

"Gazna" redirects here. For the village in Iran, see Gazna, Iran. For other uses, see Ghazni (disambiguation).

Ghazni (Dari: غزنی, Pashto: غزني), historically known as Ghaznin (غزنین) or Ghazna (غزنه) and also transliterated as Ghuznee, is a city in southeastern Afghanistan^[3] with a population of around 190,000 people.^[1] The city is strategically located along Highway 1, which has served as the main road between Kabul and Kandahar for thousands of years. Situated on a plateau at 2,219 metres (7,280 ft) above sea level, the city is 150 kilometres (93 mi) south of Kabul and is the capital of Ghazni Province.

Ghazni is the traditional homeland of the Ghilji Pashtuns, a significant Pashtun tribal confederation. Their stronghold was located in Qalati Ghilji on the Kandahar-Ghazni road. The Ghilji have played an integral role in the region as powerful soldiers for the Ghaznavid dynasty.^[4]

Ghazni Citadel, the Minarets of Ghazni, the Palace of Sultan Mas'ud III and several other cultural heritage sites have brought travellers and archeologists to the city for centuries. During the pre-Islamic period, the area was inhabited by various tribes who practiced different religions including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Hinduism.^[5] ^[6] Arab Muslims introduced Islam to Ghazni in the 7th century and were followed in the 9th century by the Saffarids. Sabuktigin made Ghazni the capital of the Ghaznavid Empire in the 10th century. The city was destroyed by one of the Ghurid rulers, but later rebuilt. It fell to a number of regional powers, including the Timurids and the Delhi Sultanate, until it became part of the Hotaki dynasty, which was followed by the Durrani Empire or modern Afghanistan. During the First Anglo-Afghan War in the 19th century, the fortifications of Ghazni were partially demolished by British Indian forces.

In August 2018 the city became of the site of the Battle of Ghazni with the Taliban briefly occupying it and taking control of most of the surrounding area. On 12 August 2021, the city was captured by the Taliban as part of the 2021 Taliban offensive.^[7]^[8]^[9]

In 2013, ISESCO declared Ghazni the year's Islamic Capital of Culture.^[10]

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History[edit]

Part of a series on the

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Related historical names of the region

Arachosia Aria Ariana Bactria Gandhara Iran Kabulistan Kafiristan Khorasan Kushanshahr

Paropamisadae Sistan Zabulistan

Related topics

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Hindu and Buddhist heritage Muslim conquests

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Further information: History of Afghanistan

The city was founded some time in antiquity as a small market town. It may be the Gazaca (Gázaca or Gāzaca) mentioned by Ptolemy,[11] although he may have conflated it and the town of Ganzak (or Gazaka) in Iran.

In the 6th century BC, it was conquered by the Achaemenid king Cyrus II and incorporated into the Persian empire. The city was subsequently incorporated into the empire of Alexander the Great in 329 BC, and called Alexandria in Opiana. By the 7th century AD, the area was a major centre of Buddhism. In 644, the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang visited a city named Jaguda—which was almost certainly the contemporary name of the later Ghazni.[12][13]

In 683, Arab armies brought Islam to the region. Yaqub Saffari from Zaranj conquered the city in the late 9th century. The Saffarids reduced the formerly Lawik dynasty to a tributary status. In 962, the Turkic slave commander of the Samanid Empire, Alp-Tegin, attacked the city and besieged the Citadel of Ghazni for four months, wresting the city from Abu Bakr Lawik.[14] Around 965, Abu Bakr Lawik recaptured Ghazni from Alp-Tegin's son, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim, forcing him to flee to Bukhara. However, this was not to last long because Abu Ishaq Ibrahim shortly returned to the town with Samanid aid, and took control of the town

once again. For nearly two hundred years (977–1163), the city was the dazzling capital of the Ghaznavid Empire, which encompassed much of what is today Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Eastern Iran and Rajasthan. The Ghaznavids took Islam to India and returned with fabulous riches taken from Indian princes and temples. Although the city was sacked in 1151 by the Ghorid Ala'uddin, it became their secondary capital in 1173, and subsequently flourished once again. Between 1215 and 1221, Ghazni was ruled by the Khwarezmshah Empire, during which time it was destroyed by the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan's son Ögedei Khan.[15]

In the first decades of the 11th century, Ghazni was the most important centre of Persian literature. This was the result of the cultural policy of the Sultan Mahmud (reigned 998–1030), who assembled a circle of scholars, philosophers, and poets around his throne in support of his claim to royal status in Iran.[16]

