

Exploring Afghanistan ...

Information and Guide to Cultural Artifacts

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1. Flag of Afghanistan

The National flag of Afghanistan features three vertical tricolor bands. The colors used are black, red, and green. The black symbolizes the dark, troubled past of the nation. The green represents both Islam and prosperity, while the red represents the blood shed by those who fought for the country's independence.



The center of the emblem features a mosque with pulpit and flags on either side. Below the mosque are Eastern Arabic numerals for the solar year 1298 (1919 in the Gregorian calendar, the year of Afghan independence from the UK); this central image is circled by a border consisting of sheaves of wheat on the left and right. In the upper center is an Arabic inscription of the Shahada (Muslim creed) below which are rays of the rising sun over the Takbir (Arabic expression meaning "God is great"), and at bottom center is a scroll bearing the name Afghanistan. The current flag was adopted on August 19, 2013.

Quick Facts about Afghanistan

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Official Name: | Islamic Republic of Afghanistan |
| Capital City: | Kabul |
| Population: | 38,346,720 (2022 est.) |
| Geographic Size: | 652,230 sq km |
| Official Language: | Afghan Persian or Dari (official, lingua franca) 77%, Pashto (official) 48%, Uzbeki 11%, English 6%, Turkmani 3%, Urdu 3%, Pachaie 1%, Nuristani 1%, Arabic 1%, Balochi 1%, other <1% (2020 est.) |
| Ethnic Groups: | Current, reliable statistical data on ethnicity in Afghanistan are not available; Afghanistan's 2004 Constitution cited Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, and Brahwui ethnicities; Afghanistan has dozens of other small ethnic groups. |
| Religions: | Muslim 99.7% (Sunni 84.7 - 89.7%, Shia 10 - 15%), other <0.3% (2009 est.) |
| Exports: | Gold, grapes, opium, fruits and nuts, insect resins, cotton, handwoven carpets, soapstone, scrap metal (2019) |
| Money: | Afghan Afghani |

Source: The World Factbook – Afghanistan

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/afghanistan/>

Geography

Afghanistan is located in Central Asia with Iran to the west and Pakistan to the east. Tall, forbidding mountains and dry deserts cover most of the landscape of Afghanistan. The jagged mountain peaks are treacherous, and are snow covered for most of the year.

Many Afghans live in the fertile valleys between the mountains and grow their crops and tend to their animals. Only 20 percent of the land is used as fields.

Summers are hot and dry, but the winters are very cold, especially north of the Hindu Kush, which is located in the eastern part of the country near Pakistan and Tajikistan. Many rivers flow through the mountain gorges. Snow melt and rain that flow out of the Hindu Kush pool into a low area and never reach the ocean.

The mountain passes in Afghanistan allow travelers passage across Asia. The country was a busy section of the Silk Road, a route that merchants have traveled over land between China, India, and Europe for over 2,000 years.

Source: National Geographic Kids

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/afghanistan>

2. Map of Afghanistan



Source: The World Factbook – Afghanistan

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/afghanistan/map>

Posters of Tourist Attractions in Afghanistan

3. Cultural Landscape and Archeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley

The cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan valley represent the artistic and religious developments which from the 1st to the 13th centuries C.E. characterized ancient Bakhtria, integrating various cultural influences into the Gandhara school of Buddhist art. The area contains numerous Buddhist monastic ensembles and sanctuaries, as well as fortified edifices from the Islamic period.



Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208/>

4. Buddhas of Bamiyan

Carved into the *Bamiyan Cliffs* are the two niches of the giant Buddha statues (55m and 38m high) destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, and numerous caves forming a large ensemble of Buddhist monasteries, chapels and sanctuaries along the foothills of the valley dating from the 3rd to the 5th century C.E. In several of the caves and niches, often linked by galleries, there are remains of wall paintings and seated Buddha figures.



Source: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/west-and-central-asia-apahh/central-asia/a/bamiyan-buddhas>

5. National Museum of Afghanistan

National Museum of Afghanistan, also called Kabul Museum, was established in 1919 at the Bagh-i-Bala palace overlooking Kabul, and consisted of manuscripts, miniatures, weapons, and art objects belonging to the former royal families. A few years later the collection was moved to the king's palace in the center of the city and in 1931 it was officially installed in the present building, which had served as the Municipality. Through the years other archaeological delegations have added their finds to the museum until today the collection spans fifty millenniums (Prehistoric, Classical, Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic) and stands as one of the greatest testimonies of antiquity that the world has inherited.



Source: <https://www.nationalmuseum.af>

6. The Great Mosque of Herat

The Great Mosque of Herat or "Jami Masjid of Herat" is a mosque in the city of Herat, in the Herat Province of north-western Afghanistan. It was built by the Ghurids, under the rule of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad Ghorī, who laid its foundation in 1200 C.E. Later, it was extended several times as Herat changed rulers down the centuries from the Kartids, Timurids, Mughals and then the Uzbeks, all of whom supported the mosque. The fundamental structure of the mosque from the Ghurid period has been preserved, but parts have been added and modified. The mosque was given its present appearance during the 20th century.



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Mosque_of_Herat

7. Herat Citadel

The Citadel of Herat, also known as the Citadel of Alexander, and locally known as Qala Iktiaaruddin, is located in the center of Herat in Afghanistan. It dates back to 330 B.C.E., when Alexander the Great and his army arrived to what is now Afghanistan after the Battle of Gaugamela. Many empires have used it as a headquarters in the last 2,000 years and it has been destroyed and rebuilt many times over the centuries.



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herat_Citadel

8. Babur's Garden

Babur's Garden locally known as Bagh-e Babur is a historic park in Kabul, Afghanistan. It includes the tomb of the first Mughal emperor Babur. Created by the founder of the Mughal dynasty, Ziihir ad-Din Muhammad Biibur (1483-1530 C.E.), after his conquest of Kabul in 1504, Bagh-e Babur is one of the earliest surviving Mughal gardens. The garden has 15 terraces along a central axis in east-west direction. From the top terrace, the visitor has a magnificent vista over the garden and its perimeter wall, across the Kabul River towards the snow-covered mountains.



