

Wagah border

Location:

28km from Amritsar, Wagah Border is located 475km from Delhi.

About:

The ceremonial border is the only border that crosses India and Pakistan from the cities of Amritsar and Lahore respectively. It is an elaborated structure of buildings, barriers and roads on either side. There is an open air theater made for people watch; "Beating the Retreat Ceremony". With roars and cheers on both the sides, the experience of its view is hair raising.

The Retreat ceremony held here is an evening theater for every traveller visiting Wagah Border. The show down ritual observed here is very interesting to watch. With soldiers tapping their foot on the ground and marching at their best, the idea is to let down other side.

This task is executed with perfect use of thumbs and gestures. The way the doors are banged on each others face reflects hight of anger and hatred fro each other. You will be shocked to see how one can kill other without even touching him. The gestures and body language do it all.

This half an hour ceremony is a matter of pride and prestige for the armed forces of both the countries. The guards at the border on the both side dress up to the mark and try make loudest salute to the flag of one's nation.

Although border opens from 10am to 04pm, the flag down ceremony starts at 04:30pm and ends with national anthem at 05:00pm . The view of the ceremony is hair raising and just imagine, two steps ahead and you are in Pakistan!

The Wagah border, often called the "Berlin wall of Asia", is a ceremonial border on the India–Pakistan Border where each evening there is a retreat ceremony called 'lowering of the flags', which has been held since 1959. At that time there is an energetic parade by the Border Security Force (B.S.F) of India and the Pakistan Rangers soldiers. It may appear slightly aggressive and even hostile to foreigners. Troops of each country put on a show in their uniforms with their colorful turbans. Border officials from the two countries sometimes walk over to the offices on the other side for day to day affairs. The happenings at this border post have been a barometer of the India-Pakistan relations over the years.

Samjhauta Express, the train service between Lahore and Delhi, plies twice a week from Attari railway station, 5 km from Wagah. The National Highway 1 of India starts from Wagah Border, and is the transit point for the Delhi–Lahore Bus service operating within the Punjab between Amritsar and Lahore, which was started in 2004 as relations between the two countries

improved.

History

During British rule the village was part of the Lahore Division of British Punjab. In 1947 the division, like the village, was split between India and Pakistan.

Porters carrying goods across Wagah border

Since independence in 1947, porters have been carrying goods across the Wagah border, which had been the only road link between the two nations, before the opening of Aman Setu in Kashmir for the start of the Srinagar–Muzaffarabad Bus in 1999.

On August 14–15, 2001, the respective Independence days of Pakistan and India, the candle-lighting ceremony at the Wagah border, in which 40,000 Pakistani citizens and 15,000 Indian citizens took part, was seen as a reflection of the changing public mood over India-Pakistan reconciliation; such candlelight vigils and the yearly 'Midnight Peace Festivals' were also reported in subsequent years.

There have been many calls for the opening up of Wagah border to promote Indo-Pak trade through increased transport between India and Pakistan. In March 2005, a delegation of the Indian Border Security Force met the Pakistan Rangers at the Wagah border to discuss the border issue after three years since the 2001–2002 India–Pakistan standoff.

In May 2005, Pakistan allowed the import of five specified food items, free of tax via Wagah border to tide over shortages in the domestic market; eventually, in an unprecedented move, on 1 October 2006, trucks carrying goods crossed the Wagah border for the first time since the independence of Pakistan and India over 60 years ago. The 1,400 Pakistani and 1,300 Indian porters employed till then were employed in unloading lorries and trucks, with this the bi-lateral arrangement which accounted for \$1.3 billion (£650 million) a year in trade in 2007 and was expected to exceed \$10 billion by 2010. The trade has further improved since then through the Wagah post, despite the ups and downs of Indo-Pak relations.[20]
Audience at the evening ceremony, Wagah border (November 2008).

With over 8000 people visiting the border on an average day just on the Indian side, governments have started developing Wagah as a tourist destination, improving tourist and custom facilities. The Indian government plans to develop a global tourist complex at the Wagah-Attari border, which lies 30 km away from Amritsar.

As the relations between the two nations improved, the joint talks to tone down the sunset ceremony were held between BSF and Pakistan rangers, and the two later started "reorienting" their personnel involved in the ceremony, effects of which were seen by November 2006, when the evening ceremony at the border was considerably less aggressive than in previous decades on both sides.

In July 2010, as part of a move initiated by India, both countries agreed to tone down the aggressiveness exhibited by soldiers during the gate closing ceremony. This was owing to the fact that the indian soldiers hurt their feet and knees performing the goose-stepping every day