

Punjab



Sprawled across the heart of Pakistan, the vibrant state of Punjab (Persian for 'Five Waters') is named after the five rivers of the region – the Sutlej, Ravi, Beas, Jhelum and Chenab. Punjab is Pakistan's most verdant province and home to more than half of the nation's population.

For the visitor Punjab is a treasure trove of experiences, and should be more than a stop on the road to or from India. Stepping off in Lahore you will encounter awesome Sufism (Islamic mysticism) and qawwali (Islamic devotional singing), the Old City and the outlandish border-closing ceremony. Beyond Lahore, there are sublime shrines and tombs in Multan and Uch Sharif, ancient forts, the deserts of Cholistan and the Khewra salt mines.

And then, of course, there are the people. Punjabis are a life-loving lot with a long tradition of warm hospitality that comes straight from the heart. Few travellers leave here without a bundle of precious memories, an address book filled with new friends, and oodles of food for thought.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Soul tripping in Lahore to one of the most phenomenal **qawwali and Sufi expositions** (p104) on the planet
- Joining pumped-up patriots as they watch burly Pakistani soldiers try to out-stomp, out-scowl and out-salute their 'rival' Indian counterparts at the fascinating **closing-of-the-border ceremony** (p120) at Wagah
- Rambling through the tangle of twisting alleyways in Lahore's **Old City** (p105) en route to the historic **Lahore Fort** (p102) and the city's stunning 17th-century **Badshahi Mosque** (p103)
- Exploring the bevy of beautiful shrines and tombs of **Multan** (p128) and **Uch Sharif** (p127)
- Taking a leisurely stroll back in time at the impressive **Lahore Museum** (p107)
- Travelling deep underground into the world's second-largest salt mine in **Khewra** (p138)



■ POPULATION: 79,429,701

■ AREA: 205,345 SQ KM