Source: <https://www.bitlanders.com/blogs/history-of-bagh-e-babur-in-kabul-afghanistan/61913>

9. Band-e Amir National Park

Afghanistan established its first national park on April 22, 2009, to promote and protect the natural beauty of a series of intensely blue lakes created by natural dams high in the Hindu Kush. Band-e-Amir is a chain of six lakes in the mountainous desert of central Afghanistan. The lakes formed from mineral-rich water that seeped out of faults and cracks in the rocky landscape. Over time, the water deposited layers of hardened mineral (travertine) that built up into walls that now contain the water. According to the Wildlife Conservation Society, who helped the Afghan government set up the park, Band-e-Amir is one of the few travertine systems in the world.



Source: <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/38311/band-e-amir-national-park-afghanistan>

History

Afghanistan was settled around 7000 B.C.E. and has been in transition for most of its history. Alexander the Great conquered Afghanistan in 330 B.C.E. and brought the Greek language and culture to the region. Genghis Khan's Mongols invaded in the 13th century C.E. In 1747, Pashtun elders held a council meeting called a Loya Jirga and created the kingdom of the Afghans.

The British and Afghans fought in three wars in the 19th and 20th centuries, but the Afghans finally defeated the British in 1919 and formed an independent monarchy in 1921.

In 1978, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in the country, setting in motion a series of events that would turn the poor, mostly peaceful country into a breeding ground for terrorism. The PDPA's occupation of Afghanistan eventually led to civil war, or a war between citizens of the same country.

Afghan fighters called the mujahedin fought against the PDPA; these rebels later received aid from the United States, Pakistan, China, and Iran. The Soviet Union, now called Russia, supported the PDPA regime. Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and remained in the country until 1989. Civil war continued in Afghanistan after the Soviet departure until the fall of the PDPA regime in 1992.

After the PDPA's fall, various groups fought to gain control of the country. The Taliban emerged in 1994 and quickly began to take over cities across Afghanistan, with military support from Pakistan. During the Taliban's rule, the group was condemned by the

international community for murdering innocent Afghan civilians and denying food supplies to starving citizens.

In 2001, following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11 of that year, the U.S. government demanded that the Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden, the leader of a terrorist group called al Qaeda, which was based in Afghanistan. The Taliban refused. The United States and its allies then took military action in Afghanistan and drove the Taliban from power in December 2001.

Both the Taliban and al Qaeda fled Afghanistan and relocated to nearby Pakistan, where they set up political and military outposts. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies worked with Afghans to set up schools, hospitals, and public facilities following the Taliban's departure. Thousands of girls—who were banned from being educated under Taliban rule—went to school for the first time. Women were free to get jobs and take part in government activities, both of which were forbidden under the Taliban.

In 2004, Afghanistan adopted its current constitution and became an internationally recognized government, electing Hamid Karzai as its first president. Under its constitution, the president and two vice presidents are elected every five years. But the government struggled to extend its authority beyond the capital city of Kabul because the Taliban forces continued to try to regain control of the country.

In 2020, the Taliban and the Afghan government began to discuss a peace treaty, and though some people were concerned that the talks wouldn't progress, U.S. president Donald Trump planned to remove U.S. troops from the country by May 2021. His successor, Joe Biden, extended the date for the withdrawal to August 31 of that year. After nearly 20 years of U.S. occupation in Afghanistan, the United States' longest war was going to end.

But the people who were concerned about the peace treaty talks stalling were right: Following Biden's official announcement in July and the start of the withdrawal of international troops, the Taliban quickly took over multiple cities by force and brought back their extreme practices. By August 15, 2021, the Taliban had taken control of all major cities, including the capital of Kabul. President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, and the Afghan government all but collapsed.

The United States sent military troops to the country to help the American diplomats and support staff at the U.S. embassy in Kabul evacuate safely.

Source: National Geographic Kids

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/afghanistan>

10. Afghan Girl's Portrait

Afghan Girl is a 1984 photographic portrait of Sharbat Gula, an Afghan refugee in Pakistan during the Soviet–Afghan War. The photograph, taken by American photojournalist Steve McCurry near the Pakistani city of Peshawar, famously appeared on the June 1985 cover of National Geographic. While the portrait's subject initially remained unknown, she was identified by early 2002: Gula, an ethnic Pashtun from Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, was a 12-year-old child residing in Nasir Bagh, an Afghan refugee camp on the edge of Peshawar, in Pakistan. In light of the Cold War, the portrait was described as "the First World's Third World Mona Lisa" in reference to the 16th-century painting of the same name by Leonardo da Vinci. Gula's image became the symbol, not only of Afghanistan, but of displaced refugees across the world.



Source: Afghan Girl

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_Girl

Religion

Islam is the official religion of Afghanistan, and the majority of the population is Muslim (approximately 99.7%). There are some very small residual communities of other faiths, including Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and Baha'i. However, the numbers of minority Muslim and non-Muslim groups have significantly declined over the past decades as people have fled sectarian tensions and conflict.

The Afghan government is established as a Sunni Islamic Republic. Therefore, there is a strong societal pressure to adhere to Sunni Islamic traditions. The moral code of the Islamic doctrine tends to govern the political, economic, and legal aspects of an Afghan's life. Not all Afghans are strictly observant Muslims. For example, many people do not pray on a regular basis. Nevertheless, everyone tends to engage with Islam on some level as Islamic customs form the basis of many general cultural norms in Afghanistan.

Islam in Afghanistan

The cultural and national identity of Afghanistan is deeply shaped by Islam. Faith in the religion is noticeable in dress, dietary codes, regular prayers, and language. For example, reverence to Allah (God) is evident in the way many people speak; it is common to slip praise into casual conversation. Although the vast majority of Afghans believe in God and the holy Qur'an, not all may be formally educated in the religion. Low literacy in Afghanistan means that some people may have never read passages of the Qur'an and rely on others who have memorized the holy text to pass on the word of God.

There are two main variations of Islam (*Sunni* and *Shi'a*) followed in Afghanistan that differ primarily in the way they have interpreted the succession of leadership in the religion. An Afghan's ethnicity is generally presumed to determine which denomination of Islam they belong to. Most Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks are Sunni, while Hazaras constitute the largest Shi'a population of Afghanistan. There are some exceptions, such as the Pashtun Turi tribe and the Badakshan Tajiks who are Shi'a.

