

A BRIEF GUIDE TO ISLAMABAD

Living in Islamabad – An insight

ABSTRACT

We at the World Bank Group Family Network (WBGFN) Islamabad have put together this short guide to help our international staff relocated to Islamabad, with all the basic information based on day-to-day necessities while living in sectors F6, F7, F8 and G6. In case of any further queries, do feel free to contact the author or any of the members listed in this guide

[WBGFN Islamabad Chapter Pakistan](#)

[City Portal](#)

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Introduction

Islamabad is the capital city of Pakistan situated on the foothills of the Himalayas called Margalla Hills. It is well planned with wide roads, abundance of parks and grand state buildings. Islamabad is best viewed from the Margalla Hills which provide a pleasant backdrop to the north of the city. The metro area population of Islamabad in 2021 was 1,164,000.

Like many capitals of the world, Islamabad is remarkably different from the rest of Pakistan. For one thing, it is a city of tree-lined avenues and gardens. There is a significant number of expats mostly from the diplomatic community who are regular patrons to a growing number of carpet and handicraft stores, not to mention imported goods in grocery shops and restaurants offering a variety of cuisines. It can be a deceptively sleepy town, but with a bit of caution and imagination, anyone can experience fun and thrill true to Islamabad.

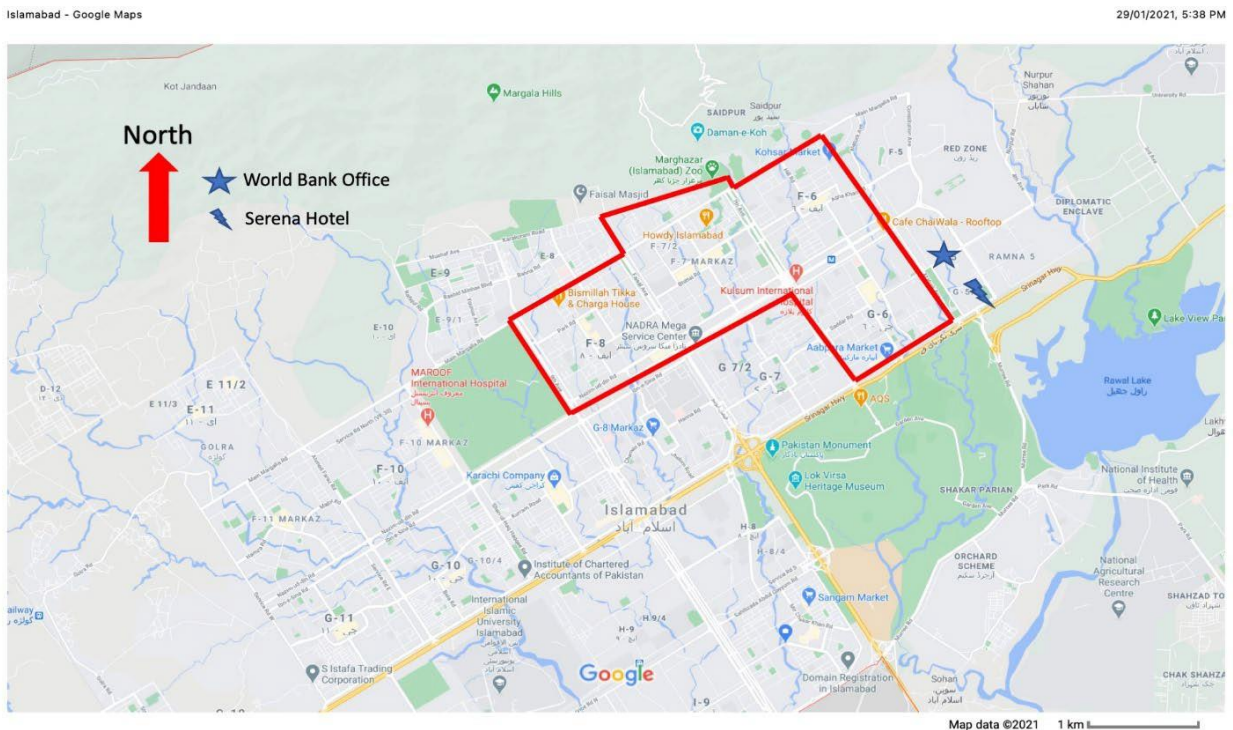


Fig. 1: Map of Islamabad (Sectors F6, F7, F8 & G6 highlighted with red boundary)

