ROHTAS FORT

**Introduction:**

**Rohtas Fort** ([Punjabi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjabi_language), [Urdu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urdu_language): قلعہ روہتاس; *Qila Rohtas*) is a 16th-century [fortress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortress) located near the city of [Jhelum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jhelum) in the [Punjab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjab,_Pakistan) province of Pakistan. The fort is one of the largest and most formidable in the [subcontinent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_subcontinent).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohtas_Fort#cite_note-WA-1) Rohtas Fort was never taken by force,[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohtas_Fort#cite_note-UNESCO-2) and it has survived remarkably intact.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohtas_Fort#cite_note-UNESCO-2)

The fortress was built by Raja [Todar Mal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Todar_Mal) on the orders of [Sher Shah Suri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sher_Shah_Suri), partly to suppress the local [Gakhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gakhars) tribes of what was then the [Potohar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potohar) region.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohtas_Fort#cite_note-or-3) Some Gakhar tribes were allies of the [Mughal Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_Empire), and refused to recognize the suzerainty of Sher Shah Suri.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohtas_Fort#cite_note-Koh-e-Jud_1989,_p8-4)

The fort is known for its large defensive walls and several monumental gateways. Rohtas Fort was declared a UNESCO [World Heritage Site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) in 1997, as an "exceptional example of the Muslim military architecture of Central and South Asia.

**Geography**:

The fort lies eight kilometers south of the [Grand Trunk Road](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Trunk_Road). It is approximately 16 km NW of [Jhelum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jhelum_(City)), and is near the city of [Dina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dina,_Pakistan). It is approximately 3 km from [Khukha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khukha). The historic [*Shahrah-e-Azam*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mall,_Lahore) road once passed along the outer northern wall of the fort.

Rohtas Fort was built on a hill overlooking a gorge where the [Kahan River](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kahan_River&action=edit&redlink=1) meets a seasonal stream called *Parnal Khas* within the [Tilla Jogian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilla_Jogian) Range. The fort is about 300 feet (91 m) above its surroundings. It is 2,660 feet (810 m) above sea level and covers an area of 70 hectares.

**Background**:

The fort was commissioned by Sher Shah Suri, founder of the [Sur Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sur_Empire). The fort was designed to block the advances of the [Mughal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_empire) emperor [Humayun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humayun), who had been exiled to [Persia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persia) following his defeat at the [Battle of Kannauj](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Kannauj). The fort occupies a strategic position between the mountains of Afghanistan and the plains of Punjab, and was intended to prevent the Mughal emperor from returning to India.

The fort was also designed to suppress the local [Gakhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gakhars) tribes of the [Potohar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potohar).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohtas_Fort#cite_note-or-3) The Gakhar tribes were allies of the [Mughal Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_Empire), and refused to recognize the [suzerainty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzerainty) of Sher Shah Suri. The height of the outer wall varies between 10 and 18 metres, with a thickness that varies between ten and 13 metres. The fortified walls have 68 bastions at irregular intervals, with twelve monumental gateways providing access to the inner fort.[]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohtas_Fort#cite_note-UNESCO-2) The ramparts follow the hilltop's contours.

The walls had up to three terraces at different levels, connected by staircases. The uppermost terrace has [merlon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merlon)-shaped battlements from which muskets could be fired, and from which soldiers could also pour molten lead

**History**:

Sur period.

The origin of the fort goes back to the Sur dynasty, when emperor [Sher Shah Suri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sher_Shah_Suri) ordered the fort built after his victory over the Mughal emperor Humayun. Construction of the fort began in 1541 It was built primarily to defend against the Mughals.

Mughal period.

The fort was ceded to [Mughal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_emperors) emperor Humayun in 1555, after the local governor, Tatar Khan Khasi, fled the fort ahead of the Mughal army's advances .

The fort lost much of its significance as the fort's purpose of subduing pro-Mughal Gakhar tribesmen, as well as the preventing the return of Emperor Humayun, was no longer required. Further, the construction of the nearby [Attock Fort](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attock_Fort) in the 1580s by Emperor [Akbar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akbar) better served Mughal interests, Rohtas Fort, ironically, came to serve as the capital of the Gakhar tribes that it had initially been designed to subdue, and was not required as a military garrison, since the local Gakhar tribes remained loyal to the Mughal crown.

Sikh Empire period.

The fort remained in use during the Mughal era, and was used almost continuously until 1707 though it was not popular with the Mughal rulers, The [Afsharid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afsharid_dynasty) ruler [Nadir Shah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nader_Shah) camped at the fort during his attack on the Mughal Empire. Also the Afghan chieftain [Ahmed Shah Abdali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Shah_Abdali) used the fort in his expeditions in the [Punjab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjab) during the waning days of the Mughal empire

In 1825, the Sikh forces of Gurmukh Singh Lamba took the fort from the Gakhar chieftain Nur Khan. Rohtas was thereafter used for administrative purposes by the [Sikh Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikh_Empire) until its collapse by the British in 1849.

These carvings are found on the gate and in the mosque. Most of these are engravings in Arabic and sunflowers.

One of these carvings is inside the Shahi Mosque outside the Pesh Imam's (Prayer leaders) room. The carving is of the word "Allah" in Arabic. The same carving is also done on merlons on top of Shahi Mosque.

The sunflower motif is on each sides of the arches of Shahi Mosque. It is also present in the guard post in between each gate.

Most of these inscriptions are on the Shahi Mosque. On the outer wall of the mosque the "[Six Kalama’s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Kalimas)" are written in beautiful calligraphy on each side of each arch of the Shahi Mosque, in the [Naskh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naskh_(script)) script.

An inscription in [Persian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_language) on the Shishi gate gives the date of construction began. The same inscription is also found over the Talaqi gate.

There are other inscriptions on the Khwas Khani, Langar Khaki and Gatali gates.

These tiles are found on Shishi gate. This type of tile became extremely popular with the Mughals who further refined them. The tiles on Shishi gate are the earliest example of the usage of these tiles. These tiles were made in Lahore.