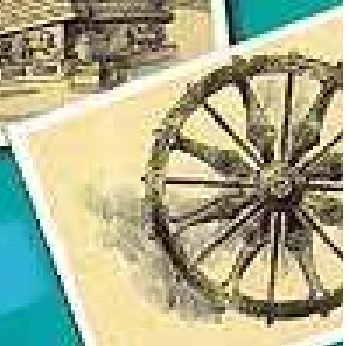
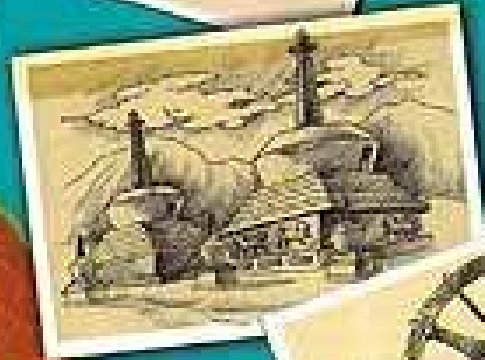
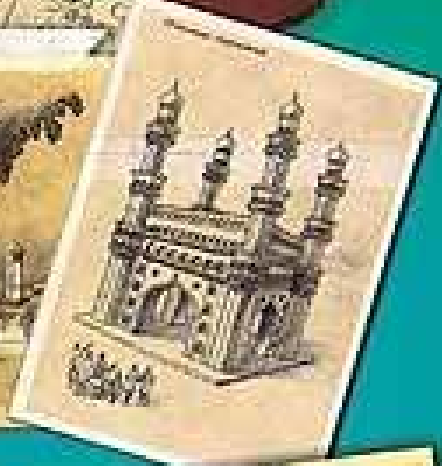
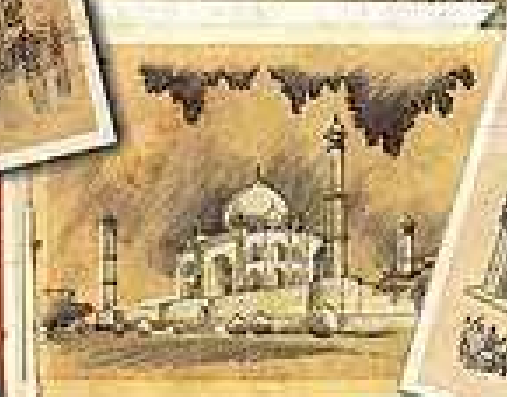




MONUMENTS OF INDIA



Agra Fort

Interesting Facts: Agra Fort won the 'Aga Khan Award for Architecture' in the year 2004. Indian Post issued a Stamp to commemorate the Aga Khan Award on 28th November 2004.

Agra Fort, situated on the banks of River Yamuna, dates back to the 16th century. Mughal Emperor Akbar laid down the foundation of the fort, in the year 1565. As many as 4000 builders were involved in the construction of Agra Fort for a period of eight years and completed it in 1573. Agra Red Fort has been built in the shape of a crescent, which is flattened on the east with a long wall that faces River Yamuna. Built out of red sandstone, the fort lies 2 km to the northwest of the magnificent Taj Mahal.



Location: Agra, Uttar Pradesh

Founded by: Emperor Akbar

Time of Construction: 1565 to 1573

The Red Fort of Agra stands enclosed within massive double walls, which rise to a height of 69 ft and have a circumference of 2.5 km. The walls have two entry gates, known as the Delhi Gate and the Lahore Gate or Amar Singh Gate. The Delhi Gate initially provided entrance to the fort and led to the inner portal, called the Hathi Pol or Elephant Gate. Encircled by a moat, Agra fort has a number of buildings within its complex and is a city within itself. There are a number of palaces inside the fort complex, along with numerous splendid mosques.

Presently, entrance to the fort has been limited to the Amar Singh Gate only. However, the general public is granted access from the southern part of the Agra Fort, which provides admission to almost all the buildings. Of the numerous structures inside the fort complex, the most popular ones are Jehangir Mahal, Khas Mahal, Diwan-i-Aam and Sheesh Mahal.

Shah Jahan was imprisoned in the Agra fort by his son Aurangzeb. Shah Jahan spent his last days in the Musamman Burj of the Agra fort. The Musamman Burj is located on the left of the Khas Mahal. It is a beautiful octagonal tower with an open pavilion. With its openness, elevation and the benefit of cool evening breezes flowing in off the Yamuna River. From the Musamman Burj one has the best view of the Taj Mahal.

Jehangir Mahal

On entering the Agra Red Fort through the Amar Singh Gate, the first building one comes across is the Jehangir Mahal. The mahal or palace stands at the end of a lawn and was intended to serve as the residence of Akbar's son, Jehangir. It holds the distinction of being the largest private residence in the fort and has been built as per a blend of Hindu and Central Asian architecture. The inner courtyard has a two-story facade of beautiful halls with exceptional carvings. The verandah on the eastern front has slender pillars and faces the Yamuna.

Khas Mahal

A white marble monument, Khas Mahal was built by Shah Jahan in 1637. It has been built as per Islamic-Persian architecture and has three pavilions, along with a magnificent fountain. Two of the pavilions are golden in color, out of which one is believed to be adorned with gold leaf.

Musamman Burj

Musamman Burj lies to the left of the Khas Mahal and is an octagonal tower with an open pavilion. Shah Jahan got this tower built for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Musamman tower is made of marble lattices and is adorned with a marble dome. There is also a verandah, with a carved fountain in the center. It was here that Shah Jahan spent the last few years of his life, after being captured by his son Aurangzeb.

Diwani-i-Khas

Shah Jahan got the Diwan-i-Khas, the hall of private audience, constructed in 1636-37. It was here that he used to receive kings, dignitaries and ambassadors. A three-sided pavilion, it has marble throne terrace, where a pair of thrones have been kept. Presently, general public is not allowed inside the Diwan-i-Khas.

Sheesh Mahal

Sheesh Mahal, the Glass Palace, is situated opposite the Mussaman Burj and below the Diwan-i-Khas. The royal dressing room of the Mughals, this palace has two large halls of equal size and has been inlaid with small mirrors.

Macchhi Bhawan

Macchhi Bhawan, a grand enclosure opposite Diwan-i-Khas, was used for harem functions. The pools and marble fountains, which once adorned the enclosure, were taken by Jat Raja Surajmal to his Deeg palace.

Hammam-i-Shahi

Hammam-i-Shahi, or the Shah Burj, is an apartment that was attached to the residential quarters and served as a summer retreat.

Diwan-i-Aam

Diwan-i-Aam, the hall of public audiences, is a red sandstone monument constructed by Shah Jahan. The emperor used to meet his officials as well as the commoners here only. The famous Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan was kept here only.

Nagina Masjid

Nagina Masjid, the Gem Mosque, was the private mosque of Shah Jahan, with typical cusped arches for the ladies of the court.

Moti Masjid

Moti Masjid, the Pearl Mosque, is a perfectly proportional white marble monument, adorned with three domes.

Ajanta Caves

Ajanta Caves are rock-cut cave monuments, situated near the Aurangabad city of Maharashtra. The caves date back to the 2nd century BC and were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 1983.

The caves of Ajanta are adorned with both paintings as well as sculptures, which are considered to be masterpieces of Buddhist religious art.

Located just outside the Ajintha village of Aurangabad district, the caves lie in a wooded and jagged ravine, which is almost in the shape of a horseshoe.

As per the Archaeological Survey of India, there are twenty-nine caves in toto. Ajanta cave temples were excavated from the southern side of the precipitous scarp, by cutting the ravine. The altitude of the caves varies from 35 to 110 ft, above the bed of the stream. There are a number of viharas (monastic halls of residence) and chaitya grihas (stupa monument halls) inside the Ajanta Caves of India. These viharas and chaityas grihas were cut into the mountain cliffs in two distinct phases.

The first phase of the formation of the caves relates to the time when Hinayana sect of Buddhism was in force. Often referred to as the Lesser Vehicle of Buddhism, the Hinayana Sect believes in the symbolical worship of Lord Buddha. Since the sect is not averse of Buddha statues, one can see a few of them in the caves belonging to the phase of Hinayana sect, namely cave numbers 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15A. Lord Buddha has been enshrined in these caves in the form of a stupa or a mound.

Three centuries later, the second phase of cutting out the caves was carried out on the same site. This phase corresponded with the phase of the Mahayana sect of Buddhism. Mahayana sect is also known as the 'Greater Vehicle of Buddhism'. This sect is more lenient and encourages direct depiction of Lord Buddha. It is believed that the Mahayana caves were founded from 462 to 480 CE. Caves number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 belong to this phase.

Caves 9 and 10, belonging to the Hinayana phase, are chaitya grihas, while those numbered 12, 13, and 15A are viharas. Of the caves belonging to the Mahayana phase, caves 19, 26, and 29 are chaitya grihas, while the rest, numbered 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27 and 28, are viharas. The viharas have varied sizes, with some of them being as much as 52 feet long. Most of them are of a square shape and showcase a wide variety as far as ornamentation and style is concerned.

Some of the viharas have a simple veneer, while some are much more elaborate; some have a porch, while some are without one. The early viharas were more like halls of residence and congregation and did not have shrines. The later ones, however, had shrines in the back walls. The shrines were built to



Location: Aurangabad District, Maharashtra

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site (Since 1983)

Number of Caves: 29

Represent: Hinayana and the Mahayana sects of Buddhism

house the image of the Buddha, often seated in the 'dharmachakrapravartana' mudra i.e., the teaching mudra. The latest caves of Ajanta even have sidewalls, along with the porch. Numerous viharas situated inside the Ajanta cave temples stand adorned with carvings, along with paintings on the walls and the ceilings.

Akbar Tomb

Akbar's tomb is situated in the town of Sikandra, which falls in the suburbs of Agra. The tomb, or the mausoleum, houses the mortal remains of one of the greatest Mughal Emperors of India, Akbar, and was built by him during his own lifetime. However, Akbar's son Jehangir got the monument fully completed by constructing its topmost portion in white marble. Sikandra tomb of Akbar is of a pyramidal shape and has five stories in toto. In the basement is situated the

real cenotaph of the Emperor, while the top floor comprises of the false cenotaph.



Location: Sikandra, near Agra (Uttar Pradesh)

Founded By: Akbar and Jehangir

The architecture of Akbar's tomb represents a blend of different architectural styles. The Islamic style is reflected in its splendid entrance, delicate patterns, admirable jali work, Persian style calligraphy as well as the garden (Charbagh) layout. However, one can also see the influence of the local style of architecture in the use of chhatris (canopies), absence of a dome, tiers of airy pavilions, etc. The same pattern can also be seen in the edifices built by Akbar inside the Agra Fort and the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri.

The entrance to the Akbar tomb is through a gateway in the south, which leads to a large enclosed garden. The gateway stands ornamented with floral and geometrical arabesque embellishments in white color. On each of the corner of the monument is an elegant minaret, made of white marble. The elegance of the calligraphic decoration adorning the gateway is beyond description, while its high central arch is quite simple. The four gardens (Charbagh) lead to the main structure of the tomb.

Apart from the top floor that has been constructed in white marble, the entire monument is made up of red sandstone. Surrounding the entire ground floor of Akbar's tomb, except the center of the southern side, are covered passages. These passages have been divided into many bays, with the help of massive arches and piers. The square stories of the tomb have arcaded verandah, with cloisters and a bunch of cubicle on all the sides. In the second story, a few of the kiosks have marble pyramidal roofs also.

The other kiosks in the second story stand adorned with cupolas. Each angle at the third story has a small square room. The topmost story, made entirely of white marble, has a square court that has been left open to the sky. Encircling the central courtyard, which stands divided into bays, are slender arches and piers. There is also a square platform in the center of the courtyard. It is on this platform that the white marble cenotaph has been laid. The cenotaph has been adorned with arabesque and floral pattern carvings.

Akshardham Gandhinagar

Akshardham Temple is situated in the Gandhinagar district of Gujarat, which stands bounded by Ahmedabad city in the southwest. One of the largest temples of Gujarat, Akshardham is a place where you can find a rare amalgamation of devotion, art, architecture, education, exhibitions and research. The temple has been constructed under the aegis of Bochasanwasi Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) of India, which was and is headed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



Akshardham Swaminarayan Temple of Gujarat was inaugurated on 2nd November 1992. The inauguration ceremony of the temple coincided with the centenary celebrations of Yogiji Maharaj and was conducted by Pramukh Swami Maharaj only. Almost all the tourists coming to Ahmedabad make it a point to visit the Akshardham Temple situated nearby. The temple is a carved stone edifice, which stands surrounded by expansive gardens. Akshardham Temple enshrines a seven-foot high, gold-leafed, idol of Lord Swaminarayan.

Location: Gandhinagar, near Ahmedabad (Gujarat)
Founded By: Bochasanwasi Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha
Inaugurated On: 2nd November 1992
Dedicated To: Lord Swaminarayan

Six thousand tonnes of pink sandstone were used in the construction of the monument. Akshardham Temple of Gujarat stands tall at a height of 108 feet and is 240 feet in length and 131 feet in width. The colonnade around the monument measures 1,751 feet (534 meters) in length. The garden surrounding the sanctum sanctorum is known as Sahajanand Van and represents a unique blend of contemplative garden and children's park. There is a marble sculpture of Lord Swaminarayan inside the garden also.

Sahajanand Van also comprises of a number of cultural spots, rides and games for children, an herbal garden, a lake and a waterfall. Akshardham temple complex also has a research center, known as the Akshardham Center for Applied Research in Social Harmony (AARSH). The research center has facilities like an extensive library, study stations and archives, but only enlisted scholars can enter the library and make use of its facilities. The first floor of the temple has a museum, which has a gallery with a collection of over 500 'parahansas'.

Other items displayed inside the temple complex include the letter to Swaminarayan's guru, Ramanand; an art object from an old tree from Chapaya; Swaminarayan's shawl and an image of the Lord on a horse. The exterior galleries serve as the venue for artistic exhibition and offer Chez Integrovision shows, audio-visuals, multi-media and the works of Lord Swaminarayan from the Hindu epics. There are three permanent exhibition halls inside the complex, set up with the aim of educating people on spiritual matters and BAPS movement.

Hall 1 (Sahajanand)

The Sahajanand exhibition is organized in Hall number one and uses imaginative settings and shows to illustrate the life of Lord Swaminarayan. The exhibition showcases 'travel in time' through a video show, a fiber-optics cosmos, miniature recreation of Chhapiya village, three 'sound-n-light' shows, etc.

Hall 2 (Sat-Chit-Anand)

The Sat-Chit-Anand exhibition has a 14-screen multimedia presentation on display. Apart from that, there is "Integrovision", an exposition of Vedic philosophy and of man's search for the eternal truth, "Tunnel of Mirrors", a glass mosaic, and dancing musical fountains.

Hall 3 (Nityanand)

The Nityanand exhibition has walk-through dioramas and fiberglass figures displaying the message of the Upanishads, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Audio-animatronics show; a recreation of the Hastinapur palace (Mahabharata); a recreation of a peaceful Gurukula; compositions of saint-poets and an exposition on 'Harmony of world religions' are the other attractions of the exhibition.

Akshardham Delhi

The Akshardham Temple of Delhi has been built by the Bochasanwasi Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, the same organization that built the Akshardham Temple of Gujarat. The temple is situated in East Delhi area, near the Akshardham Flyover. Spread over an area of 100 acres, it stands adorned with 20,000 statues, floral motifs, arches and exquisitely carved pillars. The construction work on this huge temple complex started in the year 2003 and it took approximately 2 years to complete it fully.



Location: Delhi, Near Noida Mode, NH24

Founded By: Bochasanwasi Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha

Inaugurated On: 7th November 2005

Inaugurated By: Pramukhswami Maharaj

Dedicated To: Lord Swaminarayan

Pramukhswami Maharaj, the head of Bochasanwasi Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, inaugurated Akshardham Temple of New Delhi on 7th December 2005. The inauguration ceremony was also attended by the then President of India, APJ Abdul

Kalam. A visit to the temple is the perfect way to explore the amazing world of Indian culture and get a unique view of the Hindu religion. Bordering the main temple complex are flourishing lawns, which stand adorned with water fountains and carved pavilions.