The noted Moroccan travelling scholar, Ibn Battuta, visiting Ghazni in 1333, wrote:

"We travelled thence to Parwan, where I met the amir Buruntayh. He treated me well and wrote to his representatives at Ghazna enjoining them to show me honour. We went on to the village of Charkh [Charikar], it being now summer, and from there to the town of Ghazna. This is the town of the famous warrior-sultan Mahmud ibn Sabuktigin, one of the greatest of rulers, who made frequent raids into India and captured cities and fortresses there. His grave is in this city and is surmounted by a hospice. The greater part of the town is in ruins and nothing but a fraction of it remains, though it was once a large city. It has an exceedingly cold climate, and the inhabitants move from it in the cold season to Qandahar, a large and prosperous town three nights journey from Ghazna, but I did not visit it." [17]

Tamerlane's grandson, Pir Muhammad bin Djinhangir, became the governor of Ghazni (along with Kabul and Kandahar) in 1401. Babur conquered the region in 1504 and personally thought that Ghazni was "a mean place" and pondered why any of the princes of the region would make it their seat of government. Ghazni stayed under Mughal control until 1738 when Iranian ruler Nader Shah invaded the area. After Nader Shah's death, Ghazni became part of the Durrani empire.[18]

Ghazni City is famous for its Ghazni Minarets built on a stellar plan. They date from the middle of the twelfth century and are the surviving elements of the mosque of Bahramshah. Their sides are decorated with intricate geometric patterns. Some of the upper sections of the minarets have been damaged or destroyed. The most important mausoleum located in Ghazni City is that of Sultan Mahmud. Others include the Tombs of poets and scientists, such as the Tomb of Al Biruni. The only ruins in Old Ghazni retaining a semblance of architectural form are two towers, about 43 m (140 ft) high and 365 m (1,200 ft) apart. According to inscriptions, the towers were constructed by Mahmud of Ghazni and his son. For more than eight centuries the "Towers of Victory" monuments to Afghanistan's greatest empire have survived wars and invasions, the two toffee-colored minarets, adorned with terra-cotta tiles were raised in the early 12th century as monuments to the victories of the Afghan armies that built the empire. By the time the Ghurids had finalized the Ghaznavid removal from Ghazni, the city was a cultural center of the eastern Islamic world.[19]

The Buddhist site at Ghazni is known as Tapar Sardar and consists of a stupa on a hilltop, surrounded by a row of smaller stupas.[18] Nearby, an 18-metre (59 ft) long Parinirvana

(reclining) Buddha was excavated between the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is believed to have been built in the 8th Century AD as part of a monastery complex.[20] In the 1980s, a mud brick shelter was created to protect the sculpture, but the wood supports were stolen for firewood and the shelter partially collapsed. In 2001, the Taliban blew the Buddha up, believing it to be idolatrous.[21]

During the First Anglo-Afghan War, the city was captured by British forces on 23 July 1839 in the Battle of Ghazni. The Civil war in Afghanistan and the continued conflict between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance during the 1990s put the relics of Ghazni in jeopardy. Ghazni's strategic position, both economically and militarily, assured its revival, albeit without its dazzling former grandeur. Through the centuries the city has figured prominently as the all-important key to the possession of Kabul.

After the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the United States armed forces built a base in Ghazni. They have been involved in rebuilding projects and protecting the local population against Taliban insurgents. In the meantime, they are also training the Afghan Local Police (ALP) Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA). In 2010, the United States established the Lincoln Learning Center in Ghazni.[22] The Lincoln learning centers in Afghanistan serve as programming platforms offering English language classes, library facilities, programming venues, Internet connectivity, educational and other counseling services. A goal of the program is to reach at least 4,000 Afghan citizens per month per location.[23]

On 10 August 2018, the city was attacked by the Taliban during the Battle of Ghazni. Dozens of airstrikes were carried out in support of Afghan police and government forces and hundreds of Afghan soldiers, police, and Taliban insurgents were killed as well as dozens of civilians. In addition to the destruction and human suffering caused by the fighting, the Taliban also set fire to many buildings in the city.

