

# Language

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Dari and Pashto are the official languages of Afghanistan, but Dari is the one most commonly used as a lingua franca (linking or market language). Like Farsi, Dari and Pashto are written using a modified alphabet of the cursive Arabic script (see p228).

Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Wakhi are all spoken by minorities in northern Afghanistan. All these languages (along with Pashto) are covered in Lonely Planet's *Central Asia Phrasebook*.

## DARI

Dari is so similar to Farsi (the language of Iran) that even Afghans will often refer to it as Farsi. The principal difference between the two is that Farsi contains more loan words from Arabic and Turkish.

Dari is an Indo-Iranian language and a member of the Indo-European language family. While it is written in Arabic script, and runs from right to left, it isn't related to Arabic at all. For a more comprehensive guide to the language, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Farsi Phrasebook*.

## PRONUNCIATION & TRANSLITERATION

Transliterating Dari from its non-Roman script into the Roman alphabet is a tricky affair. In this language guide the system used is designed to be as simple as possible for spoken communication, even at the expense of absolute accuracy.

In general, the last syllable of a multi-syllable word is stressed.

### Vowels

Like Arabic, Dari script has only one letter (*alef*) dedicated solely to cover vowel sounds, and many vowels that would otherwise be represented in written English are

simply left out. It is some consolation that the English vowel sounds **i** (as in 'marine') and **u** (as in 'rule') are represented in the script by the letters *ye* (ﻱ) and *ve* (ﻭ) respectively (which are also used to represent the consonant sounds **y** and **v/w** respectively). Some vowel sounds do have long variants, but pronouncing them short won't overly affect meaning. We transliterate Dari and Pashto using the following five English vowel equivalents.

|          |                |
|----------|----------------|
| <b>a</b> | as in 'father' |
| <b>e</b> | as in 'bed'    |
| <b>i</b> | as in 'marine' |
| <b>o</b> | as in 'mole'   |
| <b>u</b> | as in 'rule'   |

### Consonants

Dari consonant sounds are shown in the alphabet table on p228. There are many consonants represented in the script with only subtle sound differences; the transliterations in this book reduce these variants to their closest English equivalent. The following are the only really tricky sounds:

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>gh</b> | a guttural sound like a heavy French 'r' pronounced at the back of the mouth                            |
| <b>'</b>  | a very weak glottal stop, like the sound made between the words 'uh-oh' or the 'tt' in Cockney 'bottle' |

## ACCOMMODATION

**Do you have any rooms available?** *otagh khali darin?*

**I'd like a ... room.** *yak otagh e ... mikhamam*  
**single** *yak nafara*  
**shared** *chand nafara*

**How much is it for ...?** *baraye ... cheghadr misha?*  
**one night** *yak shab*  
**a week** *yak hafta*  
**two people** *du nafar*

## CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

The all-purpose Dari greeting is *salam aleykom*, which does duty for 'good morning', 'good afternoon' and 'good evening'.

## THE DARI/FARSI ALPHABET

| Final | Medial | Initial | Alone | Transliteration | Pronunciation                            |
|-------|--------|---------|-------|-----------------|--|
| ا     |        |         | ا     | a               | short, as in 'act', long, as in 'father' |
| ب     | ب      | ب       | ب     | b               | as in 'bet'                              |
| پ     | پ      | پ       | پ     | p               | as in 'pet'                              |
| ت     | ت      | ت       | ت     | t               | as in 'ten'                              |
| ث     | ث      | ث       | ث     | s               | as in 'set'                              |
| ج     | ج      | ج       | ج     | j               | as in 'jet'                              |
| چ     | چ      | چ       | چ     | ch              | as in 'chat'                             |
| ح     | ح      | ح       | ح     | h               | as in 'hot'                              |
| خ     | خ      | خ       | خ     | kh              | as the 'ch' in Scottish <i>loch</i>      |
| د     |        |         | د     | d               | as in 'dot'                              |
| ذ     |        |         | ذ     | z               | as in 'zoo'                              |
| ر     |        |         | ر     | r               | as in 'run'                              |
| ز     |        |         | ز     | z               | as z above                               |
| ژ     |        |         | ژ     | zh              | as the 's' in 'measure'                  |
| س     | س      | س       | س     | s               | as s above                               |
| ش     | ش      | ش       | ش     | sh              | as in 'shed'                             |
| ص     | ص      | ص       | ص     | s               | as s above                               |
| ض     | ض      | ض       | ض     | z               | as z above                               |
| ط     | ط      | ط       | ط     | t               | as t above                               |
| ظ     | ظ      | ظ       | ظ     | z               | as z above                               |
| ع     | ع      | ع       | ع     | '               | a glottal stop (see p227)                |
| غ     | غ      | غ       | غ     | gh              | a rough, guttural sound (see p227)       |
| ف     | ف      | ف       | ف     | f               | as in 'fact'                             |
| ق     | ق      | ق       | ق     | gh              | as gh above                              |
| ک     | ک      | ک       | ک     | k               | as in 'kit'                              |
| گ     | گ      | گ       | گ     | g               | as in 'get'                              |
| ل     | ل      | ل       | ل     | l               | as in 'let'                              |
| م     | م      | م       | م     | m               | as in 'met'                              |
| ن     | ن      | ن       | ن     | n               | as in 'net'                              |
| و     |        |         | و     | v               | as in 'very' (in Dari only)              |
|       |        |         |       | w               | as in 'wary'                             |
|       |        |         |       | u               | as in 'rule'                             |
| ه     | ه      | ه       | ه     | h               | as h above                               |
| ی     | ی      | ی       | ی     | y               | as in 'yacht'                            |
|       |        |         |       | i               | as in 'marine'                           |

**Welcome.**  
**Greetings.**

**Hello.**  
**Good morning.**  
**Good day.** (noon)

**Good evening.**

**Goodbye.**

**How are you?**

*khosh amadin*

*salam aleykom*

*salam*

*sob bekhayr*

*rux bekhayr*

*shab bekhayr*

*khoda hafez*

*haletan chetor hast?*

**Fine – and you?**

**Yes.**

**No.**

**Please.**

**Thank you.**

**Thank you very much.**

**You're welcome.**

**Excuse me/I'm sorry.**

*khubam – shoma chetorin?*

*bala*

*na*

*lotfan*

*tashakor*

*besyar tashakkor*

*khahesh mikonam*

*bebakhshid*