The statistical estimations of each Muslim denomination's size in Afghanistan are unclear. Shi'a leaders report that approximately 20-25% of the population is Shi'a, while Sunni leaders state the Shi'a constitute 10%. Most Afghan Sunni Muslims belong to the Hanafi Islamic school of law. It is estimated approximately 90% of the Shi'a population belong to the Twelver sect (following the Jafari school), although some are Ismaili Shi'ites.

Afghanistan has struggled with sectarian tensions between its Sunni and Shi'a populations. Sunni-dominated governments have histories of discrimination against minority Shi'ites. The Taliban, a radicalized Sunni terrorist insurgency group, continue to target and kill members of minority religious communities over their beliefs. They often attack Shi'a places of worship or religious ceremonies. Civilian casualties resulting from attacks deliberately targeting Shi'a mullahs and places of worship have increased markedly since 2016. The Hazara Shi'a population is generally the most common victim of ethno-religious terrorism.

Freedom of Religion

There are many restrictions on people's religious practice in Afghanistan. Local Muslim religious leaders make efforts to limit social activities they consider inconsistent with Islamic doctrine. For example, women of several different faiths report continued harassment from local Muslim religious leaders over their attire. As a result, almost all women (both local and foreign) wear some form of head covering.

It is important to consider that there may be opposing views regarding the role of religion in Afghanistan. Spirituality holds relevance and importance in almost every Afghan's life. However, some may view the institution of religion negatively, seeing it as a tool of oppression due to their experience of persecution and conflict.

An Afghan that feels discontent with their religion may not make their thoughts and beliefs known to their family or community. Showing contempt, offense, or a lack of reverence towards Islam can be considered blasphemous. Anyone accused of blasphemy or apostasy is likely to face strong societal discrimination and can be sentenced to severe punishments, including death. Such laws and penalties surrounding blasphemy and apostasy from Islam have been used to harass religious minorities especially. Journalists can be targeted for publishing stories that could be perceived as conflicting with the principles of Islam. Threats of kidnapping and death directed at journalists, employees of NGOs and others are serious and common.

Source: Cultural Atlas

<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/afghan-culture/afghan-culture-religion>

I 1. Tesbih - Islamic Prayer Beads

When you visit Afghanistan, you are certain to notice that the men always seem to have a string of beads in their hands. Many religions including, Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism have traditions of prayer beads, from “mala” for Buddhists to “rosaries” for Catholics.



In Islam, the “Tesbih” or “Misbaha” are used to mark the repetitions of prayers or other ritual recitations. Muslims generally use tesbih with 99 beads, which symbolize the 99 names of Allah, while Buddhists’ mala has 108 beads.

Source: Tesbih – Islamic Prayer Beads

<https://www.fethiyetimes.com/magazine/33121-tesbih-islamic-prayer-beads.html>

I 2. Pakol Hat

A *pakol*, or *pakul*, is traditionally an Afghan or Pakistani woolen hat. This pakol is made from a mix of sheep wool and goat hair and is produced in a sustainable way in Pakistan.

The *pakol* initially comes from the Afghan-Pakistani border region around Nuristan and Chitral. Originally it was more of a Pashtun headwear which was then taken over in Afghanistan by the (ethnic Tajik). The *pakol* is made from a rugged warm material with a lined interior. It is 100% wool and can be individually altered in size by rolling a thinner or thicker border. It comes in a variety of colors. It is also used as a prayer cap.



13. Prayer Rug

“What are Prayer Rugs and How are They Used by Muslims?”

During Islamic prayers, worshippers bow, kneel, and prostrate on the ground in humility before God. The only requirement in Islam is that prayers be performed in an area that is clean. Prayer rugs are not universally used by Muslims, nor specifically required in Islam. But they have become a traditional way for many Muslims to ensure the cleanliness of their place of prayer, and to create an isolated space to concentrate in prayer. Prayer rugs are usually about one meter long, just enough for an adult to fit comfortably when kneeling or prostrating.



Modern, commercially produced rugs are often made of silk or cotton. While some rugs are made in solid colors, they are usually adorned. The designs are often geometric, floral, arabesque, or depict Islamic landmarks such as the Ka'aba in Mecca or Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. They are usually designed so that the rug has a definite "top" and "bottom" -- the bottom is where the worshipper stands, and the top points towards the direction of prayer.

When the time for prayer comes, the worshipper lays the rug on the ground, so that the top points towards the direction of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. After prayer, the rug is immediately folded or rolled, and put away for the next use. This ensures that the rug remains clean.

Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan are the significant origins of handmade, excellent quality Islamic prayer carpets.

Source: Huda. “What are Prayer Rugs and How are They Used by Muslims?”

<https://www.learnreligions.com/how-prayer-rugs-are-used-2004512>

Languages of Afghanistan

The people of Afghanistan form a complex mosaic of ethnic and linguistic groups. Pashto and Persian (Dari), both Indo-European languages, are the official languages of the country. More than two-fifths of the population speak Pashto, the language of the Pashtuns, while about half speak some dialect of Persian. While the Afghan dialect of Persian is generally termed “Dari,” a number of dialects are spoken among the Tajik, Ḥazāra, Chahar Aimak, and Kizilbash peoples, including dialects that are more closely akin to the Persian spoken in Iran (Farsi) or the Persian spoken in Tajikistan (Tajik). The Dari and Tajik dialects contain a number of Turkish and Mongolian words, and the transition from one dialect into another across the country is often imperceptible. Bilingualism is fairly common, and the correlation of language to ethnic group is not always exact. Some non-Pashtuns, for instance, speak Pashto, while a larger number of Pashtuns, particularly in urban areas, have adopted the use of one of the dialects of Persian.

