

# Sindh



Sindh is named for the great Indus River that carves its way through the plains of the province, bringing it to life. The Indus has brought favour and failure to Sindh throughout its history, nurturing the Indian subcontinent's first great civilisation at Moenjodaro and Harappa six millennia ago, while shifting its course to push later dynasties out of the spotlight and leave the region languishing without influence until it was claimed for the British empire in the 19th century.

For the traveller to Sindh, the British legacy is everywhere to see. The damming of the Indus at Sukkur in the 1930s transformed the dry plains into rich agricultural land, turning the region into the country's breadbasket. Its bakers – the big landowning farmers – still hold great sway in national politics today. An equally big transformation was wrought away from the river, turning a sleepy fishing town into the booming port of Karachi. In the 21st century, the city is Pakistan's economic powerhouse and a true mega-city, sucking in migrants from across the country, all hoping to strike it rich. Those that have flaunt their wealth in trendy restaurants and expensive property near the beach.

The rest of Sindh's attractions are more modest, from the archaeological site of Moenjodaro to the Mughal mosques of Thatta. But wherever you go you're unlikely to run into many other travellers. Persistent political insecurity in Sindh means that taking trusted safety advice before travel is essential before setting out, as is keeping an ear to the ground when you get there.

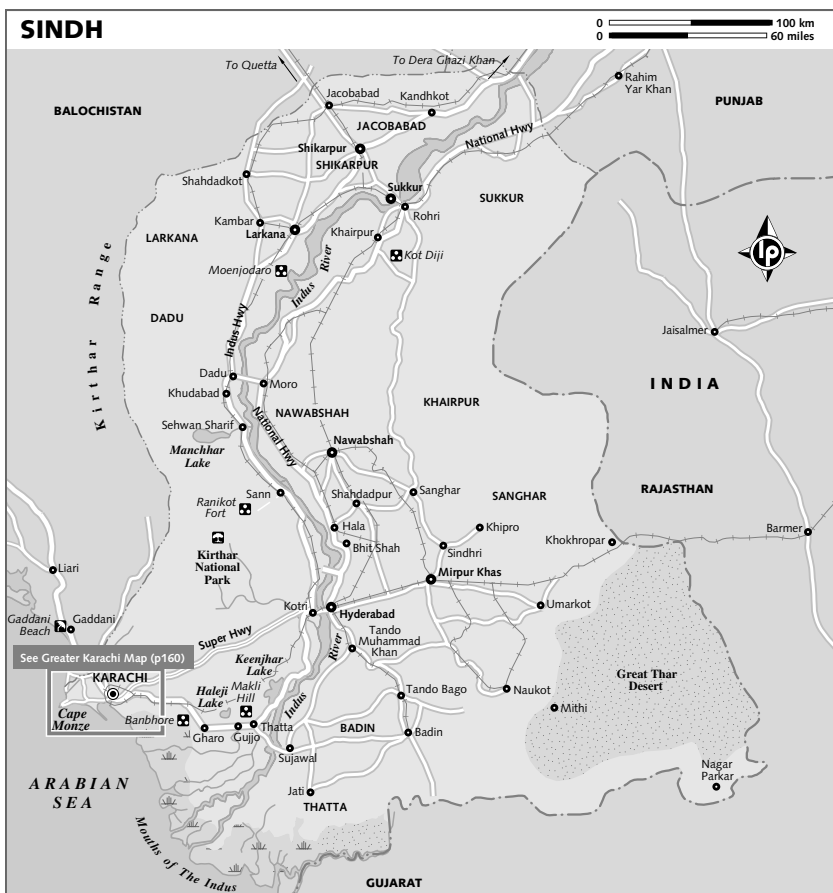
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Be seen with the great, the good and the beautiful at one of Karachi's trendy **restaurants** (p170)
- Contrast old empires with modern commerce through Karachi's British-era **architecture** (p166) and modern **bazaars** (p171)
- Take a boat trip along the coast to the **islands** (p167) and **beaches** (p167 and p167) within an easy hop from Karachi
- Explore the ruins of **Moenjodaro** (p176), greatest city of the ancient Indus Valley civilisation
- Admire the cool blue tiling of the Mughal mosque of **Thatta** (p175), built for Shah Jahan of Taj Mahal-fame



■ POPULATION: 34,231,000

■ AREA: 140,914 SQ KM



## History

The Indus River has acted as the cradle of civilisation on the Indian subcontinent, particularly where it passes through Sindh. Around 6000 years ago, some of the world's first urban cultures sprang up in the region, reaching their zenith in the great city of Moenjodaro.

Some millennia later, Sindh was annexed by the Persian empire, to be subsequently invaded as Alexander the Great tore through the region in 326 BC. When the Greeks pulled out, the Buddhist Mauryan dynasty stepped in and ruled the whole of Sindh until the early 2nd century BC.

Sindh's history is little recorded from here until Hindu Brahmins briefly took control in the 7th century AD, although their reign was

short-lived with the arrival of the Abbasid Arabs from Baghdad under Mohammed bin Qasim in 711, marching under the newly green banner of Islam. Sindh remained under the Abbasid caliphate until 874 and under Arab domination until the indigenous Muslim dynasty of the Sumras seized power in about 1058.

Dynasties came and went for several hundred years until 1520, when Sindh was brought into the Mughal empire by Akbar, himself born in Umarkot in Sindh. Mughal rule from their provincial capital of Thatta was to last in lower Sindh until the early 18th century. Upper Sindh was a different picture, however, with the indigenous Kalhoras holding power, consolidating their rule until the mid-18th century, when the Persian sacking