The grand temple complex is situated on the embankment of the River Yamuna. BAPS society incurred an expenditure of 2 billions on the construction of this magnificent monument. The main building inside the complex rises to a height of 141-ft and enshrines a magnificent statue of Lord Swaminarayan. One can see a marvelous amalgamation of pink stone and pure white marble in the construction of the Akshardham Temple of Delhi. The pink stone symbolizes endless Bhakti (devotion), while the white marble stands for absolute purity & eternal peace.

There are three halls inside the premises of the Akshardham Temple, where exhibitions are organized on a regular basis.

Hall 1 (Sahajanad Pradarshan)

Sahajanad Pradarshan exhibition is organized in hall number one and showcases life like robotics and panoramas. Scenes from Swaminarayan's life, conveying his message of peace and harmony, also form a part of the exhibition.

Hall 2 (Nilkanth Kalyan Yatra)

Hall number 2 has Delhi's first format screen and showcases Nilkanth Kalyan Yatra, the journey of Lord Swaminarayan during his teenage years.

Hall 3 (Sanskriti Vihar)

The Sanskriti Vihar exhibition of hall number three provides you a peek into the 10,000 years of Indian history in just 10 minutes.

One of the major attractions of the Akshardham Temple of New Delhi is the light show at Yagnapurush Kund, India's largest step well. The visitors can enjoy the musical fountain and light show at night only. The temple complex also has a garden called Bharat Upavan (Garden of India), with brilliantly laid-out lawns. It also houses bronze sculptures of some great Indian personalities. Yogi Harday Kamal, a lotus-shaped sunken garden inside the complex, is engraved with quotes from famous personalities, like Shakespeare and Martin Luther King.

Amaravati Stupa

Amaravati is a small town situated in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh, on the embankment of River Krishna. It was the capital of Satavahanas from 2nd century BC to 3rd century AD and is also the excavation site of an ancient Buddhist Stupa, constructed during the rule of Emperor Ashoka. Kushanas of Mathura were the ones to introduce the principles and teachings of Buddhism in Amravati town, near Chennai. Amravati stupa was founded by an emissary of Emperor Ashoka and its construction got completed around 2000 years ago.



Location: Government Museum, Chennai (Madras)

Excavated From: Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh

Founded By: An emissary of Emperor Ashoka

Amravati Stupa illustrates Lord Buddha in a human form and He is shown subduing an elephant. It is taller than the Sanchi stupa and has 95 ft high platforms, extending in the four cardinal directions, along with a huge circular dome. The carved panels of the stupa depict the life story of Lord Buddha. The entire stupa stands adorned with limestone reliefs and freestanding Buddha figures. With the decline of Buddhism in India, the stupa also faced neglect and got buried under rubble.

A 14th century inscription in Sri Lanka mentions that some repairs were made to the stupa. However, it were the European scholars, like Sir Walter Smith, Robert Sewell, James Burgess and Alexander Rea, who excavated the site and discovered the sculptures that once adorned the stupa, which include bas-relief medallions and paneled friezes. Presently, the stupa has been kept in the Government Museum of Chennai.

Amber Fort

Amber Fort is situated on the outskirts of Jaipur, at a distance of 11 km from the city. The fort once served as the ancient citadel of the ruling Kachhawa clan of Rajasthan, before they shifted their capital to the present day Jaipur. The architecture of the Amer Fort Palace reflects a magnificent blend of the Hindu and Mughal architectural styles. The fort boasts of a picturesque setting, amidst charming, jagged hills. The construction work on the Amber fort was started under Raja Man Singh I, in the year 1592.



Location: 11 km from Jaipur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Raja Man Singh I

Completed By: Sawai Jai Singh I

Founded In: 1592

However, the fort could not get fully completed during the lifetime of Raja Man Singh I. It was Sawai Jai Singh I who got the construction work completed entirely. Amber Fort is a red sand stone and white marble monument, which has a magnificent aura. The inner walls of the fort place are adorned with painting scenes with carvings, precious stones and mirror settings. The forefront of the fort has Maota Lake providing the perfect look. The sturdy walls of the Amer Fort Palace were intended to serve as a protection against the attacking enemies.

The fort has a total of four sections, each of them with separate premises. To enter the main area of the fort, one has to either climb up through the grand stairway or else go through the broad aisle on the back of an elephant. The main gate of the fort is known as Surajpol and it leads to Jaleb chowk. The chowk is the main courtyard providing entrance to the stairway that leads to the palace. In the past, this chowk served as the area where returning armies were welcomed and displayed their war earnings to the public.

The entrance of the Amber fort is through the 'Dil-e-Aaram' Garden, which is laid out in the traditional Mughal style. An impressive flight of stairs leads to the 'Diwan-e-Am' (hall of public audience) which has latticed galleries and double row of columns each having a capital in the shape of elephants on the top. To the right are steps that lead to the small Kali Temple. The Kali temple has massive doors made of silver.

Shila Devi Temple (Kali Temple)

Just before the entrance to the Amer Fort Palace, there is a steep aisle and a narrow staircase that leads to the Shila Devi Temple or the Kali Temple. Apart from its mysterious history, the temple is also known for its huge silver lions. The temple is adorned with silver doors, which have a raised relief. As per the legend surrounding the Shila Devi Temple, Maharaja Man Singh I had prayed to the Goddess to ensure his victory over the rulers of Bengal. The Goddess appeared in his dreams and asked him to retrieve Her statue from the sea near Jessore (now in Bangladesh) and enshrine it in a proper temple. The Maharaja

defeated his enemies and as per the orders of the Goddess reclaimed the statue and installed it in the Shila Devi Temple.

Diwan-I-Aam (Hall of Public Audiences)

Diwan-I-Aam, or the hall of public audiences, is situated in the second courtyard of the fort. It was here that the Maharaja used to receive the general public and hear their petitions. Built in the shape of a pavilion, the hall has a double row of columns, each capped by an elephant shape, and a lattice gallery.

Ganesh Pol

Ganesh Pol is a huge and impressive gateway, which is situated to the south of the Diwan-I-Aam. It has been painted with typical Rajasthani motifs and leads to the Charbagh.

Jai Mandir (Hall of Victory)

Jai Mandir, or the hall of victory, is another major attraction of the Amber Fort Palace of Rajasthan. It is known for its inlaid panel and glittering mirror ceiling.

Sukh Niwas

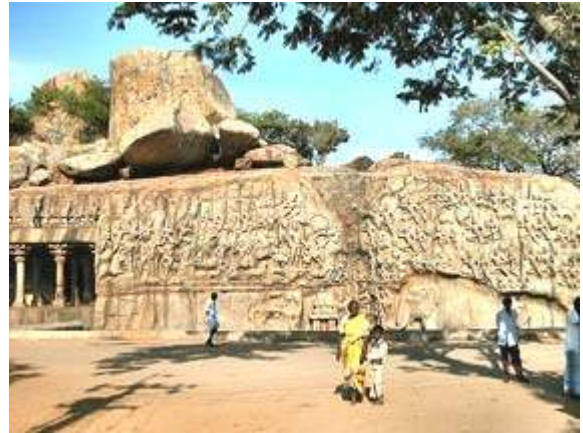
On the other side of the Jai Mandir is Sukh Niwas, the residence of pleasure or pleasurable residence. Adorned with an ivory inlaid sandalwood door, the palace provides a beautiful view of the fort rampart as well as its reflection in the Moata Lake.

Zenana

Zenana is the palace of the women and is situated in the forth courtyard. All the rooms of the Zenana have been connected through a common corridor and are designed in such a way so as to ensure privacy in each room.

Arjuna's Penance

Arjuna's Penance is a massive open-air bas-relief monolith, which dates back to the 7th century. It is situated in the town of Mahabalipuram, at a distance of 58 km from Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu. Standing tall at a height of 43 feet, the Mamallapuram monolith was carved on the face of two huge adjoining boulders, somewhere around the mid-7th century. The length of Arjuna's Penance is around 96 feet and the monolith is also known by the name of 'The Descent of Ganga'.



Location: Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu

Carved In: Mid-7th century

Significance: One of the largest bas-reliefs in the world

Arjuna's Penance is known by two names, as experts disagree on the stories depicted by it. As per one view, the massive rock sculpture has been named after one of the heroes of the great Indian Epic, Mahabharata. It is believed to illustrate an instance from Mahabharata when Arjuna, one of the Pandavas, performed rigorous austerities to get Shiva's weapon and destroy his enemies. The second view is that Arjuna's Penance is a depiction of the incident when King Bhagiratha of India did penance to bring the River Ganges down, from heaven to earth, so as to purify the souls of his ancestors.

Lord Shiva answered his prayers and sent the Ganges down to earth. However, the lord decided to break her fall to earth, by allowing the water to trickle through His hair, to lessen the impact of her fall. It is said that the animals of the whole world became curious of the incident and gathered around the soaking God to witness it. The carvings done on the massive monolith support both the stories. Apart from these incidents, the carvings also depict popular fables from the Hindu Panchatantra books.

The liveliness and naturalism of the sculpted figures stand as proofs of the outstanding skill of their sculptors. Arjunas Penance showcases more than 100 figures of gods and flying celestial creatures, birds and animals, including giant elephants, along with human beings and saints. A natural cleft between the two rocks separates the monolith into two separate halves. It is this cleft that is believed to represent the descent of the Ganges to earth.

The figures of animals and celestial beings carved on Arjuna Penance are shown either facing this cleft or approaching it and generally have their hands folded in adoration. Filling the cleft is a slab, which has been sculpted with male and female nagas (snakes). The hands of the nagas are held together in adoration and an artificial waterfall, fed from a collecting chamber sited above, is located just over it. There is a four-armed deity, probably Lord Shiva, to the left side of the cleft.

The deity is shown holding a weapon in His right hand and His left hand is in the gesture of granting a

blessing. Dwarf ganas (guards and followers of Lord Shiva) have also been shown along with the deity. To the right of the deity and a little below, one can see Arjuna, or Bhagiratha, standing on one leg, in a yoga posture with arms upraised, seeking the blessing of the lord. Underneath this figure, one can see a carved shrine of Lord Vishnu, which has sages, a buck and his doe and a lion seated in the front, along with a few disciples engaged in austerities.

To the left of the shrine are some caves, in which a few animals are shown resting. Apart from these carvings, the lower left portion of the boulder is left largely uncarved. The Upper left portion of the boulder has carvings that depict a mountain, probably Lord Shiva's abode in the Himalayas, where the figures of gods and animals have been blended together. On the right-hand side of the cleft i.e., on the other boulder, numerous celestial beings and animals have been carved.

Of these carvings, the most impressive ones are those that show life-sized elephants protecting their young ones. Just below the elephants are illustrated scenes from the Panchatantra fables, like the story of the cat trying to trick the rats by enacting the posture of penance. Just to the right of these carvings, one can see a low platform, where a group of monkeys have been carved and are seen preening one another and at the same time, playing with and nursing a baby.

Aurangabad Caves

Aurangabad caves are situated on the outskirts of the Aurangabad city of Maharashtra. They lie in a valley, located between the Sihyachal and Satara range of hills, which is irrigated by River Dudhna. There are twelve caves in toto, which are basically categorized into three groups, depending upon their location. The first group of caves consists of cave number 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, the second group comprises of cave number 6, 7, 8 and 9, while the last and the third group is made up of cave number 10, 11 and 12.



Location: Aurangabad, Maharashtra

Founded In: 2nd - 3rd century

The distance between the first and second group of caves is approximately 500 m. The first group of caves is situated on the western side of a hill, while the second group lies on the eastern side of the same hill. The third group of caves, outside the Aurangabad city, is located to the east of the second group. The earliest excavations that were carried out at the site came up with the cave number 1 and 3. Aurangabad caves have been known to date back to somewhere around the 2nd - 3rd century.

The design of the cave number three represents a Chaitya Griha of the Hinayana order of Buddhism. The heterogeneous nature of rock formation in this cave has made it difficult to preserve the caves in a proper manner. Since the rock formation is heterogeneous, the authorities have also not been able to carry out large-scale excavations here. Many portions of the caves, where the rock formations are wobbly, have been left unearthed. Even cave number 1 is an unfinished vihara, with the ceiling of its verandah having fallen down.

Cave number 2 also represents a vihara and has a shrine of Lord Buddha at the rear. The rest of the Aurangabad Caves are usually attributed to the reign of the Kalachuri dynasty. Of all the caves, cave number 7 is the most intricately built and is also quite known for its sculptural ornamentation. The cave has a shrine in the center, along with an outer corridor that runs all around it. There are recesses, at regular intervals, in the corridor. These recesses have been beautifully carved with the images of Buddhist Gods and Goddesses.

The verandah of the cave has a splendid front wall, which stands adorned with magnificent representation of a panel of litany of Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva, on either side of the entrance to the shrine. The litany of Avalokitesvara, found in Aurangabad caves, is even more detailed as well as intricate than the ones found in the Ajanta and Ellora caves. It represents Bodhisattva Padmapani as the 'Savior of Eight Great Perils' (Fire, Theft, Demon, Elephant, Lion, Shipwreck, Snake and Monkey).

Apart from the panel mentioned above, the Aurangabad caves are adorned with other impressive

sculptural panels also. One such panel is that of Tara, principal consort of Avalokitesvara. It has been illustrated to the left of the central shrine door. Then, there is also a panel that depicts a group of six female musicians on the left wall of the main shrine, believed to be a representative sculptural panel of the Aurangabad Caves. The main female, shown at the center of the panel, is in a dancing mudra, while the five others are playing different musical instruments. The remaining Aurangabad caves have incomplete excavations.

Bada Imambara

Bada Imambara is a huge complex, situated in the old city of Lucknow. One of the most famous monuments of the city, the Imambara is significant not only from historical, but also cultural and heritage point of view. The complex dates back to the year 1784 and was founded by the then Nawab of Awadh, Asaf -ud-Daula. Bada Imambara of Lucknow is neither a mosque, nor a mausoleum. Rather, it is a complex that is made up of a number of buildings, including Asfi mosque, the Bhul-Bhulaiyah (the maze) and a summer palace with running water.



Location: Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Founded By: Nawab of Awadh, Asaf-ud-Daula

Founded In: 1784

The design of the Bada Imambada of India reflects an amalgamation of Rajput and Mughal architectures, with strong Gothic influences. Its interiors are quite impressive as well as elaborate and the vaulted hall situated inside the complex is believed to be one of the largest apartments of its kind in the world. The halls as well as the vaults of the Imambara also display a strong Islamic influence. The reason for the construction of the Bada Imambada tells us a tale of the compassion and humanity of the Nawab.

Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula came to Lucknow in 1777 and in 1784, a harsh famine hit the city. In order to provide foodstuff to the famine-hit people, the Nawab decided to build the great Imambada, on food-for-work basis. He employed approximately 22,000 people to work day and night. Around one-fourth of the work done during the day was demolished at night against payment. Thus, there was always the scope of work for the people. It is also said that before distributing muskmelons amongst the poor, Asaf-ud-Daula used to get them inserted with jewels.

The Imambara complex comprises of a great hall, situated at the end of an impressive courtyard. The courtyard is reached through two magnificent triple-arched gateways and is approximately 49.4 m in length and 16.2 m in width. The largest hall in Asia, without any external support of wood, iron, or stone beams, the hall has a ceiling that is more than 15 m high. The roof of the hall is said to be 16 feet thick, with a weight of nearly 20,000 tons. People marvel at this roof, which has been built without girders or beams to uphold it.

The same roof covers three halls in all, the Persian Hall, the China Hall and the Indian Hall. The Persian Hall is the central hall, which is quite large in size. The China Hall is of an interesting shape, being square at ground level, octagonal at mid-height and 16-sided at the top. The India Hall is in the shape of a watermelon. The architect of the Bada Imambara is believed to be a Persian, by the name of Kifait-ullah. The acoustics of the hall are such that one can even hear the strike of a matchstick across the length of the hall.

The top terrace is reached through a narrow flight of steps and has a tangled set of passages. These passages were designed to confuse even the most alert minds, thus creating a maze called Bhul Bhulaiya. The main reason for the construction of the maze was to support the thick walls of the Imambada. The terrace of the monument provides a magnificent view of the old Lucknow, along with its numerous mosques and minarets. A number of monuments are situated inside the complex.

Mosque

Asfi mosque is situated inside the courtyard of the Bada Imambara and is an extremely graceful monument. A grand flight of steps leads to the paved floor of the mosque.

