



Badshahi Mosque

The pearl of Pakistan

LAHORE MAY NOT BE PAKISTAN'S CAPITAL CITY, BUT IT REIGNS AS THE COUNTRY'S CULTURAL, INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC HUB. TAKE TIME TO UNEARTH THE CITY'S HISTORICAL GEMS

WORDS | GISELLE WHITEAKER

10am

Start your morning at the Minar-i-Pakistan, the Tower of Pakistan. Soaring sixty metres into the sky in Iqbal Park, the monument commemorates the signing of the Pakistan Resolution in 1940, which paved the way for the founding of the country. A mere 500 metres down the road is Badshahi Mosque, one of the world's largest, with a reputed capacity of 100,000 worshippers in the courtyard as well as 55,000 or so spaces in the main prayer hall. The vast courtyard opens onto the stunning red-sandstone building, with four tapering minarets taller than those of the Taj Mahal, and three enormous marble domes. Epitomising the beauty, passion and grandeur of the Mughal era, this is perhaps Lahore's most famous landmark.

12pm

To complement the visual feast, stop for a bite at Cooco's Den and Café down the road from Badshahi. Set in an eclectic traditional mansion, the open-air seating features unparalleled views of the mosque and

environs. The menu focuses on Pakistani cuisine — both traditional and unusual. Try the *qeema wala naan*; traditional flatbread stuffed with spiced minced lamb, washed down with the ubiquitous milky *chai* tea.

1pm

The Lahore Fort, just around the corner, is the star attraction of the Old City. Built, damaged, demolished, rebuilt and restored several times, the fort remains an outstanding example of Mughal artistic expression at its height in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Entered on the western side through the colossal Alamgiri Gate, the complex contains a number of halls and pavilions, as well as three small museums, so give yourself plenty of time to explore here.

3pm

Negotiate an autorickshaw to transport you the three kilometres or so to the Lahore Museum, swinging by the atmospheric Tomb of Malik Ayaz in the Rang Mahal commercial area of town. Ayaz, originally a slave, rose

through the ranks to become the first Muslim governor of Lahore, contributing greatly to the city's cultural heritage. Don't linger here though — you'll want to move on to enjoy a couple of hours at the superb Lahore Museum, which has an impressive array of exhibits spanning the recorded history of the subcontinent.

6pm

End the day at Gawalmandi Food Street, back near the old walled part of the city. A centre of traditional Pakistani food, hemmed in by centuries-old buildings, the food street is closed to motorised vehicles from sunset. Re-opened in May this year after an extended government closure for some much-needed renovation work, the outdoor tables in the main dining area allow for sampling from multiple eateries — necessary, given the array of 45 restaurants offering a diverse menu of more than two hundred dishes from around Pakistan. This is the perfect place to kick back and people-watch while sampling the flavours of Lahore. 🍽️