On 18 May 2020, a suicide Humvee bomber affiliated with the Taliban killed nine Afghan intelligence personnel and injured 40 others at the National Directorate of Security (NDS) unit in Ghazni, also damaging the nearby Islamic Cultural Centre.[24][25][26]

Ghazni was the tenth provincial capital of Afghanistan to be captured by the Taliban as part of the 2021 Taliban offensive.[27][28][9]

Geography[edit]

Land Use[edit]

Ghazni is a trading and transit hub in central Afghanistan. Agriculture is the dominant land use at 28%.[29] In terms of built-up land area, vacant plots (33%) slightly outweigh residential area (31%).[29] Districts 3 and 4 also have large institutional areas. The city has four police districts (nahia) and covers a total land area of 3,330 hectares.[29] The total number of dwellings in Ghazni city is 15,931.[29]

Climate[edit]

Ghazni's climate is transitional between cold semi-arid climate (Köppen climate classification BSk) and warm-summer humid continental climate (Dsa). It has cold, snowy winters and warm, dry summers. Precipitation is low and mostly falls in winter (when it mostly falls as snow) and spring.

hide

Climate data for Ghazni

Month Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Year

Record high °C (°F) 16.0

(60.8) 17.8

(64.0) 24.8

(76.6) 28.0

(82.4) 33.0

(91.4) 36.3

(97.3) 36.7

(98.1) 35.6

(96.1) 32.5

(90.5) 29.9

(85.8) 21.2

(70.2) 16.6

(61.9) 36.7

(98.1)

Average high °C (°F) 0.6

(33.1) 2.3

(36.1) 10.0

(50.0) 18.0

(64.4) 23.7

(74.7) 29.2

(84.6) 30.8

(87.4) 30.5

(86.9) 26.5

(79.7) 19.0

(66.2) 12.6

(54.7) 5.4

(41.7) 17.4

(63.3)

Daily mean °C (°F) -5.9

(21.4) -4.4

(24.1) 3.8

(38.8) 11.0

(51.8) 16.3

(61.3) 21.4

(70.5) 23.3

(73.9) 22.2

(72.0) 16.9

(62.4) 10.3

(50.5) 4.0

(39.2) -1.8

(28.8) 9.8

(49.6)

Average low °C (°F) -10.6

(12.9) -9.0

(15.8) -1.5

(29.3) 4.2

(39.6) 8.1

(46.6) 12.4

(54.3) 15.1

(59.2) 14.1

(57.4) 8.3

(46.9) 2.2

(36.0) -2.5

(27.5) -6.6

(20.1) 2.8

(37.1)

Record low °C (°F) -33.5

(-28.3) -29.2

(-20.6) -17.5

(0.5) -5.8

(21.6) 0.0

(32.0) 5.0

(41.0) 7.7

(45.9) 2.0

(35.6) -3.5

(25.7) -6.0

(21.2) -13.8

(7.2) -33.2

(-27.8) -33.5

(-28.3)

Average precipitation mm (inches) 40.2

(1.58) 53.9

(2.12) 70.9

(2.79) 49.9

(1.96) 19.7

(0.78) 1.9

(0.07) 14.1

(0.56) 4.7

(0.19) 0.5

(0.02) 4.1

(0.16) 11.3

(0.44) 25.8

(1.02) 297

(11.69)

Average rainy days 1 2 7 9 6 1 3 2 0 1 2 1 35

Average snowy days 6 7 4 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 5 24

Average relative humidity (%) 68 72 64 55 43 36 43 39 35 42 52 60 51

Mean monthly sunshine hours 175.3 174.8 227.6 258.6 314.3 346.2 353.2 341.8 324.5 293.9 256.4 194.6 3,261.2

Source: NOAA (1958–1983)[30]

Demography[edit]

Further information: Demography of Afghanistan

The city of Ghazni's population surged from 143,379 in 2015[31] to 270,000 in 2018 as refugees from violent areas fled to the city.[32] In 2015, there were 15,931 dwellings in Ghazni city.[29]

The population is multi-ethnic, with approximately 50% being Tajik, 25% Pashtun, 20% Hazara.[33][34]

Infrastructure[edit]

Transportation[edit]

Further information: Transport in Afghanistan

In April 2012, Ghazni Governor Musa Khan Akbarzada laid the foundation stone of the Ghazni Airport. The work began later that year and was supervised by the managing director of the Ghazni province Engineer Ahmad Wali Tawakuli.[35]

The city is next to Afghanistan's main highway that runs between Kabul and Kandahar in the south. There are roads leading to Gardez and in the east and other nearby villages as well as to towns in Hazarajat in the northwest.

Education[edit]

Further information: Education in Afghanistan

The city has a number of public schools. Jahan Maleeka School is an all-girls school with over 5,000 students and 150 teachers. Naswan Shaher Kohna School, another all-girls school, has over 3000 students.