Baoli (Step Well)

People find the five-storied baoli (step well) the most fascinating structure inside the complex of the Imambada. The baoli belongs to the pre-Nawabi era and is known as the Shahi-Hammam (royal bath). The water needs of the baoli are met by the river Gomti. Only the first two stories of the baoli are above water, the rest three stories remain permanently under water.

Bangla Sahib

Gurdwara, one of the most popular shrines of the Sikhs in India, is situated in capital city of Delhi. The site of the Gurudwara once housed a large and splendid bungalow of Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur. The eighth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Sri Harkishan, stayed in the bungalow for a few months, as a guest of Raja Jai Singh. From that time onwards, the place became a revered pilgrimage amongst both Sikhs as well as Hindus. The elder brother of Guru Sri Harkishan, Baba Ram Rai, got agitated when he got the news that

Harkishan had been appointed as the spiritual head of the Sikhs.

After making futile attempts to influence leading Sikhs of Delhi and Punjab, he approached Emperor Aurangzeb. The emperor summoned Guru Harkishan to verify whether he was indeed superior and more spiritual than Ram Rai. During that time, both Raja Jai Singh and his son Raja Ram Singh were in Delhi. The Sikhs approached them and they agreed to lend them all help they could. Raja Jai Singh persuaded Guru Sri Harkishan to come to Delhi and at the same time, convinced Aurangzeb to let Harkishan stay as Jai Singh's guest till his supremacy was established.

Guru Sri Harkishan stayed in the bungalow of Jai Singh and during his stay; he continued to serve the humble, the sick and the destitute. Soon, the talk of his healing powers spread. Impressed, Aurangzeb recognized him as the eighth Guru of the Sikhs. Raja Jai Singh later got a small tank constructed over the well in the bungalow. The water of the tank (Sarovar) is believed to have miraculous healing powers and most of the people coming to the Gurdwara make sure to take a dip in the holy water.

People also carry the water (called amrit) to their home, in order to cure their ailments. The main hall of the Gurdwara is quite large and has a small golden dome, which is adorned with a sculpted bronze cupola. The eastern side of the Gurudwara comprises of the community kitchen hall, which is known as the "Langar". Everyday, free food is provided to all the devotees that come to the Gurdwara. Bangla Sahib Gurdwara of New Delhi also runs a higher secondary school, Khalsa Girls School, in an adjacent building.

There is a hospital in the basement of the complex, which is run by Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee. The basement also houses an Art Gallery, with a rich collection of paintings depicting historical events connected with Sikh history. Last but not the least, Bangla Sahib Gurudwara also has a library, inside its complex. The birth anniversary of Guru Sri Harkishan Sahib is celebrated every year at



Location: New Delhi

Founded By: Sardar Baghel Singh

Dedicated to: Guru Sri Harkishan

the Gudwara. You may visit Gurdwara Bangla Sahib of Delhi at any time of the day and you will hear the soothing Gurbani (devotional music) echoing through the surroundings.

Basilica of Bom Jesus

Basilica of Bom Jesus is situated at a distance of approximately 10 km from Panaji, the capital city of Goa. The church falls in the Old Goa area, which was the erstwhile capital of the Portuguese in the early days of their rule in India. The term 'Bom Jesus' means 'Good (or Holy) Jesus'. The construction work on the basilica was started in the year 1594 and it took 11 years to complete the monument. Initially, in 1594, Father Alexia de Menezes consecrated the Church.

However, after completion of the construction work, the consecration was done again by the Primate of India.

The Basilica of Bom Jesus was given the status of a Minor Basilica in the year 1946 and it is the first Minor Basilica of India. The basilica also holds the distinction of being one of the best examples of baroque architecture in the country. The Church of Bom Jesus is one of the churches of Goa that have been declared as World Heritage Monuments. One of the major attractions of the church or the basilica comprises of the mortal remains of St. Francis Xavier; a member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) founded by Ignatius Loyola.

St. Francis Xavier left for the holy abode on 2nd December 1552, when he was on a sea voyage to China. As per the wishes of the Father, his mortal remains were brought back to Goa the following year. It is said that when the body reached India, after a whole year, it was still as fresh as it was on the day burial took place. A major landmark in the history of Christianity in India, the Bom Jesus Basilica attracts a large number of devotees every year. People come to Goa from different parts of the world to offer prayers at the church.

Every ten years, the body of Francis Xavier's is displayed at the basilica, on his death anniversary, for public viewing. The last display was held in the year 2004. It is believed that the saint has miraculous healing powers. Church of Bom Jesus is one of the wealthiest churches in the beach state of Goa. Carpeted with marble flooring and inlaid with precious stones, the church has a rich collection of St. Francis Xavier's paintings. The Basilica of Bom Jesus mainly has simple exteriors, with the exception of the elaborately gilded altars.

The Tomb of St. Francis Xavier was given as a gift by the last of the Medicis Cosimo III, The Grand Duke of Tuscany. It was carved by Florentine sculptor, Giovanni Battista Foggini, and took ten years to complete. The casket, in which the body of St. Francis is kept, is made of pure silver. The portico of the basilica is made of black granite and reflects an amalgamation of Doric, Corinthian and composite styles.



Location: Near Panaji, Goa

Founded In: 1594 to 1605

Consecrated By: Father Alexia de Menezes

Significance: Houses the mortal remains of St. Francis Xavier

Status: World Heritage Monument

The interiors of the church, on the other hand, are based on the Mosaico-Corinthian style.

The Basilica of Bom Jesus is approximately 183 ft in length, 55 ft in breadth and 61 ft in height. Its main altar rises to a height of 54 ft and is 30 ft broad. The pillars as well as the detail have been carved from basalt. The church is cruciform on plan. There is also a single-storied structure adjacent to the church on its southern wing, which connects it with the Professed House. Some recent additions were carried out in Bom Jesus Basilica, including the flying buttresses on its northern side.

The facade of the Church represents Ionic, Doric and Corinthian Orders. The main entrance of the church is bordered, on either side, by two smaller ones. Each of them has Corinthian columns supporting a pediment. The complex of the Church of Bom Jesus comprises of two chapels, a main altar, a sacristy and a choir. There is also a belfry at the back. Beneath the choir is the altar of St. Anthony. To the left of this altar is a carved wooden statue of St. Francis Xavier. There is also a cenotaph kept in the center of the nave on the northern wall.

The cenotaph belongs to Dom Jeronimo Mascarenhas, the Captain of Cochin, who provided the resources for the construction of the church. Opposite the cenotaph, is a carved wooden pulpit, which has a canopy on top. On the three sides of the pulpit are figures of Jesus, the four evangelists and four doctors of the church. At the bottom of the pulpit are seven figures, which seem to be supporting it. Bom Jesus Basilica Art Gallery is situated on the upper level and displays the paintings of Dom Martin.

Bekal Fort

Bekal Fort is situated at a distance of approximately 16 km to the south of the Kasargod district of Kerala. Lying at the northern tip of the state, the fort dates back to the decade of the 1650s. It is believed to have been constructed under the aegis of Sivappa Naik of the Ikkeri dynasty. Another belief is that the Bekal Fort of Kerala was originally constructed by the Kolathiri Rajas and later annexed by Sivappa Naik.

The fort was first conquered by Hyder Ali of Mysore in 1763 and then the Huzur of Canara took over it, during Tipu Sultan's reign.

Bekal Fort also came under the occupation of British, during their rule over India. During that time, the erstwhile Bekal taluk was a part of the South Canara district and comprised of the present-day Kasaragod and Hosdurg taluks. Bekal Fort holds the distinction of being the largest as well as the best-preserved fort in the state of Kerala. The fort is a huge circular edifice, which rises to a height of around 130 ft above the sea level. It is spread over a 35 acres promontory, which runs into the Arabian Sea.

Bekal fort is reached through a zigzag entrance, which was deliberately designed to serve as a protection against the enemies. The fort also has a sea bastion, a number of underground tunnels and an observation tower, which give it a magnificent look. Tippu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore, extended the fort by building a mosque just outside its premises. Situated at the entrance of the fort is a temple, known as Anjaneya temple, which is dedicated to Lord Hanuman. It is said that the temple is as old as the fort itself.

The heart of the Bekal fort houses the observation tower, which is reached through a broad and wide flight of stairs. The tower has a circumference of approximately 80 feet at the base. It rises to a height of 30 feet and provides a magnificent view of the sea on three sides, along with the green landscape situated to the east of the fort. There are a number of underground passages inside the Bekal fort that lead to the outside area.

Two of the underground tunnels are still present and can be seen easily. One of them leads to the south of the fort, while the other takes you to the moat on the east. The storeroom inside the Bekal Fort is used to store weapons and ammunition. It is under the management of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and is closed to the general public. To the west of the fort is a sea bastion, located on the rocky projection, offering a magnificent view of the sea as well as the beach.

There is also a seaside pathway, from which one can have a breathtaking view of the fort to the east. To



Location: Bekal, Kasargod District, Kerala

Founded In: 1650s

the west, we can see the sea linking the beaches north and south of the battlement. Bekal fort is managed as well as controlled by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Many excavations were carried out here, which lead to the discovery of numerous old coins and other historical artifacts. Bekal is also one among the five centers that have been selected by the Government of India to be developed into a 'Special Tourism Area'

Bolgatty Palace

Bolgatty Palace is the pride of the beautiful Bolghatty Island, situated in the Kochi city of Kerala. The fort claims the distinction of being the one of the oldest palaces that were built by the Dutch in India and are still in existence. Dutch traders initially built a villa on the site, which was later expanded to form the Bolghatty Palace. Surrounded by lush green lawns, which were added later, the building once served as the palace of the Dutch Governor. It was only in the year 1909 that the Bolghatty Palace was leased to the British.



Location: Bolghatty Island, Kochi (Kerala)

Founded In: 1744

Thereafter, the palace became the residence of the British Governors, the seat of the British Resident of Cochin, during the British regime. After India gained independence in the year 1947, the palace came under the state and was later converted into a heritage hotel resort. Presently, the resort is being managed as well as operated by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC). Bolghatty Palace is situated in the middle of flourishing, tropical greenery and offers the pleasure of a laid back environment.

The location of the palace is such that it provides an awe-inspiring view of the backwaters all around. A two-storied building, it has a large lounge, in which historical portraits have been displayed. The rooms offered at the Bolghatty palace resort include executive suits, deluxe rooms, honeymoon suits and lake front cottages along the edge of the backwaters. One can also avail of the various facilities, like a mini golf course, swimming pool, Ayurvedic center and daily Kathakali performances.

Brihadeeswarar Temple

Brihadeeswarar Temple is a magnificent temple, situated in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu. It dates back to the 11th century and was founded by the Chola King Rajaraja Chola I. The temple is considered to be an architectural wonder and is the perfect example of the expertise of the erstwhile Chola rulers, who once ruled over the peninsular India.

One of the tallest temples of the world, Brihadeeswarar Temple is designed in such a way that the vimana never ever casts a shadow on the ground at noon.

Brihadisvara Temple has been built as per the South Indian style of temple architecture. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva, whose idol has been kept in the Garbha Griha (sanctum sanctorum). There is a tall sanctum tower (srivimana) inside its complex, along with splendid gopurams (elaborate gateways). A fully carved structure, Brihadeeshwarar Temple was designed by the chief architect of the Chola court, Sama Varma. It stands on a 29 m square base and rises to a height of somewhere around 65 m.

Surrounding the Brihadeeswarar Temple is a huge compound, with walls that are over 15 m high. Only the inner sanctum sanctorum, along with the gopuram (tower) adorning its top, was constructed by Rajaraja Chola I. This construction took a period of twelve years. To further enhance the beauty of the temple, the king got it adorned with a 12.5 feet tall finial, which is made of 9.25 kg of copper and is plated with 800 gm of gold. Subsequent rulers of the Chola dynasty added to the temple, never once letting the construction go out of sync.

The entrance of the Brihadeeshwarar Temple leads to a huge rectangular enclosure, which has been lined with stones. Moving through the corridor, one comes across a stone statue of Nandi Bull (the mount of Lord Shiva) and then, two idols of Lord Ganesha. Thereafter, one reaches the sanctum sanctorum (garbha griha), where the deity has been enshrined. The inner walls of the garbha griha illustrate 108 dance poses enacted by Lord Shiva. There are numerous inscriptions also, which are said to give details of the modern times.

The tower situated to the right of the temple is also an architectural beauty. The topmost tower comprises of a huge dome, made of black granite and weighing around 80 tons. The sanctum tower, or the srivimana, is surrounded by a rectangular prakara or corridor that comprises of two squares. The main tower is situated in the center of the rear square, while the vimana has 16 tiers and measures 200



Location: Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

Founded By: Rajaraja Chola I

Founded In: 1010

Dedicated To: Lord Shiva

Status: World Heritage Monument

feet in height. As per the India mythology, the point where the tower stands represents Mt Meru, the center of the universe.

Buland Darwaza

Buland Darwaza, a massive gateway, is situated in Fatehpur Sikri, a deserted city near Agra. Mughal Emperor Akbar got this gateway constructed as a commemoration of his victory over the King of Khandesh (now Gujarat) in 1573. Buland Darwaza of Agra dates back to the year 1575 and has been built as per the Mughal style of architecture. It holds the distinction of being the highest gateway of not only India, rather the whole of the world.

It looms over the courtyard of the Jama Masjid and provides entrance to the mosque.

One needs to climb a flight of 42 steps in order to reach the gateway, which stands tall at a height of 40 m. It is approximately 35 m in width and is made up of red and buff sandstone, which has been adorned with exquisite carving as well as inlaying of white and black marble. On the central face of the Buland Darwaza, an inscription has been carved. This inscription brings to light the religious tolerance of the great emperor. The gateway is also adorned with calligraphic inscriptions from the Quran on the front and the pillars.

Buland Darwaza comes across as semi octagonal in its plan and stands crowned by pillars and chhatris. One can easily make out the early Mughal design of the gateway, which is flanked by towering arches. The roof of Buland Darwaza has thirteen smaller domed kiosks. Apart from that, there is a stylized battlement and a number of small towers. The eastern archway of the Buland Darwaza has been adorned with a Persian inscription, which gives an account of Akbar's conquest over Deccan in the year 1601.



Location: Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra (Uttar Pradesh)

Founded By: Mughal Emperor, Akbar

Founded In: 1575

Cellular Jail

Cellular Jail was constructed under the British rule, in the year 1906, to serve as a prison for the Indian activists who participated in India's freedom struggle. During that time, it was also known as Kala Pani, meaning 'Black water', the term that is used for deep sea and implies exile. The jail is situated in Port Blair, the capital of Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Though the construction work on the prison was started only in the year 1896, the British had starting using Andaman & Nicobar Islands as prison as early as 1857.



The islands were believed to be the perfect place to serve as the prison venue, since they were isolated from the mainland and severed the links of the prisoners with their family and their country completely. At the same time, the prisoners could be

used in chain gangs to construct prisons, buildings and harbor facilities. By the late nineteenth century, the population of prisoners started increasing at a fast pace. It was then that the need for a high-security prison was felt by the British and the foundation of the Cellular Jail was laid in Port Blair.

Initially, the Cellular Jail was a puce-colored brick building, for which the bricks were brought from Burma (now Myanmar). There were seven wings, with a central tower serving as the fulcrum. Guards used this tower for keeping a watch over the prison inmates. Each and every wing of the prison had three stories, with the total number of cells being 698. Each cell was 4.5 m x 2.7 m in size and there was a ventilator in each cell, situated at a height of 3 m. The cells were built in such a way so as to prevent any interaction between the inmates.

This solitary formation of the cells led to the naming of the prison as the 'Cellular Jail'. There were no dormitories in the prison. Most of the prisoners that were deported to the jail were independence activists. The political prisoners of Cellular Jail were repatriated to the mainland in 1937-38. The Andaman Islands came under invasion by the Empire of Japan in the year 1942, in which the British lost. The jail, which earlier housed prisoners of the British, now became a penitentiary for the British officers and soldiers.

Later, Indian Independence League members were also imprisoned here, tortured and then, killed. Under the Japanese regime, two of the wings of the Cellular jail were demolished. After the end of World War II, the British reoccupied the islands in 1945. When India attained independence, two more wings of the jail were pulled down. After protests by the former prisoners and political leaders, the demolition was stopped and the remaining three wings and central tower were converted into a National Memorial.