Other Indo-European languages, spoken by smaller groups, include Western Dardic (Nuristani or Kafiri), Balochi, and a number of Indic and Pamiri languages spoken principally in isolated valleys in the northeast. Turkic languages are spoken by the Uzbek and Turkmen peoples, the most recent settlers, who are related to peoples from the steppes of Central Asia. The Turkic languages are closely related; within Afghanistan they include Uzbek, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz, the last spoken by a small group in the extreme northeast. Afghanistan has very small ethnic groups of Dravidian speakers. Dravidian languages are spoken by the Brahuis, residing in the extreme south.

The present population of Afghanistan contains a number of elements, which, in the course of history and as a result of large-scale migration and conquests, have been superimposed on one another. Dravidians, Indo-Aryans, Greeks, Scythians, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols have at different times inhabited the country and influenced its culture. Intermixture of the two principal linguistic groups is evident in such peoples as the Ḥazāra and Chahar Aimak, who speak Indo-European languages but have physical and cultural traits usually associated with the Turkic and Mongol peoples of Central Asia.

Source: Afghanistan – Britannica

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/Languages>

15. Dari_Alphabet Chart and Readers

The Dari language, a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian family of languages is, along with Pashto, one of the two official languages of Afghanistan. Dari is the Afghan dialect of Farsi (Persian). It is written in a modified Arabic alphabet, and it has many Arabic and Persian loanwords. The syntax of Dari does not differ greatly from Farsi, but the stress accent is less prominent in Dari than in Farsi. To mark attribution, Dari uses the suffix -ra. The vowel system of Dari differs from that of Farsi, and Dari also has additional consonants. About half the population of Afghanistan speaks Dari. It is the primary language of the Tadjik, Hazāra, and Chahar Aimak peoples. Dari, rather than Pashto, serves as the means of communication between speakers of different languages in Afghanistan.



Dari Alphabet and Pronunciation

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|-------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----|------------|
| خ | ح | چ | ج | ث | ت | پ | ب | آ/ا |
| خ | ح | چ | جیم | ث | ت | پ | ب | الف |
| xe | he | ce | jim | se | te | pe | be | alef |
| xe | h | c | j | s | t | p | b | -i/ā |
| [x] | [h] | [tʃ] | [dʒ] | [s] | [t] | [p] | [b] | [ʔ/Ø/æ/v:] |
| ض | ص | ش | س | ژ | ز | ر | ذ | د |
| ضواد | صواد | شین | سین | ژ | ز | ر | ذال | دال |
| dwād | swād | šin | sin | že | ze | re | zāl | dāl |
| d | s | ʃ | s | ž | z | r | z | d |
| [z] | [s] | [ʃ] | [s] | [ʒ] | [z] | [r] | [z] | [d] |
| ل | گ | ک | ق | ف | غ | ع | ظ | ط |
| لام | گاف | کاف | قاف | ف | غین | عین | ظی | ظی |
| lām | gāf | kāf | qāf | fe | ğayn | ayn | zoy | toy |
| l | g | k | q | f | ğ | ʾ | z | t |
| [l] | [g] | [k] | [q/ɢ] | [f] | [ɣ] | [ʔ/Ø] | [z] | [t] |
| | | | | ی | ه | و | ن | م |
| | | | | یا | ه | واو | نون | میم |
| | | | | yā | he | wāw | nun | mim |
| | | | | y/e/i/ê/â/ay | h/-e/a | w/o/u/ô/aw | n | m |
| | | | | [j/e/i:/ | [h/Ø/e/æ] | [w/o/u:/ | [n] | [m] |
| | | | | e:/v:/aj] | | o:/aw] | | |

Source: Omniglot

<https://omniglot.com/writing/pashto.htm>

Clothing

Clothing in Afghanistan consists of the traditional style of clothing worn in Afghanistan. The various cultural exchanges in the nation's history have influenced the styles and flavors of contemporary Afghan designs. The national dress is the fusion of different ethnic groups in Afghanistan. The styles can be subdivided into the various ethnicities with unique elements for each.

Traditional dresses for both men and women tend to cover the whole body, with trousers gathered at the waist, a loose shirt or dress, and some form of head covering. Today, in the major cities, such as Kabul, more and more young Afghans wear western clothes, and reserve their traditional Afghan clothing for special occasions, such as weddings or to celebrate major holidays like Nowroz or Eid. However, the recent rule of Taliban has banned the western clothing for both men and women in Afghanistan.

Source: Afghan Clothing

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_clothing

16. Women's Clothing

Traditional women's dresses are always long, made from light linens, and are loose fitting for ease of movement.

They come in many colors and have stitching for details. Most traditional clothing is colorful. More elaborate and fancier dresses are detailed with gold threading (Zardozi), gold beads, and come in many different colors on silk fabrics.

These dresses are usually worn to special occasions and weddings. They are usually of heavy design and filled with small mirrors around the chest area, along with long and pleated skirts.



Source: Afghan Clothing

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_clothing

17. Women's Head & Body Covering Attire

A burqa or a burka (blue) is an enveloping outer garment which covers the body and the face that is worn by women in Afghanistan. The Arab version of the burqa is called the *boshiya*, and it is usually black.

The term burqa is sometimes conflated with the term *niqāb*. In more precise usage, the *niqab* (black) is a face veil that leaves the eyes uncovered, while a burqa covers the entire body from the top of the head to the ground, with a mesh screen which only allows the wearer to see in front of her. The burqa is also not to be confused with the *hijab* (green), a garment which covers the hair, neck and all or part of the chest, but does not cover the face.

The wearing of the burqa and other types of face veils have been attested to since pre-Islamic times. Face veiling has not been regarded as a religious requirement by most Islamic scholars, either in the past or the present. A minority of scholars in the Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) consider it to be obligatory for Muslim women when they are in the presence of non-related (non-mahram) males in order to prevent men from thinking about women while not obliging men to wear eye-covering.

Women may wear the burqa for a number of reasons, including compulsion, as is the case during the Taliban's first and second rule of Afghanistan. Again, during their second rule in May 2022, the Taliban ordered women to cover up head to toe and only go outdoors in the company of male chaperones.

Please see instructions about how to wear a hijab in the trunk along with an embroidered Afghan scarf to practice it.