Above are the recommended sectors to look out for housing. They are F6, F7, F8 and G6 as highlighted by the red outline.

Climate

There are four distinct seasons in Islamabad:

Spring :- March – April (10 °C – 24 °C)

Summer :- May – June (25 °C -35 °C)

Summer Monsoon :- July – September (23 °C -33 °C)

Winter :- December – February (3 °C -20 °C)

Language

Official languages in Pakistan are English and Urdu. In Islamabad, Urdu and Punjabi are prevalent but English is understood and spoken across the city.

Time Zone

The time in Islamabad is PST (Pakistan Standard Time) (GMT +5)

Currency

It is possible to exchange foreign currency at the Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, where there are many money exchangers with their privately-owned shops. It is best to compare exchange rates with a few shops prior to committing to one, as rates vary.

*1 US Dollar = 192.95 Rupees (rates vary on day to day basis)

*1 Euro= approx. 200.90 Rupees (rates vary on day to day basis)

Childcare and Household Staff

Most expatriates in Pakistan employ domestic help as wages are low, and staff are easily available. It is advisable to hire only on recommendation but even so, employers may expect a high turnover. You may ask for help from RFP.

Labor divisions in Pakistan are rigid; a domestic cook cannot necessarily be expected to also wash clothes. Drivers can only drive and not necessarily to do other house chores. Instead, that duty would be assigned to a dhobi, a laundryman who goes from household to household collecting dirty linen. Similarly, a Gardener does garden work, a bearer does most household work and a sweeper does the tasks considered beneath a bearer's dignity, cleaning outside areas and bathrooms. Workplace diversity is not completely dead, as cook-bearers are available. Moreover, the demands of smaller households are such that domestic staff simply must perform multiple tasks, if they are to gain employment at all.

Some live-in staff work 50 hours or more a week. In addition to wages and accommodation, it is customary for the employer to give one day off a week, depending on the religion of the employee. Time off for daily prayers, religious holidays and visits to the mosque should also be given. Most employers provide all staff with annual bonuses, medical expenses and uniforms.

Expatriates are advised to arrange for prospective domestic staff to have a thorough medical checkup before employment, particularly when there are young children in the household.

For household maintenance, please refer to the assessment report of maintenance service providers.

Super Stores

Imported Goods

- Esajee's Kohsar Market F-6/3
- Shams Super Market, School Rd F-6 Markaz

Local Goods

Islamabad Cash & Carry, G-6 Markaz near general post office.

Hatim Supermarket, Street 5a, F-7 Markaz

Metro Cash & Carry, Laila Road I-11/4

Grocery & Chemist

D. Watson Chemist

94, West Jinnah Ave, Block I, G-7/2, Blue Area

Shaheen Chemist Super Market

School Rd, F-6 Markaz

Shopping Malls

Centaurus Mall

F-8/4, Jinnah Avenue

Safa Gold Mall

F-7, Jinnah Super Market

Markets

Jinnah Super Market (Sector: F-7 Markaz)

Jinnah Super is Islamabad's most popular place for shopping and socializing. Offering more upscale merchandise compared to other markets, Jinnah Super Market hosts several fashion shops. SAFA Gold Mall is also located in Jinnah Super Market where excellent local and international brands are available.