Location: Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Founded In: 1896-1906

Founded By: The British

Served As: Prison during India's freedom struggle

Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital was set up inside the premises of the Cellular Jail in the year 1963. The hospital has since been expanded and has 500 beds, with about 40 doctors serving the local population. The Indian Ocean Tsunami, which came in 2004, heavily damaged the Cellular Jail of Port Blair. Approximately a year back, on 10th March 2006, Government of India organized the Centenary celebrations of the Jail. A felicitation ceremony was also organized as a part of the celebrations, where the Government felicitated erstwhile prisoners.

Charminar

Charminar is a huge and magnificent edifice, situated amidst the crowded old city of Hyderabad.

Sultan Muhammed Quli Qutub Shah got the structure made, as a commemoration of the eradication of plague, soon after he shifted his capital from Golconda to Hyderabad.

The construction work on this historical monument was started in the year 1591 and got completed by 1612. There are four gracefully carved minarets adorning the monument and it is from these minarets that it got its name as the Charminar, meaning 'four' (char) 'pillars' (minars).

Charminar is a masterpiece of Qutub Shahi architecture and stands surrounded by colorful shops of Lad Bazaar (Choodi Bazaar). The monument has been built upon four grand arches, which face the four different directions. Charminar of Hyderabad has four tall minarets and a mosque on its top floor. These slender minarets and their spiral staircases add to the splendor of the monument, which is square in its shape and is adorned with stucco ornamentation. The mosque has 45 covered prayer spaces as well as some open spaces for praying.



Location: Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

Founded By: Sultan Muhammed Quli Qutub Shah
Founded In: 1591-1612

Charminar is popularly known as 'The Arc de triomphe of the East'. Each side of the monument measures 20 m and each edge have a pointed high minaret. The four minarets rise to a height of 48.7 m above the ground and can be seen even miles away from the monument. There are four stories in each minaret, which look like delicately carved rings around it. All the sides of the Charminar open into a plaza through giant arches. Each arch is 11 m in width and rises approximately 20 m to the pinnacle.

There is a clock in each of the arches, which were installed in the year 1889. Charminar comprises of two galleries within its complex, one over another. The terrace is surrounded by a stone balcony and is vaulted underneath, making it appear like a dome. The fluted minarets of Charminar have been built into the main edifice and have winding steps inside them. These steps lead to the upper floor, which provides a breathtaking view of the entire city. Charminar looks exceptionally beautiful at night, when it is completely illuminated.

Chettinad Palace

Chettinad Palace is a beautiful edifice situated in the Chettinad region, which comes under the Sivaganga district of southern Tamil Nadu. Dr Annamali Chettiyar, founder of the Indian Bank and the Annamalai University in Chidambaram, got the palace constructed. Even the design of the palace was provided by Dr Chettiyar only.

An outstanding example of the Chettinad architecture, the Chettinad Palace of India dates back to the year 1912. It reflects the traditional style of architecture, which is characteristic of the region.

The construction materials, decorative items as well as the furnishings that adorn the palace of Chettinad were mostly imported from East Asian countries and Europe. The marble was brought from Italy, chandeliers and teak from Burma, crockery from Indonesia, crystals from Europe and wall-to-wall mirrors from Belgium. The woodwork and stonework festooning the palace reflect heavy influence of the houses in France and other European countries. In the front of the Chettinad Palace is a huge iron-gate.

Just next to the gate is the verandah, which has now been converted into a waiting area for the visitors. The entire verandah has been laid with white marble. The palace also has a meeting hall, which is decorated with several pairs of elephant tusks. One can also see portraits of family members and colored crystal collection in the hall. The ceiling is adorned with copper roofing plates, which have artistic patterns in vegetable dye. It is said that the bricks used in making the palace were bound together with a paste of egg white, extract of an unripe medicinal fruit found in the hills of Kadukkai and lime grind.

After crossing the meeting hall, one reaches the central courtyard, which was once used for weddings and religious ceremonies. Surrounding the courtyard are pillars made of Burma teak and the floor is made of blood-red tiles and sloping woodwork. Chettinad Palace of Tamil Nadu also has a ladies hall, which has its own courtyard and dining hall. The third courtyard in the palace is bounded by a number of small rooms, which were used to store crockery, food and other kitchen items.

There are also two kitchens in this courtyard, along with servant's quarters that situated at its far end. The verandah adjoining the courtyard has numerous large stone hand-grinders and eleven firewood ovens have been built along the kitchen wall. One corner of the courtyard houses the puja room. There is also a small dining room in the Chettinad Palace for private dinners, which houses an extendable



Location: Chettinad, Tamil Nadu

Founded By: Dr Annamali Chettiyar

Founded In: 1912

rosewood table. On the first floor are the bedrooms and living rooms, which are not open to public viewing.

Chittorgarh Fort

Chittorgarh Fort is the largest fort in India and the grandest in the state of Rajasthan.

Chittorgarh Fort is situated at a distance of 175 km to the east of the Udaipur city of Rajasthan. In the past, the fort comprised of one of the most desired seats of power in India. The fort is believed to have been named after Chitrangad Maurya.

It is said that the Chittorgarh Fort was given to Bappa Rawal, founder of the Sisodia dynasty, as dowry in mid-8th century, when he married the princess of the Solanki dynasty. Spread over an area of 700 acres, the fort comprises of numerous ramparts, palaces, temples and towers.



Location: 175 km from Udaipur, Rajasthan

Chittorgarh fort is reached through a zigzag road of one km. It stands on a 180 m high hill, which seems to be rising from the plains below. The road that brings one to the fort further leads to its seven gates, namely Padan Pol, Bhairon Pol, Hanuman Pol, Ganesh Pol, Jorla Pol, Lakshman Pol and Ram Pol. Between the second and third gate, you will come across two chattris (cenotaphs), which were constructed in honor of Jaimull and Kulla, the two heroes of the siege laid by Emperor Akbar in the year 1568.

Suraj Pol, or the 'Sun Gate', is the main gate of the Chittorgarh fort of Rajasthan. There are a number of palaces inside the fort complex, such as Rana Kumbha Palace, Fateh Prakash Palace and Rani Padmini's Palace. All the palaces, along with the Tower of Victory, boast of Rajput architecture. Several temples, reservoirs and palaces were added on to the fort later, somewhere between the 9th and 17th century. One can also see a huge complex of Jain temples inside the premises of the Chittorgarh fort.

There is also an opening inside the fort, where Rani Padmini is said to have committed Jauhar (self-immolation by the females), along with the other women of the court. Situated close to this opening is a big water reservoir, where water flows out from a rock that is shaped in the form of cow's mouth. The shape of the rock has led to the reservoir being called as 'Gaumukh' (cow's mouth). Other major attractions of Chittorgarh fort include Bhimtal Tank, Neelkanth Mahadev Temple, Meera Temple, Kumbha Shyam Temple and Kalika Mata Temple.

The most popular structures of the fort comprise of its two magnificent towers, namely 'Kirti Stambh' or the 'Tower of Fame' and 'Vijay Stambh' or the 'Tower of Victory'. The "Kirti Stambh" was built by Maharana Kumbha in 1440 AD to celebrate his victory over Mohammad Khalji. The pedestal of the tower is 10 ft high and the tower stands at a height of 122 ft and is 30 ft wide at the base. The tower is

nine storeyed and is adorned with sculptures of Hindu deities and stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The tower provides a breathtaking view of the city. There is a huge complex of Jain temples within the fort.

Kirti Stambh

Kirti Stambh is also known as the 'Tower of Fame'. It is a seven-storied structure that narrows down from the bottom to the top, with its width lessening from 30 ft at the base to 15 ft at the top. The tower has a tapered stairway with 54 steps and was constructed around the 12th century. It is dedicated to Adinath, the first Jain Tirthankara, and houses a striking 5 ft high statue of the saint. The Jain sculptures adorning the tower were bought from outside the state.

Vijay Stambh

Vijay Stambh is also known as the 'Tower of Victory'. Maharana Kumbha got this tower built in the year 1440, as a commemoration of his victory over Mohammed Khilji. It is perched on a plinth that is 47 square ft wide and 10 ft high. Vijay Stambh is 122 ft in height and has a width of 30 ft at the base. The nine-storied tower stands ornamented with sculptures of Hindu deities as well as stories from the Great Indian Epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. A circular stairway with 157 steps leads to the terrace, which provides a splendid view of the city.

Invasions

Chittorgarh Fort has been annexed by a stronger army three times in its past. The first siege occurred in the year 1303, when King Ala-ud-Din Khilji attacked the fort to kidnap Queen Padmini, wife of Rana Rattan Singh. Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat seized the fort in 1535 by defeating Bikramjeet Singh and in 1567 Emperor Akbar defeated Maharana Udai Singh II who left the fort and founded Udaipur. It was only in 1616 that Mughal emperor Jehangir restored Chittorgarh fort back to the Rajputs, but even then, it was not resettled.

City Palace Jaipur

City Palace of Jaipur is one of the major landmarks of the state of Rajasthan. A magnificent structure, the palace was built under the patronage of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. It still houses the royal family of Jaipur, which stays in the Chandra Mahal Palace situated inside the complex.

Only the ground floor of the City Palace is open for public viewing. The entire palace complex comprises of a number of gardens, courtyards and buildings. Raja Jai Singh was the one who initially built the outer wall of the palace.



Location: Jaipur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh

Succeeding rulers of Jaipur made further additions to the City Palace, in the form of new buildings. There are a number of structures inside the palace complex, namely Chandra Mahal, Mubarak Mahal, Mukut Mahal, Maharani's Palace, Shri Govind Dev Temple and the City Palace Museum. The moment you enter the first square of the palace, you will come across the Mubarak Mahal, which was built by Sawai Madho Singh. It dates back to the 19th century and was meant to entertain the visiting guests.

Mubarak Mahal has now been converted into a costume gallery, in which royal attires of the royals have been displayed. It showcases royal costumes, folk embroidery, rare and precious Pashmina (Kashmiri) Shawls, Sanganeri prints and Benaras silk saris. After the first square is crossed, the next structure that comes in view is the Diwan-I-Khas. It is the hall where the king used to have private meetings and is reached through a beautiful gateway. Two sterling silver vessels, said to be the world's largest silver vessel, are on display inside the hall.

Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh II used these vessels to carry the holy water of River Ganges, on his trip to England. Another major attraction of the square is Diwan-I-Aam, the hall of public audience. Presently, it has been converted into an art gallery, which displays exquisitely painted ceilings and rare handwritten manuscripts of Hindu scriptures (original). Here, one can see miniature copies of the sacred Bhagwat Gita, along with miniature paintings belonging to the Rajasthani, Mughal and Persian Schools.

The next in the series of building is the Maharani's Palace, which used to serve as the residence of the queens. It has also been converted into a museum and showcases arms and weaponry dating back to the 15th century. The weapons displayed in the museum comprise of pistols, jeweled swords, guns and gun powder pouches, belt swords, chain armors, small cannons, poison tipped blades, a scissor-action dagger, etc. Thereafter, comes the most popular building of the City Palace, Chandra Mahal.

Chandra Mahal is a seven-storied monument, with each of the stories bearing a different name. The

ground floor of the Chandra Mahal houses some rare exhibits. Even the courtyard outside the palace is adorned with a beautiful peacock. The top most floor of the palace is known as the Mukut Mahal. An architectural beauty, the palace is adorned with delicate paintings, mirror work on walls and floral decorations. Badal Mahal is situated opposite Chandra Mahal. The pathway between these two palaces leads to the Govind Dev Ji Temple.

Dhamekh Stupa

Dhamekh Stupa is situated in Sarnath, near the Varanasi city of India. One of the most revered as well as most frequented Buddhist pilgrim sites in India; the stupa is cylindrical in shape. Dhamekha Stupa was built on the site where Lord Buddha preached his first sermon, after attaining Enlightened in Bodh Gaya.

The stupa is the most impressive as well as the most famous structures in Sarnath and is quite similar in its architecture to the stupas built during that period. The base of the stupa is more than 28 m in diameter and it rises to a height of 31.3 m.



Location: Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh

Dhamek Stupa stands on a pedestal and has an entrance, which measures 43.6 m on its feet. The stupa was initially founded during the Mauryan period and has been partly constructed out of red bricks and stones. Colonel Cunningham of Royal British Army carried out the first excavation connected with the stupa, in the early 20th century. Since that time, numerous digging expeditions have taken place in and around the same site. The trunk of the Dhamekh Stupa stands adorned with decorative patterns.

The patterns include geometric and floral designs, along with a broad band of Swastika (fylfot). The Swastika has been carved in different geometrical patterns, with a finely chiseled lotus wreath that runs over and below it. It is said that, in the past, as many as 12 expansions have been carried out at the Dhamekh Stupa. The main area of the Sarnath stupa has been enclosed and comprises of a maze of half-ruined monasteries and votive stupas, making it the most conspicuous structure of the city.

When the initial excavations were carried out at the site, a stone tablet was discovered. It was written on the tablet that the name of the stupa is Dhamekha Stupa and it marks the place where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon. Almost all the historians agree to the view that the stupa is nothing but a distorted form of Dharma Chakra. Some of the historians, who have taken recourse to Prakrit sources, allege that the stupa marks the hutments of the five ascetics, who abandoned Gautam Buddha in Bodh Gaya.

Dilwara Temples

Dilwara Jain temples of India are situated at a distance of approximately 2.5 km from Mount Abu, the sole hill station in Rajasthan. One of the most popular pilgrim destinations in the state, these temples have been found to date back to somewhere between 11th and 13th century. There are five individual temples inside the Dilwara temple complex of Mt. Abu.

The temples are known for their exquisite use of marble and are believed to be one of the most magnificent Jain temples not only in Rajasthan, rather the whole of India.

The gate providing entrance to the temples is splendid in its design. Dilwara Jain Temples have been enclosed inside high walls and are situated amidst a range of forested hills. The intricately carved ceilings, doorways, pillars and panels of the temples add to its beauty and splendor. The amenities provided at Dilwara Jain Temples include bathing facilities and provision of guided tours. Each of the five temples situated inside the temple complex have a unique identity. The most famous temples at Dilwara are Vimal Vasahi and Luna Vasahi.



Location: Near Mount Abu, Rajasthan

Founded In: 11th to 13th century

dedicated to: Adinathji, Neminathji,
Parshavnathji and Mahaveer Swamiji

Vimal Vasahi (Shri Adinathji Temple)

Vimal Vasahi is the temple dedicated to the first Jain Tirthankara, Shri Adinathji. The temple dates back to the year 1021 and was constructed under the patronage of Vimal Shah, a minister of Maharaja Bhimdev I of Gujarat. Situated in an open courtyard, the temple stands surrounded by a corridor. The corridor has a number of cells consisting of smaller idols of the Tirthankaras. The corridors, pillars, arches, ceilings and 'mandaps' (porticoes) of the temple have been adorned with beautiful carvings.

The huge hall of Rang Mandap has 12 decorated pillars, carved arches and a central dome. The pillars have carved images of a female playing musical instrument, along with 16 Vidhyadevis, goddesses of knowledge. Nine carved rectangular ceilings make up the Navchowki, while the Gudh Mandap has a remarkably festooned doorway. It is in this mandap that the idol of Adinath (a.k.a. Lord Rishabdev) is enshrined. The Hathishala (elephant cell), built by Prithvipal, houses a row of sculpted elephants.

Luna Vasahi (Shri Neminathji Temple)

Vastupal and Tejpal, ministers of King Virbhaval of Gujarat, got the Luna Vashi temple constructed. The temple dates back to the year 1230 and is dedicated to Shri Neminathji, the 22nd Jain Tirthankara. The ministers got the temple constructed in the memory of their late brother Luna and took heavy

inspiration from the Vimal Vashi temple. The main hall, or the Rang Mandap, has a central dome that dangles from a beautifully carved pendent.

The sitting figures of 72 Tirthankaras have been arranged in one circular band and that of 360 Jain monks in another. There is also a Hathishala, adorned with 10 beautiful figures of marble elephants. The Navchowki has some intricate cutting work of marble, while the Gudh Mandap houses a black marble idol of Neminathji. To the left of the temple is Kirthi Stambha, a big black stone pillar that was constructed by Maharana Kumbha of Mewar.

