



Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, located against the backdrop of Margalla Hills is lush green spacious and serene. Situated amidst the picturesque Pothohar plateau the city was conceived in 1960. Islamabad is a meticulously planned city with wide tree-lined streets, elegant public buildings and well-organized bazaars. The walkways are shaded and separated from the traffic by rows of flame trees, jacaranda and hibiscus. Roses, jasmine and bougainvillea fill the parks and scenic viewpoints provide the city its lustrous look. Islamabad is adorned by attractive buildings reflecting modern architectural trends such as Shah Faisal Mosque, Federal Government Secretariat, Parliament House, Prime Minister's Office, Presidency and Supreme Court of Pakistan along with many commercial complexes.

Islamabad is ringed by a string of attractive gardens and recreational areas embellished by a host of green soothing sites. Rose and Jasmine Garden, a 20,360 sq. meters facility is famous for its roses nurturing 250 different varieties of roses and a dozen types of Jasmines. Shakarparian Hills are situated at a height of 609 meters and their terraced garden offer pleasant and sweeping vistas of Margalla and Murree hills, Rawal Lake, and the city. The entire sector of F-9 is converted into an attractive Fatima Jinnah Park having a profusion of lakes, rock gardens, aquariums and fountains and its lush surroundings offer

an excellent relaxation spot thronged by people. Nestled at the base of Murree Hills is Chattar Bagh providing a quiet break from the hustle and bustle of the twin cities amidst its scenic walks, gently flowing stream, waterfall and the surrounding hillside. Murghzar Mini Zoo is located at the foot of Daman-e-Koh hillock that is a superb viewpoint housing a Japanese style children's park. The enticing surroundings of the nearby Daman-e-Koh offer panoramic view of Islamabad. Pakistan Monumnet is a new addition to Islamabad's skyline and represents nation

Islamabad offers many cultural spots depicting the beauty and variety of Pakistani culture. The premier cultural hub is the legendary Lok Virsa Heritage Museum depicting multiple phases of the life, traditions and history of the people of Pakistan through a chronological sequence. It contains a large display of embroidered costumes, jewellery, woodwork, metal work, block printing, ivory and bone work along with traditional architectural facade exhibiting fresco, mirror work, marble inlay, tile mosaic and stucco tracery from different regions of Pakistan. The Heritage Library is equipped with resource data on ethnography, anthropology, folk music, art, crafts and history. Books, video and audio cassettes/CDs containing documentaries on folk culture, folk heritage, folk and classical vocal and instrumental music are available for sale.

Pakistan National Council of the Arts runs two art galleries exhibiting contemporary Pakistani art besides revolving exhibitions and paintings available for sale. It also houses Children Art Palace displaying



Children's efforts and also holds regular art classes for them. Pakistan Museum of Natural History is located on Garden Avenue in National Park Area exhibiting early human history, geology, and the wild life of Pakistan. The exhibits are of particular interest to students and children. Islamabad Archaeological Museum presents a long historic sequence of the land where Pakistan is situated revealing it to be a seat of the world's leading

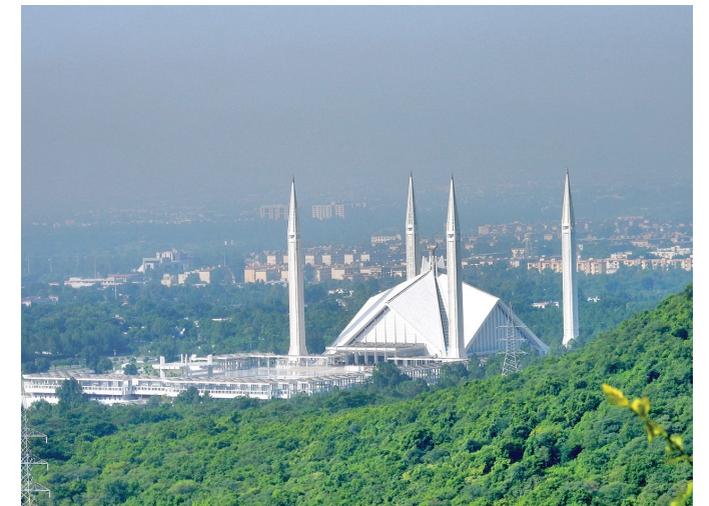


civilizations from the time immemorial. It contains proofs of primordial existence such as 20 million years old fossil remains, 2 million years old man-made stone tools, 7000 years old early human settlements which led to the world famous Indus Civilization, Gandhara Grave Culture and Gandhara Art, early Islamic settlements, Sultanate and Mughal period and their art and craft.

