



SHALAMAR *Gardens*

LAHORE

A World Heritage Site

The Shalamar Gardens are located on the Grand Trunk Road, about 8 kilometers northeast of old Lahore. Built in 1641-2 by Emperor Shah Jahan, the gardens reflect Persian and medieval Islamic garden traditions, showcasing the pinnacle of Mughal artistic expression. They exemplify Mughal landscape architecture with their symmetrical parterres, canals, fountains, and lush greenery. The gardens feature calm reflecting pools, cascades, cypresses, rose bushes, and open-fronted pavilions, creating a cool and pleasant atmosphere. The construction was overseen by Ali Mardan Khan, the Governor of Punjab, with Khalil Ullah Khan supervising and Fazil Khan handling building construction, while Jani Mimar designed the layout.



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68-Trade Centre Block, M.A Johar Town, Lahore, Pakistan. UAN: (042) 111 111 042 | www.tdcp.gop.pk





The Emperor Shah Jahan visited the newly completed garden on October 31, 1642 with guests from Persia and Turkey “who were astonished to see the garden and were of the opinion that there is no garden on the face of earth as beautiful as this garden” (Lahori). Court chroniclers Inayat Khan and Kamboh enthusiastically reported the pleasure of the Emperor on examining the “paradise-like terraces”, gardens and the agreeable pavilions which “vied with the heavens in grandeur”. Shalamar Gardens became a favourite halting place and a royal camping ground on the route to Kashmir.

To irrigate the Shalamar Gardens, a canal named "Shah Nahar" (Royal Canal) was constructed, drawing water from the Ravi River at Rajpur (Madhopur), about one hundred miles northeast of Lahore. Recognizing its outstanding universal value, UNESCO declared the Shalamar Gardens a World Heritage cultural site in 1981.

The gardens are laid out in three terraces, descending from south to north, and are enclosed by a high wall with serrated battlements. The terraces are named after the types of plants that thrived there. The upper and lower terraces are square and equal in size (874 feet per side), while the middle terrace is a rectangle measuring 874 by 254 feet.

UPPER TERRACE:

The upper terrace of the Shalamar Gardens, named "Farah Bakhsh," was exclusively for the royal family, known as "Haram-e-Shahi." This terrace featured only flowers and sweet-scented shrubs. The main buildings on this terrace include:

1. Aramgah
2. Jharoka-e-Daulat Khana-e-Khas-o-Am
3. Naqqar-Khana
4. Khawabgah Begum Sahib
5. Aiwan or Grand Hall
6. Corner Burjs (towers)



MIDDLE TERRACE

The middle terrace of the Shalamar Gardens, known as "Faiz Bakhsh," was planted with fruit trees and seasonal flowers. This terrace features four pavilions and garden parterres symmetrically arranged around a central tank, with a throne on the southern side. The northern pavilions, called Sawan Bhadon, enclose a recessed area known as Chini Khana, filled with niches for lamps. Additionally, a royal bath complex, the Shahi Hammam, is set into the eastern peripheral wall.

KEY BUILDINGS ON THIS TERRACE INCLUDE:

1. Hammam (Royal Bath)
2. Mahtabi (Moonlit Pavilion)
3. Red Sandstone Pavilions
4. Throne
5. Sawan Bhadon or Deepmala

LOWEST TERRACE

This terrace, named "Hayat Bakhsh," was planted with fruit and shady trees. The following buildings are located on this terrace:

1. The Magnificent Gateways
2. Daulat Khana-e-Khas-o-Am