Pittalhar Temple (Shri Rishabhdevji Temple)

Pittalhar Temple is also dedicated to the first Jain Tirthankara, Adinathji or Rishabhdevji. Bhima Shah, a minister of Sultan Begada of Ahmedabad is credited with the construction of this temple. Enshrined in the temple is a huge statue of Rishabhdevji, which is made up of five metals - the main one being 'Peetal' (brass). The temple comprises of the main Garbha Griha, the Gudh Mandap and the Navchowki. The Rang Mandap and the corridor of the temple have been largely left unfinished. The old idol of Rishabhdevji that was placed in the temple was replaced and reinstalled in 1468-69.

Khartar Vasahi (Shri Parshvanathji Temple)

Khartar Vasahi is a three-storied structure, constructed by Mandlik and his family. It dates back to 1458-59 and is dedicated to Lord Parshvanathji, the 23rd Jain Tirthankara. The tallest of all the Dilwara temples, Khartar Vasahi has four big mandaps on its ground floor. The outer walls of the sanctum are adorned with beautiful sculptures, depicting Dikpals, Vidhyadevis, Yakshinis, Shalabhanjikas and other ornamental sculptures.

Mahavir Swami (Shri Mahavir Swamiji Temple)

The fifth, and the last, Dilwara Jain Temple is dedicated to Shri Mahavir Swamiji. It was constructed in the year 1582 and enshrines Lord Mahaveer, the 24th Jain Tirthankara. The artists of Sirohi beautifully painted the upper walls of the porch in 1764.

Dutch Palace

Dutch Palace is situated in Mattancherry, at a distance of approximately 10 km from Ernakulam. The palace was originally built by the Portuguese, who later gifted it to Veera Kerala Varma, the Maharaja of Kochi. Initially the palace was known as the Mattancherry Palace of Cochin.

However, after the Dutch renovated it in the year 1663, it came to be known as the Dutch Palace of Kochi. Presently, the palace has been converted into a museum, where one can find paintings and murals signifying the rich tradition of the Hindus.



Location: Mattancherry, Kochi (Kerala)

Founded By: The Portuguese

Dutch Palace also houses a rich compilation of the paintings and portraits of the Maharajas of Cochin.

The beautiful frescoes of the palace correctly represent the Hindu temple art. The medieval charm associated with the Mattancherry Palace of Kochi definitely adds to its mystical appeal. One can find domination of the Portuguese style of architecture in the design of the palace. The entrance of the Dutch Palace is flanked by two beautiful arches, which lets one enter into its compound, a feature quite characteristic of the Portuguese style.

One thing that makes Mattancherry Palace distinct from the other palaces of Kerala is that even though it has been designed as per Portugal style, the pattern reflects traditional style of the state. Nalukettu style has been followed in the construction of the palace. In accordance with this style, there are total two stories inside the complex, which has been built around a central courtyard. Giving the Dutch Palace a European look are round-headed windows and doors, along with the typical sloping tiled roof.

The interiors of the palace reflect much gracefulness and have been beautifully decorated. The walls of the Mattancherry Palace have been adorned with large paintings as well as exquisite murals. Inside the premises of the palace, one can find two gorgeous temples. One of these temples is dedicated to Lord Krishna, while the other is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The rich collection displayed inside the Dutch Palace of India includes royal headdresses, weapons, furniture, royal robes, palanquins and other items used by the royal family.

The painting collection of the palace illustrates scenes from Great Indian Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, apart from the sacred Puranas. Almost all the paintings are ancient, with most of them dating back to the 16th century. These paintings are huge in size and have been spread over an area that measures almost 1000 sq ft. Even the flooring of the Dutch Palace of Kochi is quite unusual. Though it looks like polished black granite, it is actually made of a mixture of charcoal, burnt coconut shells, lime, plant juices and egg whites.

Elephanta Caves

Elephanta Caves are situated in the Elephanta Island hills, which lie almost 11 km to the northeast of the Apollo Bandar of Mumbai. The caves cover an area of 7 km in circumference and lie 7 km from the shore of the mainland. The island is named after a gigantic elephant statue that was found near its landing area. Presently, the elephant statue has been kept in the Jijamata Garden of Mumbai.



Numerous dynasties are said to have occupied the Elephanta Island, namely Konkan-Mauryas, Trikutakas, Chalukyas, Silaharas, Rashtrakutas, Kalyani Chalukyas, Yadavas, Muslim rulers of Ahmedabad and the Portuguese.

Location: Near Mumbai, Maharashtra

Founded In: 6th-7th century

Status: World Heritage Site

Even the Marathas had control over the island, from whom it passed into the hands of the British. Elephanta Caves of Maharashtra have been carved out of a single piece of rock. The main features of these caves include columns, internal spaces and beautiful images. Only some of the rock surfaces here have been finished, while some are nothing more than unfinished bare rocks. The Elephanta Caves date back to somewhere around 6th-7th century. There are a total of seven cave excavations in the Elephanta group.

The most impressive amongst these caves is the Mahesa-murti cave (cave number one). This cave represents advanced Brahmanical rock-cut architecture. Even the beautiful and vivacious sculptures of cave number one are worth having a look. The cave is very much similar to the Dumar Lena (Cave 29) of Ellora. The main entrance of cave number one is situated in the northern side. Apart from that, there are two openings on the eastern as well as western side also. There is a central hall in the cave, which is adorned with six rows of pillared columns.

In each of the row, there are six columns. The only exception is the western corner, where a lingam has been enshrined. There are also three large square recesses, divided by pilasters, and each of them has been illustrated with an enormous image of the Dvarapala. The eastern panel is ornamented with the image of Ardhanarisvara, a form of Shiva with the combined energies of both male and female. On the western panel, one can see the carved figures of Lord Shiva and His consort, Parvati, in which both of them are playing chauser.

The central recess is known for housing the Mahesa-murti, the most illustrious as well as most impressive sculpture of this period. The sculpture is gigantic in size and represents the three different forms of Lord Shiva. The first form is that of Aghora, which symbolizes a tumultuous and formidable Lord Shiva. The second form is of Tatpuruṣa, who is benevolent and is in a meditative posture. The third, and the last, form is that of Vamaḍeva, signifying a mild agreeable and endearing Lord Shiva.

Other prominent panels inside the main cave are those of Andhakasuravada Murti, the cosmic dance of Nataraja, Kalyanasundara murti, Gangadhara Murti, Ravana shaking Kailasa and Shiva as Lakulisa. You should also see the panel near the eastern opening, which illustrates Saptamatrikas. The Elephanta caves of Maharashtra are believed to be the abode of Lord Shiva.

Ellora Caves

Ellora Caves, one of the popular tourist attractions of India, are situated at a distance of approximately 25-30 km from the Aurangabad city of Maharashtra. The caves hold the distinction of being a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ellora caves symbolize the pinnacle of the rock cut architecture in the Indian subcontinent. There are thirty-four Ellora caves in toto and all of them are basically structures that have been excavated out of the vertical face of the Charanandri hills.



Location: Near Aurangabad, Maharashtra

Founded In: 5th to 10th century

Represent: Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site

Ellora Caves of India comprise of Hindu and Jain cave temples, along with Buddhist chaityas (halls of worship) and viharas (monasteries). All these caves have been found to date back to somewhere between 5th century and 10th century. The first twelve caves, numbered one to twelve, belong to the Buddhist religion and were built between 550 and 750 AD. The next seventeen caves, numbered thirteen to twenty-nine, are Hindu temples that were constructed around 600 to 875 AD.

The last set of caves, numbered thirty to thirty-four, represent the Jain religion. The Jain caves date back to the time period between 800 AD and 1000 AD. All these caves have been built in proximity to one another and symbolize the religious tolerance prevalent during that period. Almost all of the Ellora Caves have been adorned with outstanding paintings and sculptures. Not much time back, archaeologists unearthed twenty more caves at Ellora, which were devoted to Lord Shiva.

Buddhist Caves

The Buddhist caves of Ellora mainly comprise of viharas (monasteries). These monasteries are basically huge, multi-storied buildings that have been carved into the mountain face. Each monastery comprises of living quarters, sleeping quarters, kitchen and other rooms. Some monasteries even have shrines, which are adorned with carvings of Lord Buddha, bodhisattvas and saints. Many of the sculptures adorning the caves look like wood, even though they have been carved out of stone.

The most popular Buddhist cave is cave number ten, which is basically a chaitya hall (chandrashala). Known as 'Vishwakarma cave' or 'Carpenter's Cave', it has a shape and design much similar to that of a cathedral. The multi-storied entry of the cave leads to the chaitya, which has ceilings that gives the appearance of wooden beams. Placed in the middle of the cave is a 15-foot Buddha statue, where He is shown seated in a preaching pose. Cave number one to nine are monasteries, while the last two are called Do Tal (cave 11) & Tin Tal (cave 12).

Hindu Caves

All the Hindu caves have elaborate carvings done on them, right from top to bottom. Cave number sixteen is known as the Kailasa or Kailasanatha Temple and is probably the most popular as well as more exquisite of all the Hindu caves at Ellora. The cave has been designed in such a way so as to illustrate Mount Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva. Carved out of a single piece of rock, it is a multi-storied temple complex that spreads over an area double the size of the Parthenon in Athens.

As one crosses the two-storied gateway of the caves, a U-shaped courtyard comes into sight. Three-stories high columned galleries edge the courtyard and stand scattered with huge sculpted panels and alcoves with sculptures of deities. The central temple has been built as per South Indian architectural style and houses the Shiva Lingam, along with an image of the Nandi bull. Illustrative carvings adorn the lower stories of the two-storied Nandi Mandap, which is connected with the porch by a living rock bridge.

Most of the deities at the left of the entrance are Shaivaite (followers of Lord Shiva) while the right hand side houses Vaishnavaites deities (followers of Lord Vishnu). The courtyard has two pillars, with the flagstaff, known as Dhvajastambhas and houses a huge sculpture of Ravana, who is shown attempting to lift Mount Kailasa. It took 200 years and 200,000 tonnes of rock to complete this temple. Other prominent Hindu caves are Dasha Avatara cave (cave 15), Ramesvara cave (cave 21) and Dhumar Lena cave (cave 29)

Jain Caves

Jain caves symbolize certain special aspects of the Jain religion, especially the strict sense of asceticism. Though the Jain caves are not as much in size as the other caves, they do exhibit remarkably detailed art works. The thirty-second cave is known as Indra Sabha. It is basically a shrine, which has a ceiling that is adorned with a very delicate carving of the lotus flower.

There is another cave, where one can see an impressive yakshi seated on her lion under a mango tree, which is laden with fruits. Almost all the caves belonging to the Jain religion have intricate detailing that ornaments their interiors. Many of the caves also have fragments of paintings in the ceilings, which stand testimony to the fact that once they were decorated with rich images.

Fateh Prakash Palace

Fateh Prakash Palace counts amongst the popular tourist attractions of the Udaipur city of Rajasthan. This palace is a part of the City Palace complex, which dates back to the early 20th century, the time when Maharana Fateh Singhji used to rule over Udaipur. The most famous attractions of the Fatehprakash Palace of India are the exquisite Mewar School paintings that adorn its corridors.

This school flourished in Rajasthan during 17th to 19th century. Maharana Fateh Singh used this palace for residential purposes.



Location: Udaipur, Rajasthan

The palace has now been converted into a hotel. A visit to the Fateh Prakash Palace is incomplete without a visit to its excellent Crystal Gallery. The gallery houses an amazing assortment of Osler's Crystals, which were mainly collected by Maharana Sajjan Singh. Infact, he was the one who placed an order with F & C Osler of England, for purchasing the crystals. However, it was quite unfortunate that the Maharana could not live to see the crystals being delivered at the palace.

The most famous item of the Crystal Gallery is a carpet, which has been studded with sparkling jewels. The other crystal items displayed in the gallery include tables, sofa sets, dinning table, dressers, fountains, beds, washing bowls, decanters, perfume bottles and so on. Apart from the Crystal Gallery, another hall worth visiting in the palace is the Durbar Hall. The hall served as the perfect venue for holding state banquets as well as formal and informal meetings.

The best as well as the most magnificent Durbar Hall in country, the Durbar Hall of Fateh Prakash Palace is enormous in size. One can only be mesmerized by the exquisite chandelier, which hangs in the middle of the Durbar Hall. Other attractions of the hall include the paintings of Maharanas and a rich collection of arms and weapons on its walls. The numerous viewing galleries surrounding the hall were meant to ensure that the ladies of the palace have an outside view from the privacy of their veils.

Feroz Shah Kotla

Feroz Shah Kotla was the erstwhile citadel of Ferozabad, the Fifth city of Delhi. It is situated off the Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg of Delhi, near the Feroz Shah Kotla Cricket Stadium. Emperor Firoz Shah Tughlaq, the nephew of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq and successor of Muhammad Tughlaq, got the citadel of Ferozshah Kotla built in the year 1354. Along with the citadel, he also laid the foundation of the city of Ferozabad. The city and its citadel were designed by the famous architects, Malik Ghazi and Abdul Hakk.



Location: Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Delhi

Founded By: Firoz Shah Tughlaq

Founded In: 1354

Architects: Malik Ghazi and Abdul Hakk

During that time, Feroz Shah Kotla was popularly known as Kushk-I-Feroz, meaning Feroz's palace. The city of Ferozabad extended from Hauz-Khas in the southwest to Pir Ghaib in the north. The Firoz Shah

Kotla citadel of India comprises of three rubble-built walled rectangular enclosures. The design of the citadel looks like an irregular polygon, which has the eastern wall in one alignment. The eastern wall of Feroz Shah Kotla was constructed on the embankment of River Yamuna.

It is believed that Emperor Firoz Shah Tughlaq had three other palaces in Delhi, when he began the construction of this citadel. The reason for its construction was that all the other palaces were facing a shortage of water. Of the three enclosures of Feroz Shah Kotla, the largest enclosure is the central one. It is presently known as 'Kotla Feroz Shah' and has an impressive main gateway in the western direction. On either side of the gateway are fortresses, which lie mainly in ruins today.

Ferozshah Kotla is at times compared with the 'Windsor Palace of London'. In its glorious days, the citadel was the perfect example of architectural beauty. However, it was abandoned in the year 1490 and since then, it has been lying mostly in ruins. The successive rulers of Delhi used most of its ruins for the construction of other cities. However, even after being in neglect for many years, Firoz Shah Kotla still has many interesting structures within its premises and is visited by tourists in large numbers.

Ashokan Pillar

There is an Ashokan Pillar situated inside the premises of the citadel, which lies to the north of Jami Masjid. The pillar dates back to the 3rd century BC and rises to a height of 13 m. It is a sandstone structure and stands on a rubble-built three-tiered pyramidal structure. Emperor Feroz Shah Tughlaq got the pillar, which weighs 27 tonnes, transferred from Topar (Ambala) to Delhi. Another pillar, quite similar to the Ashokan Pillar, was also brought by Feroz Shah Kotla and it was fixed on the ridge.

Ashokan Pillar has been carved with seven main inscriptions or edicts of Emperor Ashoka. Apart from that, there are numerous figures and minor inscriptions engraved on the pillar. The edicts were written in the Brahmi script of Pali language and were first deciphered by James Prinsep in 1837. The pillar is made of sandstone. However, it was polished in such manner that even today it looks as if it has been made up of some metal. Since Feroz Shah adorned the pillar during his rule, it came to be known as 'Minar-i-Zarin'.

Jami Masjid

Jami Masjid is situated next to the Ashokan Pillar in the citadel of Feroz Shah Kotla. The structure that once made up the mosque has today been reduced to the southern and western walls with the gateway. Jami Masjid was one of the largest mosques of the Tughlaq period and rests on a series of cells on the ground. It is still in use today. However, most of the structures of the mosque, including the prayer hall as well as the walkways, situated on the sides of the courtyard that was used by the royal ladies, have vanished.

The mosque is made of local quartzite stone and is entered from the northern side. At one point of time, Jami Masjid was connected to the citadel by a bridge. It is said that, in the past, there was an entrance to the mosque from the underground cells also. So great was the beauty of the mosque that Timur constructed a similar mosque at Samarkand in Iran. In the year 1759, the mosque became the site of the murder of Emadul Mulk, the prime minister of the Mughal Emperor Alamgir Sani, by his own emperor.