Resources[edit]

Ghazni City is in an area of low rainfall. In 2007, one of the gates on a 50-year-old dam on the Jikhai River broke, bringing up concerns among the inhabitants of Ghazni city about the water supply. The dam serves as a good source of irrigation water to Ghazni City and the surrounding agricultural areas.[36][37] Nearby rivers have a history of flooding and causing severe damage and death,[38] though efforts have begun to remedy this.[39]

Sports[edit]

Professional sports teams from Ghazni

Club League Sport Venue Established

Band-e-Amir Dragons Shpageeza Cricket League Cricket Ghazni Cricket Ground 2013

Oqaban Hindukush F.C. Afghan Premier League Football Ghazni Ground 2012

Stadiums

Ghazni Cricket Ground

Ghazni Ground

Notable people[edit]

Rulers and emperors[edit]

Abu Bakr Lawik, ruler of Ghazni from the Lawik dynasty
Abu Ali Lawik, son of Abu Bakr Lawik and ruler of the Lawik dynasty
Sabuktigin, founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty
Mahmud of Ghazni, son of Sabuktigin, first independent ruler of the dynasty of Ghaznavids in the 11th-century
Muhammad of Ghazni, son of Mahmud of Ghazni and Sultan of the Ghaznavid empire
Mas'ud I of Ghazni, twin brother of Muhammad of Ghazni and Sultan of the Ghaznavid empire
Mawdud of Ghazni, nephew of Muhammad of Ghazni and Sultan of the Ghaznavid empire
Ibrahim of Ghazna, Sultan of the Ghaznavid empire
Khusrau Malik, Sultan of the Ghaznavid empire
Bahram-Shah of Ghazna, Sultan of the Ghaznavids empire
Muhammad Shah, thirteenth Mughal emperor in the 18th-century
Politicians and military leaders[edit]
Alp-Tegin Turkic slave commander of the Samanid Empire, became later the semi-independent governor of Ghazni til his death in Ghazni
Abu Ishaq Ibrahim of Ghazna, son of Alp-Tegin, Turkic officer and the Samanid governor of Ghazni
Böritigin of Ghazni, Turkic officer and the Samanid governor of Ghazni
Ismail of Ghazni, son of Sabuktigin and brother of Mahmud, emir of Ghazna
Ali ibn Ishak, financial minister of the Ghaznavids
Abd al-Razzaq Maymandi, vizier of the Ghaznavid Sultan Mawdud Ghaznavi and Abd al-Rashid
Toghrul of Ghazna, Turkish slave general and usurper of the Ghaznavid throne
Azad Khan Afghan, Pashtun military commander from the 18th-century
Nur Muhammad Taraki, former president of Afghanistan
Poets and scientists[edit]
Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni, famous 10/11th-century Iranian scholar and polymath, worked and died in Ghazni
Abu'l-Fadl Bayhaqi, 10/11th-century Persian secretary, historian and author at the court of the Ghaznavids, also died in Ghazni
Asjadi, Persian royal poet at the court of the Ghaznavids in Ghazni
Farrukhi Sistani, Persian royal poet at the court of the Ghaznavids, spent most of his life in Ghazni and also died there
Manuchehri Dāmghānī, Persian royal poet at the court of the Ghaznavids in Ghazni, most probably died in Ghazni, too
Unsuri Balkhi, Persian royal poet at the court of the Ghaznavids in Ghazni
Hakim Sanai Ghaznavi, 11/12th-century Persian Sufi poet and mystic
Hassan Ghaznavi, 12th-century Persian poet
Faiz Mohammad Katib Hazara, 19/20th-century historian, writer and intellectual
Abdul Rahman Pazhwak Afghan poet and diplomat
Religious leaders[edit]
Shaykh Syed 'Alī al-Hujwīrī, 11th-century Persian Sunni Muslim mystic, theologian, and

preacher

Jamal al-Din al-Ghaznawi, 12th-century Sunni Hanafi jurist, theologian, and Kalam scholar of the Maturidi school

Gholam Mohammad Niazi, Political Islamic movement thinker, Dean of the faculty of theology at Kabul University

Others[edit]

Abdul Ahad Mohmand first Afghan citizen and fourth Muslim to journey to outer space

Points of interest[edit]

Citadel of Ghazni

Minarets of Ghazni

Palace of Sultan Mas'ud III

Tomb of Sebuktigin

Mausoleum of Sultan Mahmud

Mausoleum of Sanai

Museum of Islamic Art

Tapa Sardar Excavations

Tomb of Al Biruni

Twin towns – sister cities[edit]

Hayward, California, US[40]

Giżycko, Poland[41]

See also[edit]

Ghazni Province

Mahmud of Ghazni

Iconoclasm

Ghaznavids

List of cities founded by Alexander the Great