Situated in the cusp of a beautiful valley

Islamabad is blessed with a variety of lakes and dams. The foremost among them is the Rawal Lake covering an area of 8.8 sq. km. The terraced garden and the lake are ideal for picnic, fishing and boating. The highest point in the garden commands a panoramic view of the lake, Margalla and Murree hills, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Simli Lake, about 30 km from Islamabad is fed by the melting snow and natural springs of Murree Hills. Angling and boating are also available at the lake. Khanpur Lake and dam is at a distance of 48 km from Islamabad and is an ideal place for day trip/picnic, boating, angling and watching migratory birds during winter. Misriot Dam is located 12 km southwest of Islamabad having a lake with boating and fishing facilities. It has a pleasant landscape and walkways beyond the lake among eruptions of black rocks. Tanaza Dam is a small dam located at about 35 Km southwest of Islamabad on Dhamial Road and its quiet atmosphere is ideal for a day trip.

Islamabad is full of beautiful mosques and shrines. Shah Faisal Mosque, named after King Feisal of Saudi Arabia is the crown jewel adorning the city spread over 1,89,705 square meters with 88 meters high minarets and 40 meters high main prayer hall. The main prayer hall can accommodate 10,000 persons while the covered porticos and verandahs can take over 24,000 worshippers. Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif (Bari Imam) has a popular place in the



folk lore. Originally built on the orders of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb the death anniversary (Urs) of its patron saint is observed with fanfare and devotion. The shrine of Syed Meher Ali Shah of Golra Sharif is located in sector E-11 of Islamabad. A bard of considerable repute he wrote beautiful prose and poetry in Persian, Arabic and Punjabi languages,



mostly in praise of God and His Prophet (PBUH).

Steeped in long standing historical legacy Islamabad is surrounded by rich archaeological, cultural and historical remnants. One of the fine historical sites is Rawat Fort located 17 km east of the city built by Gakkhars, a fiercely independent tribe of the Potohar Plateau in early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Rohtas Fort, located 109 km south east of Islamabad is one of the most impressive historical monuments built by Afghan ruler Sher Shah Suri, in 1540 serving as a huge fortified base for military operations. Pharwala Fort is about 40 km from Islamabad built in 15<sup>th</sup> century by a Gakkhar ruler, Sultan Kai Gohar, on the ruins of a 10<sup>th</sup> century Hindu Shahi Fort. Attock Fort is situated about 101 km west of Islamabad on the left bank of Indus River. The Fort was completed in 1583 under the supervision of Khawaja Shamsuddin Khawafi, a minister of Emperor Akbar. Giri Fort is perched up on a hilltop about 8 km northeast of Taxila at the foot of Margalla Hills. It was built in 5<sup>th</sup> century by the Buddhist monks and later used by Sultan Masud son of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni.

Situated at the crossroads of history Islamabad is ringed by numerous passages of historical significance. The foremost among them, Margalla Pass is located

26 km west of Islamabad mentioned by historians and emperors like Alberuni, Ferishta and Jehangir. There is an obelisk built in 1890 in memory of British Brig. Gen. John Nicholson by his colleagues. A small part of the ancient Shahi (Royal) Road was first built by the Persians in 516 BC and later developed by the Afghan King Sher Shah Suri in 1540s and repaired by the Mughals in 1672. Wah Gardens was a major campsite of Mughal rulers developed with magnificent trees and water channels by successive Mughal Emperors. Tapering cypress trees line the canals through which cool waters once flowed between elegant Romanic pavilions and cascading into large reflecting basins. Hasan Abdal, 48 km from Islamabad was frequented by Mughal Emperors on their way to Kashmir. It houses the Sikh sacred place Gurdwara Panja Sahib having a scared rock with the handprint of Guru Nanak and is visited by Sikh pilgrims twice a year.

Another site of historical significance is Taxila located at 35 km from Islamabad. For over a thousand years Taxila remained famous as a centre for learning Gandhara art of sculpture, architecture, education and Buddhism. There are over 50 archaeological sites scattered in a radius of 30 kms around Taxila. A museum comprising various sections with rich archaeological finds of Taxila, arranged in chronological order and properly labeled is housed close to the site.

Representing the true spirit of a capital city



Islamabad is home to several universities in and around it. Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) was established in 1973 in sector H-8. Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) was setup in 1967 while International Islamic University (IIU), was created in November 1980. The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) was founded in 1991, while COMSATS Institute of IT was established in 1998. The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) and the University of Arid Agriculture (UAA) at Rawalpindi are also imparting knowledge and learning to the youth of Pakistan.

Islamabad is surrounded by breathtaking hillocks offering scenic beauty and energizing climatic conditions. Murree, the queen of Hills, is one and a half hours drive from Islamabad via the 55 km well carpeted winding road. Murree lies in a valley that is 2,413 meters high. Beyond Murree the hill resorts of Ayubia, Khairagali, Bhurban, Patriata, Dongagali and Nathiagali offer cool respite from the torrid heat of the plains. Patriata resort is located about 15 km south east of Murree and was developed on a virgin site at Patriata Ridge at 2,223 meters, the highest point in Punjab province. The resort is equipped with the dual chairlift and cable car system from Gulehra Gali to Patriata Ridge covering a distance of 3.1 km. The Gondola cable cars, first of its kind in Pakistan, give an all round panoramic view of the valley.



*Data courtesy PTDC*

# ISLAMABAD