In Jinnah Supermarket, men's and women's clothes can be purchased for prices starting at Rs 5,000 to Rs 8,000 (approx.). Some of the most popular shops in Jinnah Super Market are as follows

Name	Description
The Body Shop	Cosmetics
Saeed Book Bank	Large Book Shop
Florist	Best stocked florist in the city
Traditions	Leather goods
Hang Ten	Name brand clothing for men, women and children
Chen One	Large department store selling household goods

Amer Adnan	High-end Pakistani men's designer outlet
Juanid Jamshed	Mid-market Pakistani designer outlet
Maria B	High-end Pakistani women's designer outlet
Levi's	American jeans outlet
Khadi	Mid to High end Pakistani designer outlet
Bata	International shoe brand

Jinnah Super also hosts numerous and ever-changing food stands and restaurants, and a landscaped outdoor seating area. Jinnah Super is a very popular hangout for the young and trendy who come out in numbers.

Super Market (Sector: F-6 Markaz)

Super Market is one of Islamabad's oldest and most attractive markets, offering reasonable prices on a large range of goods. Popular shops include United Bakery, one of Islamabad's oldest and popular bakeries; Shaheen Chemist, which sells medicines and cosmetics; Mr. Books, a very popular bookstore selling a wide range of new books; Shams, selling imported sweets and cosmetics, and Floral Market, the ideal place to purchase flowers of any kind and variety. Super Market is also a haven for the trendy and

hip. A larger and older market, it offers more variety than others, and hosts a handful of novel stores offering books, clothes, shoes, groceries and coffee shops.

Aabpaara Market (Sector: G-6)

Located close to the city center, Aabpaara is the oldest and most comprehensive market in Islamabad. There are dry fruit stores, antique shops, novelty shoe stores, mechanical and electrical repair kiosks, clothes, consumer electronics and many other shops. Most goods here are very affordable.

Melody Market (Sector: G-6 Markaz)

Close to the Aabpaara Market is the Melody Market, known throughout the city for its excellent clothing and accessory stores, food markets and novelty bookstores. The market is also one of the

oldest in the city, and, due to its affordable prices, very popular. It attracts many people from the city and is Islamabad's most convenient and accessible shopping areas.

Duty- Free Privileges

All IRS can benefit from duty free privileges. As members of United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), all IRS can avail duty-free privileges including duty-free import of household goods and vehicles. Duty-free shops can be found at all the international airports, and in major cities. The duty-free shops in Islamabad are located on Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, and in the Diplomatic Enclave. Once the diplomatic card has been issued, IRS can purchase liquor/items from UN duty- free shop. Membership fee currently is USD 500 which is refundable. For further information on duty-free privileges, please refer to the attached document on Key Pointers in Pakistan.

Electricity

All power sockets in Islamabad provide a standard voltage of 230v with frequency of 50Hz. You can use all your equipment in Islamabad if the outlet voltage in your own country is between 220V-240V. It is advisable to carry a travelling adapter.

Banking

A few preferred banks that our local staff and other IRS are using include the following:

Standard Chartered Bank

Website: <https://www.sc.com/pk>

Branches:

- Awan Arcade Branch, 1-B, Blue Area, Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam, Awan Arcade, Islamabad. Tel: 051 831930233
- F-7, Markaz Branch, 6-A, F-7 Markaz, Jinnah Super Market, Islamabad. Tel: 051 111 100

Habib Bank Limited

Website: <http://www.hbl.com>

Branches:

- 4th Floor, Habib Bank Tower Jinnah Avenue, Islamabad,
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Phone: 051 2872203, 051 2821183

Other branches:

- Aabpara Market, Islamabad, Tel: 051-2607441, 0512829110
- F-7 Commercial Area (Jinnah Super), Islamabad, Tel: 051-2650772-2650770
- F-6 Super Market, Islamabad, Tel: 051-2201699, 2827148, 2601654, 2823685
- Jinnah Avenue, Islamabad, Tel: 051-2804306, 2804307, 2804304-5
- F-11 Markaz, Islamabad, Tel: 051-2228054, 2228055
- I-8 Markaz, Islamabad, Tel: 051-4862268-4862270
- F-10 Markaz, Islamabad, Tel: 051-2114200, 2114202-4
- G-10 Markaz, Islamabad, Tel: 051-2819007, 2819006
- F-8 Markaz, Islamabad, Tel: 051-2287377-9

Credit Card Use

Most major credit cards are accepted in the main hotels and larger stores. American Express and Visa is widely accepted. MasterCard and Diners Club are accepted at a limited number of locations in Pakistan. There are ATMs in all major cities.