Baoli

As you move towards the northwest of the Ashokan pillar, you will come across a garden. In the center of the garden is situated a large circular baoli or step well. Apart from subterranean apartments, the baoli also has a large underground drain for the water towards its eastern side. The baoli was only used by persons of royal lineage and used to serve as a cool haven during summers.

Other Structures

The other structures inside the Feroz Shah Kotla include the foundation structure of a square hall. It is situated behind Ashokan Pillar, to the north of Jami Mosque. Then, there are ruins of many other structures, which have not been identified as yet, since they are in a very decrepit shape.

Fort St George

Fort St George claims the distinction of being the first fortress of the British in India. The British founded this citadel, in the year 1644, at Chennai, presently the capital city of Tamil Nadu.

With the construction of the fort, the surrounding area also witnessed a surge in the settlements as well as construction activities. Infact, one can say that the present day city of Chennai (Madras) evolved around St George Fort only.

East India Company had initially entered India to indulge in trade and commerce. Their first licensed trading started in the city of Surat.



Location: Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Founded By: The British

Founded In: 1644

However, soon, the company decided to enter into the spice trade, for which it was necessary to have a port nearer to the Malaccan Straits. A strip of coastal land, called Madraspattinam, was purchased from a local chieftain and the construction of a harbor and a fort began. The day, on which the construction work on the fort was completed, coincided with St. George's Day. This is the reason why the fort was named as Fort Saint George. Soon, it became the heart of merchant activity & developed into a new settlement area called George Town.

The town started expanding at a fast pace, including the surrounding villages within itself. The expanding settlements finally evolved into the present city of Chennai. Fort St George is surrounded by walls that are 6 m high and have endured numerous assaults in the 18th century. The fort also came into the possession of the French. However, the French control lasted for a period of three years only, from 1746 to 1749. Fort St George was then restored to the British under the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

In order to prevent outsiders from entering the premises of the fort, the British got a moat built around it. The area inside the moat was named as 'The White Town'. Fort Saint George boasts of a rich collection of artifacts belonging to the British colonial period, which is displayed inside its premises. Apart from the artifacts, the fort is also home to some French antiques. Many known personalities, like Thomas Pitt, Elihu Yale, Robert Clive and Lord Cornwallis, have either stayed in the fort or frequented it during British rule.

Many officials of the British East India Company used the fort for residential purposes also. Presently, the fort is serving as the administrative headquarters of the legislative assembly of the state of Tamil Nadu. The troops, which are in transit to different places in South India and Andaman Island, still have access to the barracks situated inside its premises. The most popular structures inside the fort include St. Mary's Church, Museum, Wellesley House and Clive House.

St. Mary's Church

The oldest Anglican Church in India, St. Mary's Church dates back to somewhere around 1678. It took approximately two and a half years to complete the church, which was built during the reign of Charles, the second. The prayer hall of St. Mary's Church served as the venue for the marriages of Robert Clive and Governor Elihu Yale (Founded of Yale University in the United States). The church, adorned with marble plaques, is popularly known as the 'Westminster Abbey of the East'.

Museum

The premises of Fort St. George display items that were kept in the fort during British rule. The building that houses the museum was completed in 1795 and initially; it was used as the office of the Madras Bank. The rich collection of the museum comprises of weapons, coins, medals, uniforms and other artifacts from Britain, France and India, almost all of which date back to the British period. The original letters written by Clive and Cornwallis, along with a set of period uniforms, also form a part of this collection. However, what serves as the icing on the cake is a large statue of Lord Cornwallis. All the relics exhibited at the museum serve as a reminder of the British rule in India.

Wellesley House

The Wellesley House is a major attraction of the St George Fort. On the first floor of the house is the banquet hall, which displays the paintings of the Governor of the Fort, along with the other high officials of the Regime. The battlements of the Wellesley House stand adorned with the canons belonging to Tipu Sultan. As one enters the building, the first sight that comes across is that of a 14.5 ft statue situated near a stairway, which was created by Charles Bank in England.

Clive House

Clive House, also known as the 'Admiralty House', once served as the residence of Robert Clive. He first stayed in this house with his wife in the year 1753. A brick and mortar structure, Clive House was constructed more than 300 years back. The wooden floors of the house seem to be beautifully complimented by its intricately carved wooden staircases and high ceilings. A huge hall on the first floor is ornamented with Corinthian columns and was used as a banquet hall for parties and celebrations.

Gangaikondacholapuram

Gangaikondacholapuram Temple is situated near the Thanjavur city of Tamil Nadu. The temple was founded in the year 1020 and it took approximately nine years to fully complete the construction work. Gangaikondacholapuram Temple of Tanjore is dedicated to Lord Shiva, one of the Hindu Trinity of Gods. The person who can be credited with the erection of this temple is King Rajendra Chozhan, son of Raja Raja Chozhan. Rajendra built this temple to recreate his father's achievement, the Brihadeeswarar Temple of Thanjavur.



Location: Near Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

Founded By: King Rajendra Chozhan

Founded In: 1020-1029 AD

Dedicated To: Lord Shiva

The time when the Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple of India was built represents the golden period of the Cholas. During those years, the Cholas were engaged in the invasion of northern

territories and wealth was flowing in from all directions. The vimanas of the temples have been adorned with exquisite carvings and reflect a heavy influence of the Northern styles. One can see magnificent carvings on the hard southern granite stones of the temple. The sculptures of the temple are quite characteristic of the temples constructed by the Cholas.

This elaboration and ornamentation, a result of contact with the Northern Chalukya kingdoms, reflects a departure from the earlier Chola and Pallava style of subtleness and simplicity. Numerous sculptures embellish the interiors of the Gangaikondacholapuram Temple of Tamil Nadu. The most impressive as well as most splendid sculptures are those of The Nataraja (Shiva in the form of a Cosmic dancer) and Coronation of King Rajendra Chozhan by Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

Not to be missed are the sculptures of the Dancing Lord Ganesha and the Ardhanarishwar (the man-woman manifestation of Lord Shiva). The Ardhanarishwar form of Lord Shiva represents both duality of divine energy, with its one half having masculine characters and the other being that of an ornamental female. Inside the sanctum sanctorum is a four meter high Shiva Lingam. Surrounding the sanctum are two walls, which were meant to provide a private worship area to the royal family.

The entrance of the sanctum sanctorum is adorned with a beautifully crafted image of Goddess Saraswati. This image reflects an influence of Chalukyas in the architecture of the temple. One also comes across the 'Suryapita' icon that signifies sun worship as well as the 'Navagrahas' (nine planets), another influence of the Chalukyan connection. The Cholas were quite known for being scrupulous record keepers. The inscribed texts in copper plates and temple walls serve as a proof of this quality.

The inscriptions on the walls tell stories of many conquests of the warrior king, land donated during the period, coronation of kings etc. Gangaikondacholapuram Temple has witnessed numerous wars in the past. It used to serve as a garrison and fortified cantonment of, first, the Pandyas and, later, of the British. The temple has also been the target of several lootings and pillages. However, all this could never rob Gangaikondacholapuram Temple of its architectural beauty and sculptural treasures.

Gateway of India

Gateway of India is one of the major landmarks of India, situated in the Mumbai city of Maharashtra. The moment a visitor/tourist arrives in Mumbai by a boat, the first sight that comes in view is that of the massive Gateway of India. As you cross the gateway and move on to the steps behind it, the waterfront of the South Mumbai looms in view. From there, you can take boat trips to various locations, like the Elephanta Island.

The Gateway of India, though built as a welcome to King George V for his visit of 1911.

The foundation stone was laid on 31 March 1911, by the governor of Bombay Sir George Sydenham Clarke, with the final design of George Wittet sanctioned on 31 March 1913.

The gateway was opened on 4 December 1924, by the viceroy, the Earl of Reading.

The monument is basically a 26 meters high arch, which has been made out of yellow basalt and reinforced concrete.

The architecture of the gateway is mainly based on the Indo-Saracenic style. However, elements from the Muslim architectural styles of 16th century Gujarat can also be seen. The central dome of the Gateway of India, standing at a height of 26 m, has a diameter of fifteen meters. When the gateway was constructed, the whole of the harbor front had to be realigned. This was done in order to make it fall in line with a planned esplanade, which was to sweep down to the center of the Bombay city.

Even in the early 20th century, the construction cost of Gateway of India came to somewhere around Rs. 21 lakhs. The cost was mainly borne by the Government of India. Since adequate funds were not available, the plan of building an approach road could not be put into action. The main reason for the construction of the Gateway of India was built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Bombay (now Mumbai). The visit was made before the Darbar in Delhi that was set up in December 1911.

The foundation stone of the monument was laid by, the then, Governor of Bombay Sir George Sydenham Clarke on 31st March 1911. The architect of the gateway was George Wittet, whose final design was sanctioned in August 1914. The time period between 1915 and 1919 was spent on



Location: Mumbai, Maharashtra

Founded By: Sir George Sydenham Clarke

Founded In: 31st March 1911-1924

Architect: George Wittet

reclamations at Apollo Bundar, which were done for the land on which the gateway and the new sea wall were to be built. The foundations were finally completed in the year 1920 and the Gateway of India was completely ready in 1924.

Gammon India Limited, established by J C Gammon in 1919, carried out the construction work on the foundations of the gateway. During that time, it was the only construction company in India that was accredited with ISO 9001: 1994 certification in all fields of civil engineering, including design. The First Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry, which were the last British troops to leave India after the country gained independence, passed through the Gateway of India in a ceremony on 28th February 1948.

Gingee Fort

Gingee Fort also known as **Chenji** or **Jinji** or **Senchi** in Tamil Nadu, India is one of the few surviving forts in Tamil Nadu, India.

Gingee Fort counts amongst the few forts that are still in existence in Tamil Nadu. It is situated in the Villupuram district, which is situated at a distance of approximately 160 km from the Chennai city of India. The district also lies close to the union territory of Pondicherry.

One of the most unassailable citadels of India, the fort was given the name of 'Troy of the East' by the British.



Location: Villupuram District, near Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
Founded By: Chola Dynasty and then, Vijayanagar Empire
Founded In: 9th century

The place where the Gingi fort today stands, was once the site of a small fort built by the Chola dynasty in 9th century.

However, when the Vijayanagar Empire took over in the 13th century, modifications were carried out at the fort. It was then that the fort was elevated to the status of an impregnable citadel, which was intended to protect the small town of Gingee. The fort also served as the head quarters of the Gingee Nayaks, when they used to exercise their domination over the state of Tamil Nadu. The main reason behind the establishment of this fortress was to serve as a protection against any Muslim invasions.

Gingee fort came under the occupation of the great Maratha leader, Shivaji, in the year 1677. He recaptured the fort from the Bijapur sultans who had initially taken over its control by defeating the Marathas. During Shivaji's reign, the fort was further strengthened. The decade of 1690s saw Gingi fort being constantly laid under siege by the Mughals. However, a full decade passed before they could take over the fort. From the Mughals, Gingee fort fell into the hands of the Carnatic Nawabs, who lost it to the French in 1750.

Before the British took control of the fort in the year 1761, it briefly went into the hands of Hyder Ali. Gingee fort spreads over three hills, which have been connected through its walls. The total area enclosed within the fort is approximately seven sq km. It is situated at a height of approximately 800 feet and stands surrounded by a 24 m wide moat. Gingee fort comprises of a number of structures inside its premises, like Kalyana Mahal (marriage hall), granaries, prison cells, a military gymnasium, etc.

There is also a temple inside the fort, dedicated to a female Hindu deity, known as Chenjiamman. The ramparts have a sacred pond, which is known as 'aanaikulam'. The naturally hilly terrain of Krishnagiri, Chakkilidrug and Rajagiri hills make up the walls of Gingee fort. The gaps in these natural walls have been sealed with the help of the main wall, which has a breadth of approximately 20 m. Gingee fort was

declared a National Monument in the year 1921 and is presently under the control of the Archeological Department.

Golconda Fort

Golconda Fort is a magnificent monument, situated on the western periphery of the Hyderabad city. The fort was built under the patronage of Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah, in the year 1525. The culture as well as splendor of the Nawabs is truly reflected in the architectural style of the Golconda Fort.

Since the fort was built with infallible defenses, its architecture is considered to be military in its style. In the entire history of Golconda fort, it has never been known to fall to enemy attack.

The colossal battlements, fortresses and gateways of Golconda Fort make it one of the most defensive and impenetrable strongholds of its time. It is situated atop a jagged terrain, which is scattered with rocks and stones. The aural features of the fort also highlight the fact that the builders of that time were technically quite advanced. The waterworks seen inside as well as below the premises of the fort further stand as a testimony to the architectural skill of the Qutab Shahi rulers. The water needs of the people living in the Golconda Fort were met through a maze of clay pipes fed by Persian wheels, located below the fort.

Golconda fort was initially built by the Kakatiya rulers as a mud fort, named Mangalawaram or Mankal, in the year 1143. However, the fort assumed its present shape when Quli Qutub Shah founded the kingdom of Golconda and turned it into a strong fortress. Much later, Naya Quila (an irregular rhombus with a rough pentagon) was added to the fort, on its northeastern side. The rugged terrain, the huge boulders and the eerie ambience surrounding the fort lend it a mystical charm.

The walls of the Golconda Fort are approximately four miles in circumference and comprise a total of 87 semi-circular bastions inside them. Apart from that, there are eight gateways and four drawbridges forming the interiors of the fort. In the year 1687, Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb invaded the fort and left it almost completely in ruins. However, one can still see some of the huge cannons mounted at a few points. Golconda Fort is basically made up of four distinct forts that have been joined together.

The lowest structure of the fort is its outermost enclosure, which is entered through the Fateh Darwaza or the Victory Gate, situated near the southeastern corner. The gate was so named after Emperor Aurangzeb succeeded in invading the fort and bringing it to ruins. It is known for its magnificent architecture and amazing acoustics. This fort comprises of a number of building inside its complex, including noble's mansions, bazaars, temples, mosques, soldiers' barracks, stables, etc.



Location: Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
Founded By: Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah
Founded In: 16th century

Amongst the numerous imposing gateways of the Golconda fort, the most impressive one is the Fateh Darwaza. The darwaza, also known as victory gate, is an architectural beauty and is quite famous for its amazing acoustics. The fortresses of Golconda still house the canons that were once used by the Qutab Shahis as well as those of the Mughal forces. A canon, known as Fateh Rahbir (guide to victory), was boarded on Pethla Burj by Emperor Aurangzeb and reminds the people of his resolve to conquer Golconda.

One of the most magnificent as well as the most popular structures in the Golconda fort is the Balahisar Darwaza. The gateway stand adorned with statues of mythical beasts and lions, which seem to be guarding it. From Balahisar, one has to climb almost 380 uneven stone steps to reach the inner complex. The main complex of the fort is made up of a series of structures, ranging from those used for public audiences to the ones used as royal residences and halls. On the right hand side of the porch are mortuary baths.

These baths were meant for giving ritualistic bath to the deceased harem ladies. Then, we have the ruined Nagina Bagh, situated within an enclosed area. As you move further, you will come across offices of Akanna and Madanna, two important Hindu officials of Qutab Shah. Near the upper entrance are the ruins of Ambar Khana, along with those of Bari Baoli (step well). Then, there is a Hindu temple, belonging to the Kakatiya period and dedicated to Goddess Kali, which was carved out of a single huge boulder.

The mosque built by Taramati and a temple, Ram Mandir, are the other important buildings situated within the Golconda fort. To reach the zenana palaces (residence of women), one has to climb down a series of narrow steps. Built on huge platforms, the palaces have been adorned with high ceilings, decorative niches, alcoves and cornices, etc. Graceful ornamentation on stucco adds to the splendor of the delicate arabesques in the roundels above the side arches.

Naya Qila is an extension of the Golkonda Fort opposite to it. This ramparts of this new fort starts after the residential area in between. This area is very extensive with extensive ramparts, many burj (Arabic for tower) and Haathiyaan Ka Jhaad - a very large and old Baobab Tree with an enormous girth. It also includes a war mosque. Plans are afoot by the local government to convert the area into a Golf Club.

- René Magritte's painting Golkonda was named after the city.
- John Keats' early poem "On receiving a curious Shell" opens with the lines: "Hast thou from the caves of Golconda, a gem / pure as the ice-drop that froze on the mountain?"

The Sound and Light Show

One of the most popular attractions of the Golconda Fort is a sound and light show, held on a daily basis, except Monday. Audio and visual effects are used to display the entire story of the Golconda Fort before the audience. The show is presented in three languages, English, Hindi and Telugu.

