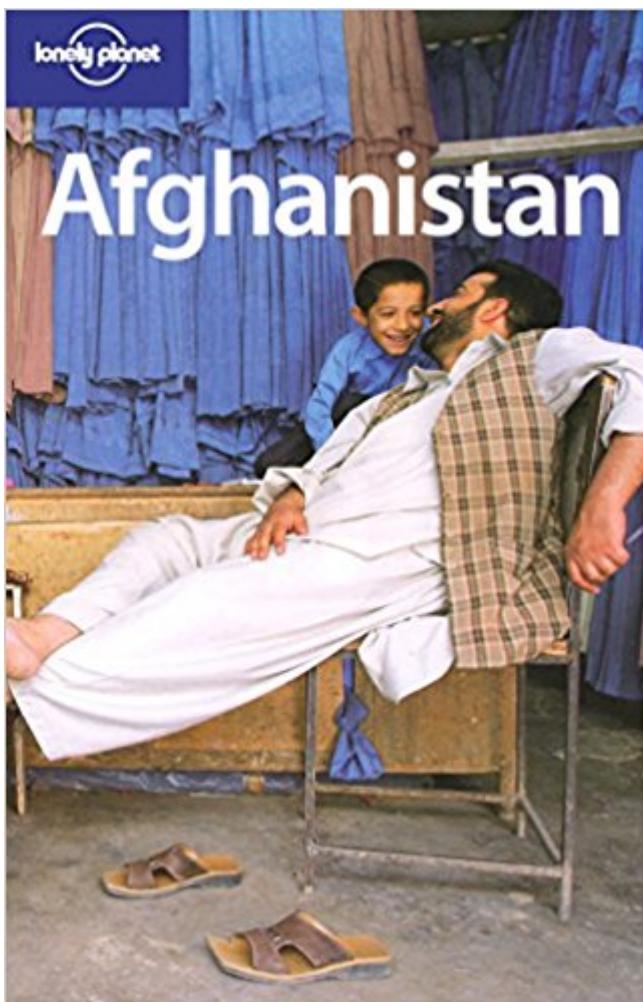


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# **Lonely Planet Afghanistan (Lonely Planet Travel Guides) (Country Travel Guide)**



## **Synopsis**

Discover AfghanistanBlink as you emerge from the cliffs at the top of one of Bamiyan's enormous Buddha niches. Stop pedalling for a moment and drift in your swan-shaped pedalo on the waters of Band-e Amir. Utter a great smoking sigh of contentment as you puff on a sheesha at Mirwais Shandaiz. In This Guide: Chapters on working and safety in Afghanistan, with advice from resident expats. Specialist contributors write on journalism, women, and trekking in the Wakhan and the Afghan Pamir. Lonely Planet founder Tony Wheeler reflects on travel to Afghanistan over the decades.

## **Book Information**

Series: Country Travel Guide

Paperback: 244 pages

Publisher: Lonely Planet; 1 edition (August 15, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1740596420

ISBN-13: 978-1740596428

Product Dimensions: 7.8 x 5.1 x 0.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.5 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #905,105 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in Books > Travel > Asia > Afghanistan #286 in Books > Travel > Middle East > General #801 in Books > Travel > Asia > General

## **Customer Reviews**

"This is not the typical guidebook for the typical tourist; it is meant for... armchair travelers and the few independent ones who are up for the challenge." --New York Times, August 26, 2007

Who We Are At Lonely Planet, we see our job as inspiring and enabling travelers to connect with the world for their own benefit and for the benefit of the world at large. What We Do \* We offer travelers the world's richest travel advice, informed by the collective wisdom of over 350 Lonely Planet authors living in 37 countries and fluent in 70 languages. \* We are relentless in finding the special, the unique and the different for travellers wherever they are. \* When we update our guidebooks, we check every listing, in person, every time. \* We always offer the trusted filter for those who are curious, open minded and independent. \* We challenge our growing community of

travelers; leading debate and discussion about travel and the world. \* We tell it like it is without fear or favor in service of the travelers; not clouded by any other motive. What We Believe We believe that travel leads to a deeper cultural understanding and compassion and therefore a better world.