Mobile phone service providers

- Jazz
- Telenor
- Zong
- Ufone

Internet

You may connect to the internet by opting to set up a fiber optic broadband connection at your home or use a 4G dongle provided by Jazz and Zong.

Nayatel is a popular choice as a service provider among residents in Islamabad. It provides fast reliable internet connection and high-quality cable tv.

Fiber optic Broadband Internet providers.

- PTCL

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- Nayatel
- Transworld

Cable

- PTCL
- Nayatel

Security Situation

Islamabad is a relatively safe city; however, it is advised to avoid walking and travelling in isolated dark areas. It is very useful to always keep an eye on the WBG security advisory.

Museums/ Monuments

Pakistan Museum of Natural History

Shakarparian National Park, Garden Ave, Islamabad
051-9249239

Lok Virsa Museum

Garden Avenue, Shakarparian Rd, Islamabad.
(051) 9249209

Pakistan Monument

Kashmir Highway, Islamabad
(051) 9249209

Taxila Museum

An hour's drive from Islamabad, the museum hosts some incredible pieces from the area's Buddhist past. Also next to the museum are the remains of an ancient Buddhist city, complete with a temple-ruin on top of a hill. Shahpur Rd, Bhir Mound City Walls, Taxila. (051) 9315477.

Shah Faisal Mosque.

Shah Faisal Ave, E-8, Islamabad,

One of the largest mosques in the world when built, the unique architecture, the source of some debate, is best experienced in person. From floating staircases, to dizzyingly high minarets, this place is a must visit for anyone living in Islamabad.

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Saidpur Village

Saidpur Road, Islamabad

Nomad Gallery

Muzaffar Khan Rd, Bani Gala, Islamabad, Islamabad

Tel. 226-2502

Tanzara Gallery

1/A, Main Saidpur Road, Saidpur Village, Saidpur, Islamabad

Tel. (051) 2320199

Hunerkada

217-B, Margalla Road F-10/3, F 10/3 F-10, Islamabad

Tel. (051) 2211152

La Galerie (Alliance Francaise de Islamabad)

9 Street 49, F-6/4 F 6/4 F-6, Islamabad

Tel. 265 2356-57

PNCA- Pakistan National Council of Arts

F-5/1 F-5, Islamabad

Tel. (051) 9205273

MyArtWorld

5-A, Aga Khan Road, F-6/3, Islamabad

0313 4021167

Rohtas Art Gallery

57-B, Street 26, Sector F 6/2, Islamabad

Tel. 227 1390

Sports & Social Clubs

Islamabad Club

Main Murree Road, Islamabad

Tel: (92-51) 922-3620/28, 904-
6000

www.islamabadclub.org.pk

Sports facilities: Badminton, golf, gym, horse riding, squash, swimming, tennis. Social facilities: billiards, library, playground, restaurant, bridge, steam room

Single: USD 1750 (initial fee), USD 560 (membership fee)

Serena Maisha Club

Islamabad Serena Hotel, Ramna 5, Khayaban-e-Suhrawardy, Islamabad. Tel: 51 2874000.
www.serenahotels.com

Sports facilities: gym and swimming.