Golden Temple

Golden Temple is counted amongst the most revered pilgrimages of the Sikhs in India. It is located in the Amritsar, one of the most developed cities of Punjab. Sikh devotees from different parts of the country come to Amritsar to offer their prayers at the Golden Temple, which is officially known by the name of Harmandir Sahib.



The term 'Harmandir Sahib' has been derived from two words, Hari meaning 'God' and Mandir meaning 'Temple'. Thus, Harmandir literally means the 'Temple of God'.

Location: Amritsar, Punjab

Official Name: Harmandir Sahib

Founded By: Hazrat Mian Mir

Founded In: 1588-1601

It was built by the fifth Sikh guru, Guru Arjan Dev, in the 16th Century. In 1604, Guru Arjan Dev completed the Adi Granth, the holy scripture of Sikhism, and installed it in the Gurdwara.

The site where the gurdwara now stands was once the venue of a temple, surrounded by a small lake and a thin forest. The nearby town of Goindval served as the residence of the third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Das. The great Mughal Emperor Akbar used to come to the town to visit the Guru. He got so much impressed by the way of life in the town that he allocated the revenues of several villages lying in the surroundings to the Guru's daughter, Bhani, as a gift on her marriage to Bhai Jetha.

Bhai Jetha went on to become the fourth Guru of the Sikhs and came to be known as Guru Ram Das. He enlarged the lake surrounding the temple and even constructed a small township around it. The town initially came to be known as 'Guru Ka Chak', 'Chak Ram Das' or 'Ram Das Pura'. However, the full-fledged town of Amritsar was developed under the leadership of the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev. Hazrat Mian Mir, a great Sufi saint of Lahore and a friend of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, laid the foundation stone of Golden Temple in December 1588.

It took approximately 13 years to construct the monument and it was completely ready and 1601. The Afghans, under the rule of Ahmed Shah Abdali, attacked Golden temple and inflicted great damages on it. Owing to this destruction, the gurdwara had to be substantially rebuilt during the 1760s. The gurdwara is situated in the middle of a small lake, which is known as the 'Sarovar'. The devotees believe that the water of the lake has curative powers and call it as Amrit (The Holy Water).

One can enter the gurdwara complex through any of its four entrances. The four entrances of Golden Temple are suggestive of the importance of acceptance and openness in relation to human beings.

There is no restriction on people for entering the gurdwara. People of any religion, color, creed or sex can enter Harimandir Sahib. The only restraint that has been applied is that a person must not drink alcohol, eat meat, smoke cigarettes or consume any drugs while inside the premises of the shrine.

Just like in any other gurdwara, people entering the Golden Temple have to cover their heads as a sign of respect. They are also required to wash their feet in the small pool of water before entering the sanctum sanctorum. Built on a 67 sq ft. square platform, Harmandir Sahib covers an area of 40.5 sq ft. At the end of the walkway is Darshani Deori (an arch), with a doorframe that is approximately 10 ft in height and 8ft 6in in breadth. The door panes are adorned with artistic style and lead to the ramp taking to the main building.

13 feet wide 'Pardakshna' (circumambulatory path) runs around the main shrine and leads to the 'Har ki Paudi' (steps of God). The main building of Golden Temple has three stories, with their front facing the bridge. The central hall is small square room with three entrances. A recitation of Guru Granth Sahib is held here on a regular basis. Just above this room is the low fluted dome, adorned with lotus petal motif. On the top of it is an inverted lotus, the 'Kalash' with a beautiful 'Chhatri'.

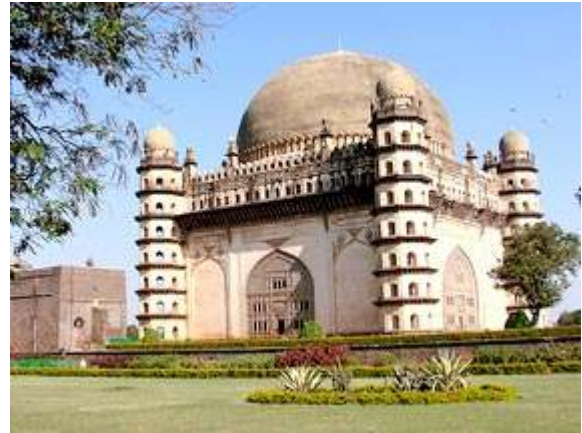
Golden Temple is festooned with decorative gilding and marble work, which date back to the 1800s. The magnificent gold work and marble work was done under the reign of Ranjit Singh, the Maharaja of the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab. The architecture of the gurdwara represents an exceptional harmony between the Muslim and the Hindu architectural styles. Infact, it is said that the architecture of Harmandir Sahib has created an independent Sikh school of architecture in the Indian subcontinent.

After Operation Black Thunder of 1988, Government acquired a narrow peripheral strip of land surrounding the gurdwara. This was done for the purpose of creating a security belt. This led to displacement of a large number of people and as a result, large scale protests. The project was discontinued at that time and was revived only in 1993 by the Deputy Commissioner Karan Bir Singh Sidhu. He changed the concept of the periphery, from that of a security belt to that of a second parikarma.

A serene landscape, fully consistent with the beauty of the Golden Temple, was also created. The pilgrims visiting the Golden Temple can only travel by foot in the Galliara, vehicles are not permitted. On 6th July 2005, the SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) decided to install closed circuit television cameras around the Harmandir Complex for security purposes.

Gol Gumbaz

Gol Gumbaz is a mausoleum, situated in the Bijapur city of Karnataka. It serves as the last resting place of the seventh ruler of the Adil Shahi dynasty, Muhammad Adil Shah. One of the most magnificent structures built by the erstwhile Adil Shahi rulers, Gol Gumbaz today counts amongst the major tourist attractions of Bijapur. The mausoleum has been built as per the Islamic architectural style, which is found in India in general and the Deccan region in particular.



Location: Bijapur, Karnataka

Founded By: Muhammad Adil Shah

Founded In: 1656

Gol Gumbaz situated in Bijapur district of Karnataka is the second largest dome in the world. The Gol Gumbaz was built by Muhammad Adil Shah in the year 1656.

The tomb, located in Bijapur, Karnataka in India, was completed in 1656 by the architect Yaqut of Dabul. Although "impressively simple in design", it is the "structural triumph of Deccan architecture".

Almost all the hallmarks of the traditional Islamic or Persian style of architecture are reflected in the architecture of Gol Gumbaz. These include a dome, different types of shapely arches, geometric proportions and use of Islamic motifs. However, one cannot ignore the local influences that are clearly visible. The greatly foliated drum below the globular dome and the use of the local dark brown stone, which was a characteristic trait of the Bijapur buildings of that period, serve as a proof of the local influences.

Gol Gumbaz dates back to the year 1656 and was built by Muhammad Adil Shah in his own lifetime. One of the most impressive monuments in Bijapur, the mausoleum is an enormous cube, which is adorned with octagonal seven storied towers. Crowning the towers are small rounded domes that are seen projecting at the corners. Each face of the Gol Gumbaz is flanked by three arches, with the central arch being huge in size. Bordering the central arch are two arches that are smaller in size.

The entrance to the arch has been inscribed with a few lines, which declare that the structure houses the mortal remains of Muhammad Adil Shah. There is a projection on the tomb walls is aligned with the sixth story of the corner towers. The projection is backed by closely set brackets, which are topped by a band of small arched openings. The ramparts of the mausoleum have an ornamental binding, looming beyond which is the spherical dome. The dome is huge, with an internal diameter of 125 feet and its apex being 200 feet high.

It is built in the typical Bijapur style and has a foliated drum. Instead of a pier, the dome of Gol Gumbaz has a pillar. The crescent finial that prevails over the spires illustrates the Turkish origin of the ruler. The

interiors of the monument have a single square chamber of grandiose magnitude. Each side of the chamber is 135 feet high, with the walls being over 10 feet thick and 110 feet high. The ornamentations of the mausoleum have been incorporated in the construction in such a way that they reflect an unusual feature of simple grandeur.

Eight pointed intersected arches have been constructed for sustaining the colossal dome over the square room. The arches are perfectly stable and are capable of contracting any impetus from the weight of the dome. On the top of the arches is a circular platform, which comes into contact with the base of the dome. An octagon was produced at the intersection between the square chamber and circular base of the dome to ensure an easy and transition from one to the other.

Gomateshwara Statue

The Monolith of Gommateshwara is situated in Sravanabelgola, one of the most sacred Jain pilgrim centers in India. Considered to be the tallest monolithic sculpture in the world, Gommateswara statue is the pride of Karnataka. It is perched on top of the Indragiri hill and serves as the symbol of the grandeur of the Jain religion. The monolith dates back to the year 980 AD and was constructed by Chavundaraya, a minister and commandant of King Rachamalla of the Ganga dynasty.

Gommateshwara Monolith stands tall at a height of 58 feet. It is constructed entirely out of granite and depicts Jain saint Gommateshwara, also known as Bahubali, without any clothes. The colossal statue is believed to have been carved out of a single rock and can be seen from as far as 25 km. Since it is situated on a hill, one has to climb around 614 steps to reach the statue. The Monolith of Gommateshwara has been built as per the typical Jain architecture and beautifully represents the exquisite craftsmanship of the Indian artisans.

The body of the saint has been sculpted in perfect proportions and one can feel calmness in his face. There is a very interesting story behind the construction of the Gommateshwara statue. Bahubali was one of the two sons of Adinath, the first of the 24 Jain saints (Tirthankars). He was never interested in the material possessions of his life and gave away the entire kingdom of his father to his brother. Renouncing the world, he underwent rigorous penance and was recognized as Gommateshwara.

It is said that Chavundaraya's mother saw a huge statue of Gommateshwara in her dreams. After waking up, she vowed that she would not eat until her dream was converted into reality. Thereafter, Chavundaraya and his mother went on a pilgrimage, in which they came across the two hills at Sravanabelgola already sanctified by the Jains. Chavundaraya decided to build the statue of Gommateshwara on the larger hill and ordered the carving of the monolith out of a boulder that stood on top of the hill. The image was consecrated in 980 AD.

Festival

After every 12 years, during the Mahamastakabhisheka ceremony, the Monolith of Gommateshwara is anointed with tons of coconut milk, jaggery, curd, bananas, milk, poppy seeds, sandalwood, and saffron. Jain pilgrims come here from different parts of the country as well as the world to witness this event.



Location: Sravanabelagola,
Karnataka

Founded By: Chavundaraya

Founded In: 980 AD

Status: Tallest monolithic
sculpture of the world

Gwalior fort

Gwalior Fort (ग्वालियर क़िला) in Gwalior, in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

It was the residence of the royal Maratha family 'Scindia' who were the rulers of Gwalior State, entitled to a 21 gun salute. It is one of the biggest forts in India and a postage stamp has been issued by the Indian Postal Service to commemorate the importance of this fort. From historical records, it is established that it was built in the 8th century.

It is said that the Mughal Emperor Babur (1483–1531) described it as, "The pearl in the necklace of the forts of Hind". The fort, also given the epithet "Gibraltar of India", provides a panoramic view of the old Gwalior town, which is to its east.



Location: Madhya Pradesh

Founded By: Raja Man Singh Tomar

Founded In: 8th Century

The Gwalior fort spreads out over an area of 3 square km, surrounded by concrete walls of sandstone. The Gwalior fort encloses three temples, six palaces and numerous water tanks. At a point of time Gwalior fort was regarded as North and Central India's most invincible fortress.

The fort was built by Raja Man Singh Tomar in the 15th century. The fort of Gwalior has seen many ups and downs of history. In the course of almost five hundred years, the Gwalior fort went from one ruler to another.

From the Tomars it passed to the Mughals, Marathas and the British. The Gwalior fort finally went to the Scindias from the British. The Teli-ka-Mandir is the most famous of all the temples of the Gwalior fort. This temple was built in the Dravidian style shrine and is notable for its generously sculpted exterior. The Saas-Bahu Temples (two pillared temples which stand next to each other, one larger than the other) are also fascinating.

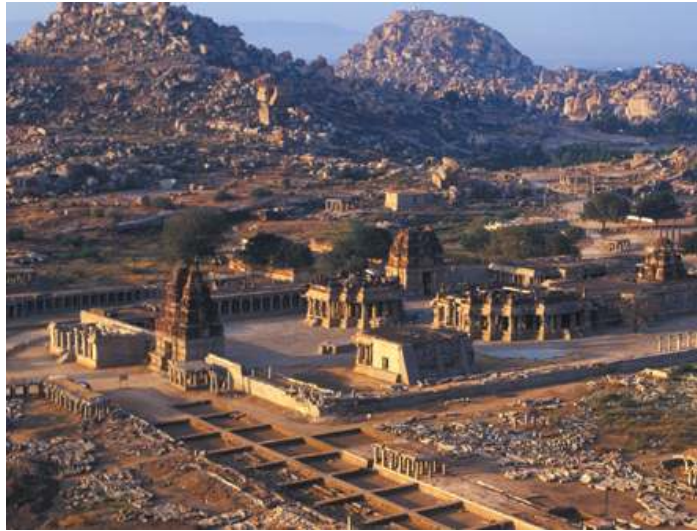
The Man Singh Palace is one of the most amazing palaces of the Gwalior fort. It was built by Man Singh in the 15th century. It was in the same palace the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb imprisoned and later murdered his brother Murad. Then there is gruesome Jauhar Kund, where the women of the harem burnt themselves to death after the defeat of the king of Gwalior in 1232. Other significant palaces within the Gwalior Fort include the Karan Palace, the Jahangir Mahal, the Shah Jahan Mahal and the Gujri Mahal (built by Man Singh for his favorite queen, Mrignayani).

Hampi Ruins

The city Hampi served as the capital city of the Vijayanagar Empire of India in the 14th century. It is situated in the Deccan state of Karnataka and is spread over an area of more than 26 sq km.

Hampi stands surrounded by River Tungabhadra in the northern side and by rocky granite on the other three sides. The site where Hampi now stands is believed to have housed the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha (associated with Ramayana).

The city is believed to be the abode of Lord Virupaksha and His consort Pampadevi.



Location: Karnataka

Status: World Heritage Center

It was when the Mughal invaders destroyed the Vijayanagar Empire that the city of Hampi was reduced to ruins. Savage massacre and horrors describe the carnage inflicted upon the city during that time. However, the remains of palaces and gateways of the broken city stand as a testimony to its erstwhile grandeur as well as its senseless destruction. Hampi Ruins have been listed as a World Heritage Center. In March 2002, the Government of India announced that Hampi would be developed as an international destination center.

Almost all the ruins of Hampi are situated along the road that leads to the city, from Kamalapura. The first structure one comes across is the Malyavanta Raghunathaswamy temple, built as per the Dravidian style of architecture. The outer walls of the temple have been carved with odd-looking fish and marine monsters. Then comes the Hampi Bazaar, a beautiful street that is 35 yards wide and nearly 800 yards long. On the western end of the Bazaar lies the Virupaksha Temple.

The temple enshrines the idols of Lord Shiva, Goddess Pampa and Goddess Bhuvaneswari. Virupaksha temple, which has a 120 feet tall tower, has some structures that date back to 11th or 12th century i.e., before the emergence of Vijayanagar kingdom. Situated close by is the huge monolith of Ugra Narasimha, which is 6.7 m tall. There is an inscription near the monolith, which states that it was carved from a single boulder in the year 1528, when Krishnadeva Raya used to reign over the Vijayanagar Empire.

Vithala Temple Complex

One of the most magnificent monuments amongst Hampi ruins is the Vithala Temple Complex, which stands adorned with 56 musical pillars. The famous Stone Chariot is situated to the east of the main hall and houses numerous revolving stone wheels. Right in the front of the sanctum sanctorum is the great

mandapa. Huge pillars of granite, about 15 feet in height, support the roof of the temple. Each of the pillars has been cut from one single block of stone. Situated near the temple is the 'Purandra Dasara Mantapa', a protected monument.

House of Victory

The House of Victory was constructed when Krishnadeva Raya came back after launching a successful assault over the King of Orissa. The house is ornamented with rows of beautiful plinths, which have elaborately and elegantly carved. It was here that the kings of Vijayanagar used to sit on a grand throne and enjoy the nine-day Dasara festival celebrations.

