

1. Introduction

Planning a trip from Islamabad to Naran, a breathtaking valley in Pakistan's northern areas, is an exciting prospect. This guide will help you navigate the journey, offering insights into transportation, accommodation, food, attractions, and budgeting, based on real travel experiences. Whether you prioritize speed or scenic beauty, we'll help you plan a memorable trip.

2. Key Highlights

The journey from Islamabad to Naran offers two main routes: the faster motorway route (6-7 hours) and the more scenic Murree route (8-8.5 hours). Fuel costs vary significantly depending on your vehicle's size, ranging from approximately 2700 to 11000 Pakistani Rupees. Mansehra is a common stop for lunch, offering a variety of local eateries. While the motorway offers a quicker, less challenging drive, the Murree route provides stunning views but requires more driving time and navigating potentially challenging roads. Be prepared for potential travel sickness, especially on the winding Murree route. Sightseeing in Naran itself is a separate adventure, detailed in future videos.

3. Transportation

You have two primary options for traveling from Islamabad to Naran: * **Motorway Route (M1 & M15):** This faster route takes approximately 6-7 hours. You'll travel on the M1 Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway, then switch to the M15 Hazara Motorway, before continuing on the N-15 National Highway to Naran. Consider getting an M-Tag for your car to expedite toll payments. Rest stops are available along the motorway. * **Murree Route:** This scenic route takes 8-8.5 hours and offers picturesque views. You can choose between the Murree Expressway (E-75) or the older Kashmir Road. The Expressway is generally preferred for easier driving. This route involves navigating steeper and more winding roads. Regardless of your chosen route, it's advisable to have a well-maintained vehicle, especially if opting for the Murree route. Public transport options, such as Faisal Movers, are also available, offering a more comfortable ride at a cost of approximately 3000 PKR from Islamabad/Rawalpindi to Naran.

4. Accommodation

Accommodation options abound in Naran, ranging from budget-friendly guesthouses to more luxurious hotels. The main bazaar area offers many hotels, but parking can be limited and less convenient. Jheel Road is recommended for better parking and a more tranquil setting. Outside of Naran, places like Burawai and Batakundi also offer accommodation options. The Sky Touch Resort in Burawai is mentioned as a good option with ample parking. Remember to book in advance, especially during peak season.

5. Food and Dining

Mansehra offers various local eateries for lunch. Expect to find traditional Pakistani "desi" food. Along the route and in Naran, you'll find restaurants and cafes catering to different tastes and budgets. The Cordillera Resort in Balakot is mentioned as a good option for breakfast or a meal break. Kiwai also offers restaurants, including Cafe Abshar, with a unique setting near the Kunhar River. Be prepared for varying levels of service and amenities depending on the establishment.

6. Tourist Attractions (Naran and Surrounding Areas)

Naran itself is a starting point for exploring many attractions. The videos mention several key destinations: * **Lake Saiful Muluk:** Approximately 8 km from Naran, accessible by 4x4 vehicle or jeep (approx. 4500 PKR for a jeep ride including a 1.5-hour wait). * **Lulusar Lake:** About 50 km from Naran, a beautiful lake best visited during the summer months when the ice has melted. Accessible by car. * **Babusar Top:** Around 66 km from Naran, offering stunning valley views. A 1000cc or 1300cc car is recommended for the steep drive. * **Other Attractions:** Shogran, Sharan, Lalazar, and Siran Valley are also mentioned as worthwhile destinations.

7. Safety Tips

* Drive cautiously, especially on the Murree route and mountain roads. Use low gear and maintain a low speed on winding roads. * Be mindful of potential brake failure on steep descents due to overheating. * Check river levels before crossing shallow areas. * Fill your fuel tank whenever possible, as gas stations can be scarce in certain areas. * Carry a fully charged phone with a Telenor SIM for reliable internet access in some areas.

8. Best Times to Visit

The best time to visit Naran is during the summer months (May to September) when the weather is pleasant and the roads are generally accessible. Winter brings snow, making some roads impassable.

9. Budget Considerations

Budgeting for your trip will depend on your travel style and choices. Fuel costs alone can range from 2700 to 11000 PKR depending on your vehicle. Accommodation costs vary widely. Food expenses will depend on your dining choices. Entrance fees to attractions and potential jeep rentals should also be factored into your budget. Consider the cost of public transport if you choose not to drive.

10. Conclusion

A trip from Islamabad to Naran offers a rewarding experience, whether you choose the speed of the motorway or the scenic beauty of the Murree route. Careful planning, considering the factors outlined in this guide, will ensure a smooth and memorable journey to this stunning region of Pakistan. Remember to check for any road closures or travel advisories before you embark on your adventure.