Social facilities: Bar, restaurant, sauna, spa, beauty salon, massage, steam room

Single: PKR 100,000 (membership fee), Couple: PKR 130,000 (membership fee)

The Gun Club

PO Box 3017, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad Tel: (051)

9212847 www.thegunclubisb.com

Zaver Spa and Health Club

Islamabad Marriott Hotel, PO Box 1251, Agha Khan Road Shalimar 5, Islamabad

Tel: (051) 111 223 344

www.marriotthotels.com.pk

Alliance Francaise Islamabad

House 9, Street 49, F6/4, Islamabad

Tel. 051 282 5218, 051 282

5219 www.afislamabad.org

Social facilities: library, TV/media lounge

Beauty Salons

Michael K. Salon

Beverly Centre, Street 22, F-7, Islamabad

Tel: (051) 2656463

TONI&GUY

2nd floor, TONI&GUY, Beverly Centre, F 6/1 Blue Area

Tel: +92 311 1100864

Daniella's Salon and Spa

plot #13V, Bangish plaza Jinnah super F-7 markaz, F 7 Markaz F-7, Islamabad

Tel: (051) 2653377

Dining

Pakistanis are predominantly Muslim and do not consume pork. Spices and curry are essential ingredients in Pakistani cuisine. They include chili, turmeric, garlic, pepper, cardamom, cloves, ginger, cinnamon, saffron, and nutmeg among others. Using yogurt to marinate meats is another typical recipe. The usual side dishes are plain rice, bread and lentils. The food in the south of the country is more spiced, while in the north less so. Green tea is typically served at all meals. During

the month of Ramadan, fasting is a daily activity, and plays a central role in the celebration of the end of the fasting period.

The foodpanda, Airlift and cheetah apps are available for home delivery. Most restaurants can be found on these apps and many more beyond this list as the Islamabad food scene is developing very quickly.

Chinese / Thai

Yums F-7

Dynasty

Marriott Hostel

Heng Chang (Chinese) F-7/2

NomNom Wok (Chinese) Kohsar
Market, F-6/3

Chop Chop Wok F-6

Tiger Temple (Exclusively Thai) F6

Sakura (Japanese) Marriot Hotel

The Royal Elephant (Thai) Marriott Hotel

Coffee/Tea House

Butlers – F6

Coffee bean (Multiple branches across the city)

Dunkin Doughnuts (Multiple branches across the city)

Mocca (F-6)

Chai Khana (F-6)

Gloria Jean's (Multiple branches across the city)

Chai Mehfil (F-6)

Coffee Planet (Multiple branches across the city)

Leaf Lead & Coffee Beans (Multiple branches across the city)

Butler's Chocolate (F-6)

Pakistani

1969 Restaurant Garden Avenue, great outdoor seating.

Andaaz/ Des Perdas Restaurant (Saidpur Village)

Habibi (Multiple branches across the city)

Zamana

La Montana

Dumpukht

Marriott Hotel

BBQ Tonight

Continental/European

Tuscany Courtyard (Kohsar market, F-6/3)

Jason's Steakhouse (F-5)

Monal Tree House (Monal, Pir Sohawa)

Roosters (F-7)

Nadia Café (Marriott Hotel)

Zigolini's Italian (Marriott Hotel)

Steaks By CFU (F-7)

Fast Food/ Pizza

One Potato Two Potato (OPTP)

F-7, Jinnah Super and several other branches
KFC (Multiple Branches across the city)
Mcdonald's (Multiple Branches across the city)
Pizza Hut (Multiple Branches across the city)
Texas Chicken (Centaurus Mall)
Mr. Cod (Multiple Branches across the city)
Flippin' Awesome (F-7)
Pizza Originale (Multiple Branches across the city)
Dominoes Blue Rea G-7

Arabic, Persian & Afghani

Bait-al Arab Mandi (F-7)
Arz Lebanon (F-7)
Istanbul Restaurant (F-6)
Kabuli Restaurant (F-7)
Omar Khayyam Persian Kebabs (G-7)

Bakeries

Loafology G 7/2 Blue Area, up-market bakery
KC Grill (Multiple bakeries across the city)
Tehzeeb Bakers (The bakery with the most footfall in the city)
Kabuli Bakery F7, they are some of the few bakeries making real baguettes in Islamabad

Schools

Islamabad has recently become a family station for the World Bank and UN agencies. At present, the available schools are limited in numbers, but of international standard.