Source: Burqa

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burqa>

Source: Burqa, Niqab, and Hijab

<https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/difference-between-hijab-niqab-burqa-chador-al-amira-khimar-and-shayla-1647362208-1>



18. Women's shoes - Paizar or Payzor

The traditional Afghan shoes are called *paizar or payzor*. These can be worn by men and women. For men, the artisans use dark colors but for women they use bright colors.

Originally made from pure leather, they have exquisite embroidery and additional embellishments that give them a unique appeal. From day-to-day wear, weddings, religious occasions, to parties and festivals, *paizar* provides an essential ethnic appeal to the person wearing them. As they evolved through the centuries and are being produced by individual artisans, products vary in designs and colors. They encapsulate cultural diversity, local ethos, and ethnicity.



Source: Afghan Clothing

http://missbspaage.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/9/8/13980362/afghanistan_clothing.pdf

19. Afghan Kuchi Jewelry

Kuchi is a Persian word meaning 'those who go on migrations'. The Kuchis are a nomadic tribe who have lived along the ancient routes bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Culturally rich, colorful, eclectic, exuberant, unique & beautiful... these are just some of the words that come to mind when describing Kuchi jewelry. Kuchi jewelry incorporates colorful glass jewels, coins, bells, dangles, beadwork, embroidery, mirrors, pom poms & bright fabrics, creating impressive headpieces, earrings, necklaces, chokers, cuffs, bracelets, rings, belts & anklets.



Traditionally, Afghan women wear this jewelry as everyday wear, and for special ceremonies. The more expensive jewelry, made with precious stones and solid metals, are generally worn on special occasions such as weddings and tribal celebrations. These exuberant pieces create a sense of individual beauty, and ward off evil spirits.

Source:

<https://www.lostlover.com.au/blogs/news/kuchi-jewellery-headpieces>

20. Men's Clothing

The Afghan traditional clothing for men is called *perahan tunban* which literally means 'dress and trouser.' It is also known as *peran o tunban* which is worn by men in Afghanistan and in some parts of Pakistan.

The *perahan* (the upper garment) is wide and loose with the sleeves also worn loose and pendent from the arms. The *tunban* (lower garment) is worn loose and hanging. The traditional *perahan tunban* varies according to the region of Afghanistan with some ending at the knees and others midway between the calf and the feet (in which case small slits are created).

The modern *perahan tunban* is called *shalwar Kameez* (trousers and shirt) which retains some of the loose features of the traditional outfit. It consists of straight cut trousers and shirt, waistcoat, and with (optional) head covering. In Afghanistan, cotton and wool are the main materials used for dressing. Silk has its consumers and is mostly used in clothing and crafts including carpets, or rugs but of course it is more expensive.



Source: Perahan Tunban

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perahan_o_tunban

21. Men's Head Covering

Men cover their heads by wearing different types of hats and each one has its particular name. For example, Qarakul (black) is made from lamb skin.

Pakool (brown), is made of wool.

Turban (*lungee*) is made of silk or cotton. It is tied or wrapped around the head. Please see instructions about how to tie/wrap a turban in the trunk along with three scarves to practice it.



22. Men's shoes - Peshawari Sandal (*chappal*)

The Peshawari sandal (*chappal*) is a traditional type of footwear of Afghan people, worn especially by Pashtuns in the parts of Afghanistan and the Pakistani province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The shoe takes its name from the city of Peshawar – capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province – where it originates. While *chappal* is the word for flip-flops or sandals in Urdu, locals in Peshawar call the Peshawari *Tsaplay*. The shoes are worn by men casually or formally, usually with the *shalwar kameez*. Because of their comfort, they are worn in place of sandals or slippers in Afghanistan and Pakistan.



Source: Peshawari Sandal

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peshawari_chappal

Currency

23. Afghan Afghani

Afghanistan's currency is called the Afghan Afghani (AFN) and was created in 1925 to replace the Afghan rupee. Throughout the 19th century, Afghanistan's unit of currency was the rupee (*rūpya*). Afghan currency is issued by the nation's central bank called Da Afghanistan Bank.

Although the Afghan Afghani has many coins and older banknotes, the current banknote set is a series from 2002-2008. This series has the denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 with the 1, 2 and 5 afghani banknotes being the only banknotes replaced by coins.



Art

24. Afghan Rug

Rug making, also known as carpet weaving, has been a part of Afghanistan's history for centuries. Afghan rugs are more than decoration; they are an iconic symbol, representing a country of many cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

Afghan rugs, like Afghanistan itself, represent a diverse range of cultures and artistic sensibilities. With some drawing heavily on Persian influences, others from more oriental styles, and still others reflecting the unique war history of Afghanistan, an Afghan rug is both an amazing piece of art and a pinnacle of craftsmanship. Making an Afghan rug is a painstakingly slow process. They take months to make, woven by hand and individually crafted to be unique. Additionally, there are many different styles to choose from based on different tribal traditions in various regions.



25. Afghan Hand Woven & Beaded Handbag

This handbag is made from the handwoven soft rug. It is made of wool and colored with natural dye. These bags are each made differently so each one is unique with different patterns.

The bag is ornamented with handmade beaded patches and medallions which are called *Kuchi*. *Kuchis* are the nomadic people of Afghanistan, who make a variety of beaded patches, medallions, and jewelry pieces.



26. Hand Embroidered Wall Hangings

Afghanistan is surrounded by many different ethnic groups and cultures, and it is not surprising therefore that the materials, designs, and colors used by the Afghan people for their embroidery reflect the central and important location of their country in Asia. Almost each ethnic group inside Afghanistan has its own specific way of living, which is often reflected in their traditional embroidery.

In general, the production of embroidery is carried out by girls and women at home. By the end of the twentieth century there also was a significant number of men carrying out embroidery, but this was usually machine embroidery produced in tailor's workshops.



Embroidery is used in Afghanistan to decorate a wide range of objects. It is used for house decorations (tablecloths, mats, towels, wall-hangings, curtains and so forth), for animal trappings (notably the decorative blankets for horses), as well as for the clothing of both men and women. In general, women's clothing tends to be more elaborately and colorfully embroidered than that of men.

