) are popular, as are *samosas* (deep-fried pastries filled with meat or vegetables). Muslims don’t eat pork, so it is not available. The most common bread is the flat *chapati*. Summer fruits include mangoes, plums and melons, and apples can be found in the winter. Many traditional dishes are eaten without utensils, but rather with their right hand.

**Landmarks**

The best place to visit is Lahore, known as "the city of gardens" and the capital of Punjab. It is an ancient town, rich in historical monuments, including some of the finest specimens of Muslim architecture -- the Badshahi Mosque of Emperor Aurangzeb, the Wazir Khan Mosque, the Shalimar Gardens of Emperor Shahjahan, Emperor Jehangir's Mausoleum and the Royal Fort of Akbar with its fabulous Hall of Mirrors. Lahore is considered to be the cultural capital of Pakistan because of its numerous colleges, places of learning, sports activities, frequent stage plays etc. The Museum in Lahore is
considered to be the best in the sub continent. It houses the statue of fasting Buddha beside a host of priceless relics. The Horse and Cattle Show is an annual event held at the Fortress Stadium every spring. It is a pageant of equestrian sports, folk dances, music and tattoo parades.