

It is impolite to look other people in the eye for long periods, unless you are intimate. Whereas Westerners are taught from childhood to look someone squarely in the eye, Pakistanis are taught just the reverse; it is considered rude or aggressive to look someone in the eye for a period of time. Pakistanis averting eye contact, therefore, are not being sly or evasive, rather just polite. Outside urban areas, foreign men should not stare at women or look them in the eye. This is insulting and can lead to trouble.

On the other hand, staring at strangers on the street is common in Pakistan, especially if the stranger is a Western woman. Don't take offense. Just keep your own eyes modestly averted and carry on.

VI. Rites and Religion

During Ramadan foreigners should refrain from smoking, drinking or eating in public. Some Muslims will not go out to dinner during this month of fasting. Others will accept dinner invitations for Iftar, after sunset. Servants and workers should not be expected to work at their optimum level during Ramadan. The rigors of fasting and the late nights spent praying and reading the Quran lead inevitably to a degree of slackness in the work place. Acknowledging this, most offices close early in the afternoon and work expectations are considerably lowered. Exhibit a considerable degree of patience during this period, as tempers are likely to be frayed. During this month of Muharram, refrain from asking conservative Muslims of the Shia sect to go to lunch or dinner.

When visiting mosques and holy places, you must remove your shoes before entering the compound. A woman should fully cover arms, legs and head to visit a mosque. It is better for women not to visit mosques during Friday prayers, unless there is a special section for women in the mosque.

VII. Alcohol for Travelling Foreigners

The resident or visiting foreigner who is not Muslim is permitted by the Government of Pakistan to drink and serve alcohol in non-public places. When you are travelling, this includes your hotel room where you can discreetly keep your own stock. For this, one simply signs a paper declaring that one is not of the Muslim faith.

VIII. Photography

Keeping in mind the country's traditions, be careful not to photograph anyone, male or female, without obtaining their consent. If you wish to photograph women and there are men in the party, ask the men rather than the women themselves. Permission is usually given (by men in particular), but do not force the issue if it is not. In certain areas of the country, the restrictions (either traditional or religious) are strong enough to give rise to a difficult situation should you pursue the matter.

It is forbidden to photograph military installations, frontier posts, ancient monuments, railways, bridges, junctions and airports.