Source: Afghan Dress

<https://www.trc-leiden.nl/trc-digital-exhibition/index.php/afghan-dress/item/82-afghan-embroidery>

27. Water/Nuts/Fruit Bowl

This is a traditional water bowl, made of silver-plated copper. The product relates to an old era, when in those days craftsmen used to prepare antiques from pure Gold and Silver. This decorative element is beautifully engraved and embossed. The Afghan people still use these kinds of bowls in rural areas to drink water or store food.



28. Islamic Calligraphy

Islamic calligraphy is the artistic practice of handwriting and calligraphy, based upon the alphabet in the lands sharing a common Islamic cultural heritage. It includes Arabic Calligraphy, Ottoman, and Persian calligraphy. It is known in Arabic as khatt Islami, meaning Islamic line, design, or construction.



The development of Islamic calligraphy is strongly tied to the Muslim holy book Qur'an; chapters and excerpts from the Qur'an are a common text upon which Islamic calligraphy is based. However, Islamic calligraphy is not limited to strictly religious subjects, objects, or spaces. Like all Islamic art, it encompasses a diverse array of works created in a wide variety of contexts.

Abdul Hakim Karimizada is one of just a few artists in the city of Herat in Afghanistan, who are trained in traditional Islamic calligraphy. He recently displayed his work in an exhibition dedicated to themes of peace, love, and unity. Afghanistan hopes to register its form of calligraphy with UNESCO, but there are fears that the centuries-old tradition might be dying out.



This calligraphic hanging scroll displays the spectacular art of Islamic calligraphy.

Source: Ghandhara

<https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghan-calligrapher-keeps-ancient-art-alive-with-his-brush/31028541.html>

Source: Islamic City

<https://www.islamicity.org/covers/islamic-calligraphy/>

Sports

The two most popular sports of Afghanistan are cricket and football. This is not so much of a surprise since Afghanistan has a lot of open areas that are conducive to such sports. But the traditional sport of the Afghan people is what is called Buzkashi.

There are other sports played in Afghanistan like boxing, basketball, and taekwondo, but football is where they seem to excel. During the Taliban regime, the playing of sports had a setback with all sports banned for both men and women. During the US occupation the playing of sports became popular again, and women were participating in sports in greater numbers, too. Unfortunately, since 2021, the Taliban's taking over the country has meant that the playing of sports, for women in particular, is in jeopardy.

Source: Topend Sports

<https://www.topendsports.com/sport/list/buzkashi.htm>

29. Football

The Afghanistan national football is controlled by the Afghanistan Football Federation. Founded in 1922, they played their first international game against India in Kabul in 1941. Afghanistan then joined FIFA in 1948 and the AFC in 1954, as one of the founding members. They play their home games at the Ghazi National Olympic Stadium in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. In 2013, Afghanistan won the 2013 SAFF Championship and earned the "FIFA Fair Play Award." Afghanistan has come close to qualifying for the previous 3 editions of the AFC Asian Cup (2015 AFC Asian Cup, 2019 AFC Asian Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup) but are yet to make their debut.



Source: Afghanistan National Football Team - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan_national_football_team

30. Cricket

The Afghanistan men's national team represents Afghanistan in international cricket. Cricket has been played in Afghanistan since the mid-19th century, but it was only in the early 21st century that the national team began to enjoy success. The Afghanistan Cricket Board was formed in 1995 and became an affiliate member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 2001 and a member of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) in 2003.

After nearly a decade of playing international cricket, on June 22, 2017, at an ICC meeting in London, full ICC Membership (and therefore Test status) was granted to Afghanistan. Alongside Ireland, this took the number of Test cricket playing nations to twelve. It is the first country to ever achieve Full Member status after holding Affiliate Membership in the ICC. The team is ranked 9th in Twenty20 International (T20I) cricket as of January 2021 and holds the world record for the highest ever T20I score, with their score of 278/3 against Ireland at Dehradun on February 23, 2019.

In August 2021, concerns and doubts were raised over the participation of the Afghanistan national cricket team in the future international matches ever since Afghanistan was brought under the control of the Taliban. Concerns were raised over the safety of Afghan national cricketers and their families who were still in Afghanistan during the Taliban takeover on August 15, 2021.

Taliban spokespersons stated that the Taliban would not disrupt the men's cricket team's participation in international matches and that they would allow Afghanistan to play the international cricket matches with other countries.

Source: Afghanistan National Football Team - Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan_national_cricket_team

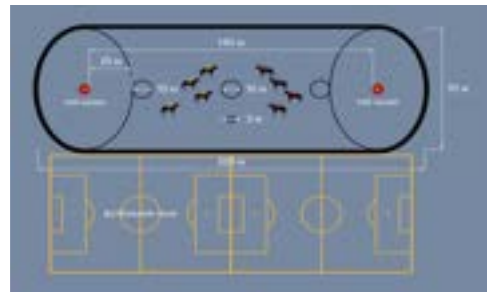


31. Buzkashi

Buzkashi, which is also called *kokpar* or *kokboru*, is a sport in which riders on horses attempt to drag a goat carcass toward the goal. Buzkashi is played around Central Asia, usually in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and also Iran. It is the national sport of Afghanistan.

The riders usually wear heavy clothing and head protection to protect themselves from whips and boots. As per the Afghan Olympic Federation, the game is played on a field with a square layout, which is 400 meters on each side. Each team should have 10 riders each, but only five riders can play each half.

The game lasts around 90 minutes with 45 minutes each half, with a 15-minute break in between. The game is supervised by a referee. Sometimes, the games can last for several days.



Source: Topend Sports

<https://www.topendsports.com/sport/list/buzkashi.htm>

Photographs: Anna Huix

<https://www.wired.com/story/knock-around-goat-carcass-with-buzkashi-players/>

Children's Games

32. Pebble Tossing - Sangchil Baazi

This game involves tossing a small pebble (*sangchil*) into the air and grabbing another pebble from the ground without losing the pebble that was tossed into the air. The game gets more complicated as more pebbles are then required to be picked up from the ground as one is tossed. After one pebble, an attempt is made to pick up 2 at one time, then 3, and so on. Usually, the game is played with 5 pebbles at a time. Whoever is able to pick up the most pebbles is the winner.