1. International School of Islamabad

Faiza Iftikhar

Johar Road, Sector H-9/1, Islamabad

+92-51-443-4950, +92-51-443-4951, +92-51-443-4952, +92-51-

443-4953 <https://www.isoi.edu.pk/about-isoi>

2. Frobel's International School

Street – 13, Sector F – 7/2,

Islamabad

http://froebels.edu.pk/about_us.html

+92 512 652164, +92 512 652165, +92 512

652166

info.isb@froebels.edu.pk

3. International Grammar School Islamabad

Street-58, F 11/4, F11,

Islamabad <http://igsc.edu.pk/>

051-2102526, 051-2102549, 051-8359366, 051-

8359367 internationalgrammar@gmail.com

info@igsc.edu.pk

4. Sheikh Zaid International Academy

School, Jamali Road, Street – 8, Sector H – 8/4, Islamabad

<http://www.szia.ae/about/>

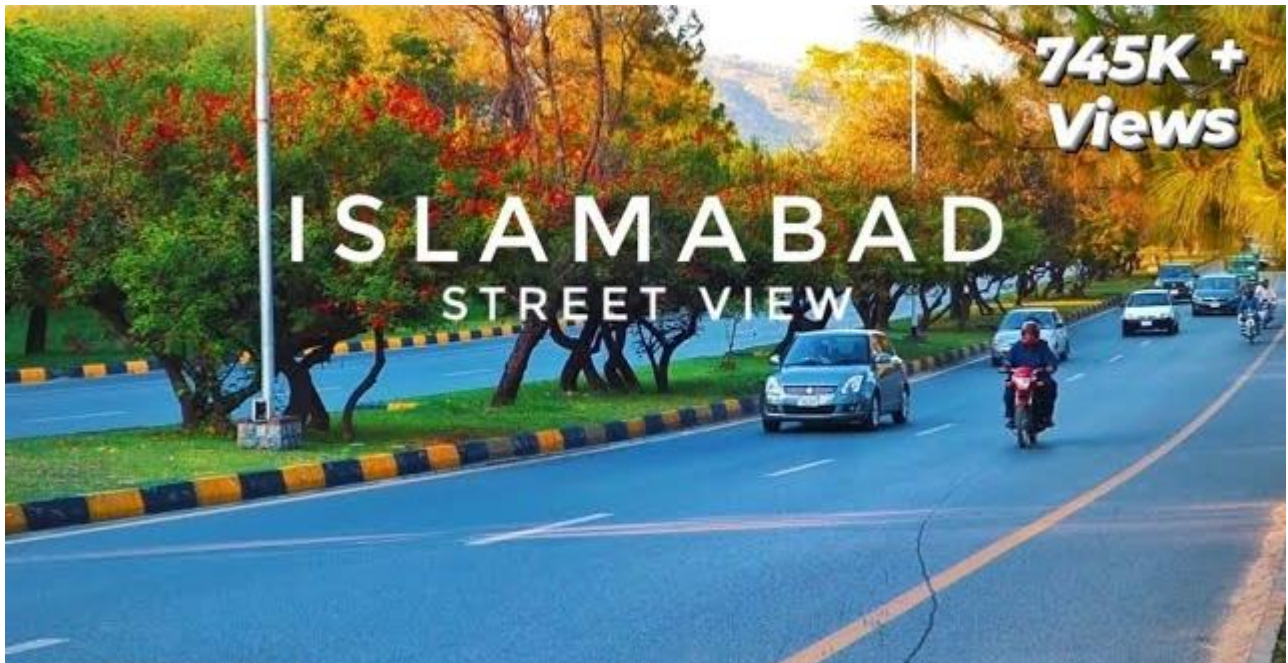
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Images of Islamabad



Rawal Lake



Street View



Monal Islamabad



Serena Islamabad