I realize that to write a guidebook for a war zone is a difficult endeavor, a bit like painting lane dividers across a swamp. The historic references are excellent but things pretty much are in constant and often dangerous flux from thereon. I did extensive research, as well as consulted, and contributed to, the lonely planet thorntree forum. Even to NGOs and members of Blackwater, and still ended up with erroneous information. I ended up, based on my own research (more on my website: cosmic-pearl.com) mostly finding my own accommodations, although, when arriving in the dark of night at Mazar-e-Sharif, at an airport under construction, things were getting pretty shakey and all I had was one lonely planet reference with just a name, but no phone number - I added that info also on my website. The situation anywhere in Afghanistan, as we once again saw recently, can change overnight from benign to extremely dangerous. I would say, take the books with you, one or two, and cautiously, if you feel you must go, dive in. I entered Afghanistan from Tajikistan, where I got my Afghan visa and on my website explain how that is to be accomplished. You can get a visa for Tajikistan at the airport, so, you really need no visa ahead of time for either. In the end I will say, do your homework, read, listen, and read some more, be careful, be alert, take a couple of books for the historical context, and then enjoy the experience and stay out of known battlefields. No trip is worth anything if you don't come back to talk about it. While I was there, the US embassy had just been attacked, two German NGOs were massacred in the mountains, not far from the Kabul-Mazar highway, doing a little hike in the mountains, and deep in the Panshjir Valley, a Taliban attack occurred. And remember this, all you read is old information, and much of what you get back, even from people who are currently visiting Afghanistan, even on the thorntree forum, is sensationalized (lies) or bad or useless advice for whatever reason. I recall someone saying that wearing no vest or wearing a ballcap, was like wearing a pink bunny suit in public, I forget the exact idiotic terminology used, also, that it was highly recommended to find local dress to wear, and some other moron, not even in Afghanistan at the time, agreed to all of that, probably making himself seem important. Another was scared to take photos, and he was an ethnic Pakistani, living in England, able to blend right in. All nonsense. Just be discreet when taking pictures, especially when taking pictures of women. I saw Afghans in jeans and shirts and Afghans not wearing vests, more often, though, with full suit jackets over their Khamis, and I saw them wearing ballcaps too. It doesn't matter what you wear, as long as you don't wear shorts as a man, and are pretty much covered from the neck down,

as a woman, and depending on location, have your hair covered as well. I usually, but not always, did wear a tactical vest, but for practical reasons. Remember, you are always instantly recognized as a foreigner and can never blend in. Yet useful information, such as what to do when you arrive at the Kabul airport was not talked about, until I mentioned it on the forum.

I love the Lonely Planet guidebooks. Of all of the travel guidebooks they are very well researched and well written for those at any level. These books not only tell you what there is to see in these countries, but places to eat and stay. What I really love is that they also tell you about the Dangers and Annoyances that one would encounter in these countries or regions when traveling there. I am interested to see that Afghanistan has become safe to the point that Lonely Planets has published a travel guide for the whole country. Prior to 9/11 Afghanistan was part of the LP Guide for Central Asia. Further foreigners were advised not to travel there because the nation was awash in land mines and booby traps and one's safety could not be guaranteed.

My husband loved it.

When you consider Afghanistan as a complex environment, ravaged by war the last 30 years and still experiencing conflict today, this book makes a good attempt at covering the need to know. I would keep it purely as a guide and remember Afghanistan is a constantly changing environment - particularly the security risks so do some research as well!

...this after just getting back from Afghanistan ...as a tourist. Take everything in this book with a grain of salt. It's a fast moving country and to try and list "tourist" sites, places to stay, and places to eat could be potentially deadly. Good background info read before you go, definitely, but used as a "guide" ...good luck. Left mine at the Serena in Kabul (in the library if you need one while you're there). The first LP guide which really lent credence to the "Lonely Liar" reputation LP has around the world. One star because, honestly, LP should not be trying to put out a guide to a country in this kind of shape which is changing so dramatically and quickly. The book was probably outdated before it even hit the shelves. But hey, so what if people read it, get the wrong idea and get killed there, as long as they make money, right?

In preparation for a military deployment to the country I had been doing extensive reading on all aspects of Afghanistan, which can get depressing. So I picked up the book in the hopes of getting a

current, positive view of the country by someone with first-hand knowledge and a appreciation for the culture, and was not disappointed. If you are looking for the fastest way to get your head around its complicated history, the first 60 pages hits all the critical events neatly and is probably the best short history I've come across. As someone not planning on utilizing the actual travel information, the rest of the book serves as a good introduction to the various regions and major cities and gives you an appreciation for the geospatial relationships within and the layout of the country, its topography, and the general flow of its cities. The traveler specific information (transportation, lodging, food, costs, etc) seem very detailed and complete, with many options per city and reviews, addresses, phone etc for each. Seems like it would be very usable to a traveler. Throughout it ties in cultural as it applies to the modern westerner and by the end you'll have a pretty good frame of reference for further study. Certainly a must for anyone visiting as a tourist (but remember the security situation is quite different now, as the book also warns), and I think also an important read for the soldier that can give you the quick look at modern Afghanistan and also its history from a perspective we're generally not provided.

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