Source: Kids' Games

<https://www.afghan-web.com/games/kids-games/>

33. Kite Flying - Gudi-paran Baazi

When literally translated, *gudiparaan baazi* comes to “flying doll game”. However, it is really kite fighting. While this game is mostly played by kids, many adults participate in it as well.

Kids (many times on roof tops) fly their kites with the goal of cutting their opponent's kite string. The string is no ordinary kite string – an adhesive mixed with rice and sharp grounded glass is applied to it. Leather gloves or a piece of leather is used to prevent the flyer from getting their fingers cut by the sharp glass. All sorts of strategies are used during the actual fight, and the undefeated champion is usually referred to as the Sharti. Many kids sometimes patiently wait till one kite loses so they can follow the losing kite and capture it. Gudiparaan baazi was one of those games that were banned during the rule of the Taliban.



Source: Afghan Kite Flying

<http://starwinds.net/KiteFlying/afghan-kite-flying>

34. Tushla Baazi with Marbles

As noted above, this is a game where there are a lot of variations. However, a simple form is played as such: A circle is drawn on the ground with a straight line through the center. Both players line up the same number of marbles on the line.



Each player tries to knock off the other player's marble by striking it with one of their marbles. If successful, he/she collects the other player's marble. Whoever has the greatest number of collected marbles wins the game.

This game can also be played with sheep or goat knuckle-bones instead of marbles. When bones are used, the game is called *bujal baazi*.

Source: Kids' Games

<https://www.afghan-web.com/games/kids-games/>

Music

The music of Afghanistan comprises many varieties of classical music, folk music, and modern popular music. Afghanistan has a rich musical heritage and features a mix of Persian melodies, Indian compositional principles, and sounds from ethnic groups such as the Pashtuns, Tajiks and Hazaras. Instruments used range from Indian *tablas* (drums) to long-necked lutes.

Afghanistan's classical music is closely related to Hindustani classical music while sourcing much of its lyrics directly from classical Persian poetry such as Mawlana Balkhi (Rumi) and the Iranian tradition indigenous to central Asia. Lyrics throughout most of Afghanistan are typically in Dari (Persian) and Pashto. The multi-ethnic city of Kabul has long been the regional cultural capital, but outsiders have tended to focus on the city of Herat, which is home to traditions more closely related to Iranian music than in the rest of the country.

For decades, Afghanistan has experienced war and the intransigence of fundamentalists. After the Taliban reclaimed power, music was banned. Many musicians were forced to stop playing music or go into exile. For example, the Afghanistan National Institute of Music moved to Lisbon, Portugal.

Source: Music of Afghanistan

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Afghanistan

35. The Afghan Rubab

The Rubab is the national instrument of Afghanistan. Its origins date back from the 7th Century C.E. and its roots from Central Afghanistan. It is also known as “the Lion of Instruments.” It is mainly played by Afghan, Pashtun, Tajik, Kashmiri, and Persian classical musicians. The rubab was usually accompanied by the *tabla* drum pair, introduced to the Kabul court in the mid-19th century by musicians such as Gamu Khan, from Kasur, near Lahore in Pakistan.



The Rubab is a double chambered lute, and its body is carved out of a single piece of wood, with a membrane covering the hollow bowl of the sound-chamber, upon which the bridge is positioned. It has three melody strings tuned in fourths, 4 Frets, three drone strings and 15 sympathetic strings. The instrument is made from the trunk of a mulberry tree, or out of Rose wood. The Afghan Rubab is featured in many Classical and traditional folk and melodies and is often referred to by Afghan and Persian Sufi poets in their poems especially notable to mention is Rumi.

Homayoun Sakhi is an Afghan-born player of the Afghan Rubab, an instrument of which he is considered a master. Since moving to the United States, he has collaborated with the Kronos Quartet and others. Sakhi was born in 1976 in Kabul into a family of musicians; he learned to play the rubab from his father. He moved to the United States in 2002 and lives in Fremont, California, where he teaches Afghan music at a children's school he opened. Sakhi's music is heard on two CDs from Smithsonian Folkways: *The Art of the Afghan Rubab: Music of Central Asia Vol. 3* (2006), a solo album, and *Rainbow: Music of Central Asia Vol. 8* (2010), a collaboration with the Kronos Quartet and others.



Source: Voice of Afghanistan

<http://www.voicesofafghanistan.com/instruments-musical-history/>

Cuisine

Afghan cuisine is influenced by Persian, Central Asian and Indian cuisines due to Afghanistan's proximity and cultural ties. The cuisine is mainly based on Afghanistan's main crops, such as wheat, maize, barley, and rice. Accompanying these staple grains are native fruits, vegetables, and dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, whey, pomegranates, grapes, and sweet melons. Most of the people's diet revolve around rice-based dishes, while naan bread is consumed with most meals. Tea is generally consumed daily in large quantities and is a major part of hospitality. The culinary specialties reflect the nation's ethnic and geographic diversity. The national dish of Afghanistan is Kabuli Pulao, a rice dish cooked with raisins, carrots, nuts and lamb or beef.

The cuisine of Afghanistan has elements from various places, for example chilies or garam masala from India, coriander and mint from Iran, dumplings and noodles from Uzbekistan and China, kebabs from Turkey and Arabia, and pulao from Central Asia. The similarities can be seen in the use of spices like cumin and cinnamon (as in Indian cuisine), green cardamom flavors (as in Chinese tea), and kebabs and yoghurts (as in Turkish and Arabic cuisines).

Afghan food is well spiced but neither too hot nor pungent, which contributes to the wonderful medley of flavors. Meals are eaten with the right hand, using flat crusty bread as a scoop. Bread which is called *naan* is eaten with just about everything.

Source: Afghan Cuisine

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_cuisine

36. Popular Afghan Food Posters

Kabuli Pulao

Kabuli pulao is quite easy to make as it only consists of a handful of ingredients. It is known as the national dish of Afghanistan because of its popularity. It is a slow-cooked pulao that includes lamb and mutton along with meat stock called yakhni.

This rice dish requires minimum spices and is cooked in lamb fat for flavor. It is later garnished with raisins and shredded carrots for a touch of sweetness. It is a traditional dish that is a part of every household menu and religious gathering in Afghanistan.



Afghan Kabab

Afghan Kebab is known as one of the best dishes you will ever taste. It tastes delicious. Kebabs are made differently all over the world, but Afghani kebabs are among the best.

Lamb/goat meat plays a major role in the ingredients, and the red chili powder in it spices things up, so people always come back for more. Afghan kebabs can accompany other main dishes.



Mantu

Mantu is a well-known dish from Afghanistan. It is loved for its dumpling-like appearance and mouthwatering taste. The mantus are a pastry wrapper stuffed with spiced lamb. They can be cooked in two different ways: boiled or steamed.

They are commonly topped with yoghurt and garlic, to amp up the presentation. The best part is that you can make them as big as you like and enjoy them with a wide variety of sauces.



Bolani

Bolani is a type of flatbread, commonly baked or fried. It is stuffed with different fillings, either a mixture of veggies or meat, or you can always eat it simply with yoghurt. It is usually eaten as a side dish or an appetizer, and is very common at birthdays, engagement parties, or holidays.

It can be served with either yoghurt or mint yoghurt, but *doogh*, a special drink like butter milk, is the most demanded side for bolani. The best part about this dish is that it can be eaten in a variety of ways: filling or no filling, or with different kinds of sauces.



Firnee

Firnee is a traditional Afghan dessert that is believed to have originated in India, where it is known as phirni. Afghan firnee is usually made with cornstarch (instead of ground rice in the Indian version) that is cooked in a mixture of milk and sugar, and just like Indian phirni, it is typically flavored with aromatic spices such as cardamom, saffron, and rose water.



The traditional version calls for sprinkling the dessert with finely ground pistachios, but these days it is often enriched with pieces of seasonal fruit, dried fruit, or coconut flakes. Similarly, to Indian phirni, Afghan firnee is also traditionally prepared for special events and festivities such as weddings and religious holidays like Ramadan and Eid.

Haft Mewa

Haft mewa is almost like a fruit salad but made with seven different types of dried fruits and nuts mixed and served in a special syrup.

The ingredients are raisins, senjed, pistachios, hazelnuts, prunes, walnuts or almonds, and plums. This sweet and healthy salad is Afghanistan's most popular dessert due to the overload of nutrients and its exceptional taste.



Roghani Naan

Roghani naan is a soft and fluffy flatbread that is made in a hot tandoor (clay oven). When cooked, the top is rubbed with butter to give it a deliciously shiny gloss.

This naan is mostly eaten on special occasions along with a variety of BBQ foods. Roghani naan's pillow-like texture makes everyone's heart melt.



Afghani Burger

Burgers are the most popular street food all over the world and Afghani burgers really do top the list. They may look like rolls, but they have the quality and taste of a first-rate burger.

Minced meat is cooked with a creamy tomato sauce for the classic burger taste. At many street stalls, you can watch the whole thing being cooked, from beginning to end, so you know what's going into your burger.



Source: Most Popular Afghani Dishes

<https://www.chefspencil.com/most-popular-afghani-dishes/>

Source: Taste Atlas

<https://www.tasteatlas.com/most-popular-desserts-in-afghanistan>

37. Collage of Afghan Food and Fruits Stamps - Posters

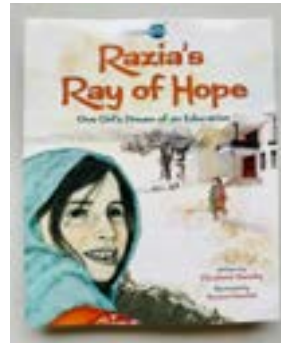
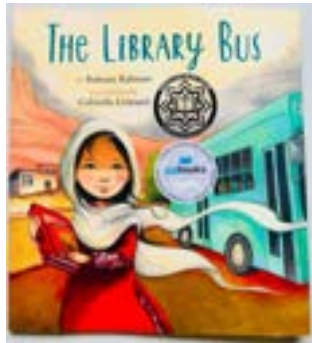
Afghanistan has a wide varying landscape allowing for many different crops. Afghan cuisine is based on cereals like wheat, maize, barley, and rice, which are the nation's chief crops.

Afghans do not eat spicy food like the neighboring Pakistanis. Fresh and dried fruits is the most important part of Afghan diet. Afghanistan is well known for its fine fruits, especially pomegranates, grapes, and its extra-sweet jumbo-size melons. These are some old Afghan stamps with fruits' pictures of 1961.



38. Afghanistan Children's Books

These children's books bring Afghan stories and voices to life. While they present a variety of themes and settings, they capture the resilience, spirit, and warmth of the Afghan people, especially Afghan children. These books can be used to support school and community discussions of current events as they develop in Afghanistan.



Quick Artifact Reference

1. Flag of Afghanistan



2. Map of Afghanistan



3. Cultural Landscape and Archeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley - Poster



4. Buddhas of Bamiyan - Poster



5. National Museum of Afghanistan - Poster



6. The Great Mosque of Herat



7. Herat Citadel - Poster



8. Babur's Garden - Poster



9. Band-e Amir National Park - Poster



10. Afghan Girl's Portrait



11. Tesbih - Islamic Prayer Beads



12. Pakol Hat



13. Prayer Rug



14. Pashto Alphabet Chart and Readers



15. Dari Alphabet Chart and Readers



16. Women's Clothing



17. Women's Head & Body Covering Attire - Hijab



18. Women's shoes - Paizar or Payzor



19. Afghan Kuchi Jewelry



20. Men's Clothing



21. Men's Head Covering



22. Men's shoes - Peshawari Sandal (*chappal*)



23. Afghan Afghani



24. Afghan Rug



25. Afghan Hand Woven & Beaded Handbag



26. Hand Embroidered Wall Hangings



27. Water/Nuts/Fruit Bowl



28. Islamic Calligraphy



29. Football



30. Cricket Bat, Ball and Shirt



31. Buzkashi - Poster



32. Pebble Tossing and Afghan Children Games - Poster



33. Kite



34. Tushla Baazi - Marbles



35. The Afghan Rubab Music CD



36. Popular Afghan Food Posters



37. Collage of Afghan Food and Fruits Stamps - Posters



38. Afghanistan Children's Books