Hazara Ramaswami Temple

To the west of the House of Victory lies the Hazara Ramaswami temple. It is reached through a path that is entered through two ruined gates. It is said that the Hazara Ramaswami temple served as the private place of worship of the royal family. The main attraction of the temple comprises of a series of scenes from the Ramayana, which have been carved on two of the inner walls of the mandapa.

King's Balance

King's Balance was the weighing scale where kings weighed themselves against grain, gold or money. The weighed items were then distributed amongst the poor.

Queen's Bath

Queen's Bath is a swimming pool that was used by the queen of the palace. It is 50 ft long and 6 ft deep, adorned with arched corridors, projecting balconies and lotus-shaped fountains that used to sprout perfumed water.

Lotus Mahal

Lotus Mahal is a two-storied palace, which is shaped like a lotus flower from top. The palace used to serve as the summer residence of the queen. Beautiful archways set in geometric regularity festoon this two-storied structure.

Elephant Stables

The Elephant Stables of Hampi have been built as per an amalgamation of Hindu-Muslim style of architecture. It is quite huge in size and used to house about 11 elephants in separate compartments.

Mahanavami Dibba

Mahanavami Dibba is a wooden structure, from which the royalty used to watch the celebrations of the Mahanadu festival. The platform is adorned with beautiful carvings.

Mustard Ganesha

Mustard Ganesha is a 9 feet tall statue of Lord Ganesha, carved out of a single stone. It is also known as Sasivikalu Ganesha.

Noblemen's Palace

This palace used to house the aristocrats and other high-ranking officials.

Hawa Mahal

Hawa Mahal is a magnificent building situated in the 'Pink City' of Jaipur. A multi-layered monument, it dates back to the year 1799. The palace was built under the patronage of Sawai Pratap Singh, the grand son of Sawai Jai Singh and son of Sawai Madhoo Singh.

Mr. Lal Chand Ustad was selected as the architect of the splendid Hawa Mahal. The structure of the palace looks quite similar to a beehive.

It has been constructed out of red and pink sand stone, which have been meticulously outlined with white borders and motifs.

Its unique five-storey exterior is also akin to the honeycomb of the beehive with its 953 small windows called jharokhas that are decorated with intricate latticework. The original intention of the lattice was to allow royal ladies to observe everyday life in the street below without being seen, since they had to observe strict "purdah" (face cover).

The palace stands overlooking one of the main streets of Jaipur. It was initially intended to serve as the place from where women of the court could watch the activities taking place in the bazaar and the surrounding streets, from the comfort of stone-carved screens. Hawa Mahal has over 900 niches and has been built in the shape of the crown that adorns Lord Krishna's head. The palace has five stories and is ornamented with small casements, each of them having tiny windows and arched roofs.

The inner face of the palace as well as the chambers is quite plain and lacks any ornamentation. The entry of the palace is from its rear, rather than its front portion. A majestic door provides the entry to the palace and the first structure that one comes across is a spacious courtyard. Surrounding the courtyard on three sides is a double-storied building. The building houses an archaeological museum inside its premises. Only the eastern wing of the Hawa Mahal has three more stories above.

Hawa Mahal stands on top of a high podium and rises to a height of fifty feet. The thickness of the palace is even less than a foot and it comprises of a number of small personal chambers. Instead of regular stairs, there are ramps reaching the upper floors. As one looks up from the roadside, Hawa Mahal comes across as a delicate screen with its numerous casements. Little lattice worked windows, small balconies and arched roofs, with hanging cornices, make the palace definitely worth a visit.

Jaipur is synonymous with Hawa Mahal. This beautiful monument of India was built by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh in the year 1799. Also known as the Palace of Winds, this beautiful monument is the landmark of Jaipur. The monument is five stories high and the front of the monument is delicately



Location: Jaipur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh

Founded In: 1799

Architect: Mr. Lal Chand Ustad

carved with beautiful motifs. It provides an outstanding example of Rajput style of architecture. Hawa Mahal is not exactly a palace but a screen of superbly sculpted windows that look like the front of a palace. It was built for the royal ladies of Rajasthan who wanted to view the busy city life from inside a veil.

The structure comprises of 953 beautiful windows made out of pink sandstone. These windows are known as "Jharokhas" and are built in a way that it resembles a honeycomb. Behind every window is a small chamber meant for sitting comfortably and viewing the busy city life. The palace is called Hawa Mahal because these small windows allow natural circulation of air, thus allowing ventilation from all parts of the palace.

Humayun Tomb

Humayun's tomb is one of the monuments in New Delhi that date back to the time of the Mughals. It is situated on the Mathura road, where it crosses with the Lodi Road.

The **first building (tomb) in India** to be constructed under the rule of Mughal Emperor Akbar, the tomb dates back to the year 1562.

It took almost ten years to complete this magnificent monument. The architect of Humayun's tomb was Mirak Mirza Ghiyath and it was constructed under the supervision of Haji Begum, the Persian wife of Humayun.

Heavy influence of Persian art form is clearly visible in the architecture of the Humayun's tomb of India. The tomb is situated adjacent to the Nizamuddin Dargah, the shrine of the Sufi Saint Nizamuddin Auliya. Tomb is comparable in its architecture to the mausoleums of Timur and Bibi Khanam at Samarqand. Since the tomb is situated in the heart of a geometrically arranged garden, it is also known as the Garden Tomb of Humayun. The garden is divided into four parts and is known as the Char Bagh (Char meaning four and Bagh meaning garden).

The reason for such location of the main tomb is that in Islam, jannat or paradise is a place that is set in the middle of the garden. Its garden stands divided into 36 squares, by a network of water channels and paths. The first garden tomb of India, Humayun's Tomb is surrounded by a high rubble wall. The wall is also separated into four large squares, divided by walkways and channels. Each square is then further subdivided into smaller squares by pathways. This style of gardens was introduced by Babur and went on till the time of Shah Jahan.

A long axial processional track provides entrance into the tomb. As you move further, you will come across a number of gateways. The mausoleum has an octagonal shape and its foundation platform is composed of numerous arcades. Beneath these arcades are the graves of lesser-known people of the royal court, like various nobles and workers of Humayun's period. The central chamber of Humayun's tomb is a double-storied structure and is quite huge in size. The chamber has four offsets and the facades of its two stories have cloisters.

The openings to the chamber have been covered with perforated screens. On each side of the chamber are three vigorous arches that seem to be dominating it. Amongst these arches, the central one is the



Location: Mathura Road, New Delhi

Built By: Hamida Banu Begam, widow of Humayun

Founded In: 1562-1572

Architect: Mirak Mirza Ghiyath

Entombs: Mughal Emperor Humayun

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site

highest. The main room of the central chamber houses the cenotaph of the Emperor Humayun and his Queen Bega Begum. The top of the tomb is adorned with a huge double dome, measuring approximately 42.5 m in height. The dome is made of white marble and it claims the distinction of being the first double dome in any building in India.

Humayun's tomb has been built mainly with red sandstone, with subtle use of white and black marble, mainly in the borders. There are two prominent double-storied gateways, one on the west and the other on the south, which provide entrance to the entire structure of the Humayun's tomb. However, these days, the southern gateway remains closed. In the middle of the eastern wall is the baradari (pavilion), while the hamam (bath chamber) is situated, in the center of the northern wall.

Apart from housing the graves of Humayun and his wife, Humayun's tomb also entombs a number of other Mughal personalities. Hamida Begum (Akbar's mother), Dara Shikoh (Shah Jahan's son) and Bahadur Shah II (the last Mughal Emperor) have been buried here. The tomb has been declared as a protected monument and is presently under the ownership and management of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Humayun's Tomb has also been listed in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites in 1993.

India Gate

India Gate is a magnificent monument, situated near the famous Connaught Place market of New Delhi. The edifice was constructed as a commemorative structure, in the memory of the soldiers who lost their lives while fighting in the World War I. Falling on the Rajpath; India Gate stands tall at a height of 42 m. It is a very popular picnic spot and people from all over Delhi come here to enjoy and relax, especially in summer evenings.

Following India's independence, the India Gate became the site of the Indian Army's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, known as *Amar Jawan Jyoti* ("the flame of the immortal soldier").

India Gate is also known as All India War Memorial.

Edwin Lutyens, who was the man behind the design and construction of the entire New Delhi, designed this monument also.

The foundation stone of India Gate was laid down in the year 1921, by His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught. Almost ten years later, the monument was dedicated to the country, by the then Viceroy, Lord Irwin.

India Gate, an "Arc-de-Triomphe", comes across as a gateway in the middle of a crossroad. It is designed in the shape of an arch, which stands on a low base of red Bharatpur stone.

The arch of India Gate mounts in stages to a huge cornice, underneath which Imperial suns have been inscribed. Both the sides have been inscribed with the word 'India', which is flanked by the dates MCMXIV (1914) on the left and MCMXIX (1919) on the right. There is a shallow domed bowl at the top, which was initially intended to be filled with burning oil on special occasions. However, this practice is not in vogue today. The names of the martyred British and Indian soldiers of the Afghan war of 1919 have been written on the Indian Gate.

Another memorial, Amar Jawan Jyoti, was added to the existing structure of India Gate after the country became independence. It is an arched memorial that has an eternal flame, which keeps on burning day and night. The everlasting flame was lighted as a mark of respect to the soldiers who laid down their lives in the India-Pakistan War of 1971. India Gate is encircled by a number of fountains, which are beautifully lit at night. The monument should be visited after dusk, when it is magnificently floodlit.



Location: Near Connaught Place, Delhi

Designed By: Edwin Lutyens

Founded In: 1921

Significance: War Memorial of martyred soldiers

Jagannath Temple

Jagannath Temple of Puri is one of the most revered pilgrim destinations in India. The temple is dedicated to Lord Jagannath (Lord of the Universe), another form of Lord Krishna. One of the most popular attractions of the Jagannath Puri Temple of Orissa is its annual Rath Yatra, a chariot festival in which a procession of the three main temple deities, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra, is taken out on ornately bejeweled chariots. The temple is especially sacred to the followers of the Vaishnava traditions.



Some time back, copper plates were discovered from the Ganga dynasty. As per the inscriptions on these plates, Jagannath temple was constructed under the patronage of Anantavarman Chodaganga Dev, the ruler of Kalinga. Especially the Jagamohana and the Vimana portions of the temple date back to the time period when Anantavarman was in power (1078 - 1148). However, the temple assumed its present shape under Ananga Bhima Dev, who got it reconstructed in the year 1174.

Location: Puri, Orissa

Dedicated To: Lord Jagannath (Krishna)

Founded By: Anantavarman Chodaganga Dev

Reconstructed By: Ananga Bhima Dev

Famous For: Annual Rath Yatra

Till the year 1558, when the Afghan general Kalapahad attacked Orissa, Lord Jagannath was worshipped in the temple. However, with the arrival of the Afghans, the worship was stopped. It was only when Ramachandra Dev established an independent kingdom at Khurda in Orissa that Jagannath Puri was sanctified and the deities were reinstalled. There is a very interesting legend surrounding this temple and its origin.

It is said that the original image of Lord Jagannath, a deity form of Lord Krishna, was found near a fig tree. It was in the form of Indranila, the Blue Jewel, and was so stunning that Dharma decided to hide it in the earth. In order to procure the image, King Indradyumna of Malwa performed ruthless penances. Pleased by his penance, Lord Vishnu appeared before him and asked him to find a floating log by the Puri seashore. The King found the log and soon, Lord Vishnu and Vishwakarma appeared before him in the form of artistes.

They then prepared the images of Lord Krishna, Balarama and Subhadra from the log. Jagannath Puri Temple is spread over an area of approximately 400,000 square feet. The entire temple complex is surrounded by a high-fortified wall and on the topmost point of the temple is placed the 'Chakra' of Lord Vishnu. The entire complex of Jagannath Puri Temple comprises of atleast 120 temples and shrines. The

complex has been built as per Orissan architectural style. Jagannath Temple has a red flag, which conveys whether Lord Jagannath is within the shrine or not.

The main temple, which houses the sanctum sanctorum, is curvilinear in shape and is adorned at the top by the 'Srichakra' (eight-spoke wheel) of Lord Vishnu. There is a huge tower in the temple, built on a raised platform of stone and rising to a height of approximately 214 feet above the inner sanctum. All the shrines, halls and mandaps situated near the main temple have pyramidal roofs that seem to be rising in steps towards the tower, looking just like a ridge of mountain peaks. Apart from a 20 feet high inner wall, another wall also encloses the shrine.

In the front of the main gate is a magnificent sixteen-sided monolithic pillar. There are also two lions statues placed on either side of the gate, which seem to be guarding the shrine. Inside the sanctum sanctorum are the idols of three deities, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra. All the idols have been placed on an ornamented platform. Elaborate worship services are held at the Jagannath Puri Temple on a daily basis. Apart from that, the temple also serves as the venue of numerous festivals every year.

The kitchen of the Jagannath Temple of Orissa is believed to be the largest kitchen in the whole of India. Every day, thousands of devotees come to the temple and are given the holy food called "Mahaprasad". The entire temple complex of Jagannath uses the services of over 6000 priests. Along with that, over 14000 people serve as the assistants and attendants of the priests, waiting on the Jagannath deity. Then, we have the numerous pilgrim guides who take devotees on a complete tour of the Jagannath Puri Temple.

Jaigarh Fort

Jaigarh Fort, one of the most magnificent forts of India, is situated in Jaipur, the 'Pink City' of Rajasthan. It is perched on top of a hill and is situated in the outskirts of the city, at a distance of approximately 15 km. Jaigarh fort is also known as the 'Fort of Victory' and was constructed somewhere between 15th and 18th Century.

The fort was built by Jai Singh II in 1726 to protect the Amber Fort and its palace complex and was named after him.

The fort, rugged and similar in structural design to the Amber Fort, is also known as Victory Fort.



Location: Jaipur, Rajasthan

Founded In: Between 15th and 18th Century

Built by: Jai Singh II

It is still in its original shape since not even once during its lifetime has it fallen to enemy forces. One has to climb a steep road in order to reach the main gate of the fort, known as Dungar Darwaza.

Jaigarh fort or the fort of victory was constructed by Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur in 1726. The Fort stands in the middle of thorn and scrub hills, which impart it a stout look. The Jaigarh fort gives an amazing view of the city below. The purpose of building the Jaigarh fort was to strengthen the defense of Amber. It is the main reason why the Jaigarh fort is quite plain and simple. The fort is surrounded by a moat and all other arrangements seen in big citadels. Jaigarh Fort was also used as the treasury of the royal family of Jaipur.

The road leading upto the fort provides a panoramic view of the surroundings. The walls of Jaigarh fort are spread over three kilometers. The fort used to serve as the center of artillery production for the Rajputs. It is also home to the Jaivan Cannon, world's largest canon on wheels. There is a 5 km long canal that used to bring in water from the high hills, which was stored in the fort for the army men. Jaigarh fort also served as the royal treasury of the Maharajas of Jaipur for a number of years.

The legend has it that the Kings of Amber/Jaipur used the compartments below the water tank to store the gold and jewelry. The various structures inside the fort have been connected through numerous passageways. Surrounding the Jaigarh Fort is a moat, which served as a protection against enemy assaults. In the past, the fort was kept sealed by the government for a period of seven years. This was done in the view of the rumor that there is a huge treasure of gold buried in it. Many searches and excavations were carried out, but they led to nothing.

Main Attractions of Jaigarh Fort

Jaivan Cannon

The huge Jaivan cannon has been placed on the top of a tower inside the Jaigarh fort. It has an 8 m barrel, with a trajectory of about 20 km, and weighs approximately 50 tons. It is said that the cannon is so massive that it took four elephants to swivel it around on its axis. However, what is more surprising is the fact that the cannon has not been used till date. It was only test fired once by Jai Singh in 1720 and the cannon ball fell about 38km away. The impact of the test was the formation of a lake on the spot and collapse of many houses in Jaipur.

Vijay Garh

Vijay Garh is the name given to the part of the fort that used to serve as its armory. It boasts of a large compilation of swords and small arms, including time bombs. Then, there is an interesting treasury lock with five keys, big wine and oil jars and even a 1681 map of Amber. You can also try your hands at the mini cannon kept here.

Jaigarh Cannon Foundry

The cannon foundry of Jaigarh dates back to the 16th century. One of the few surviving medieval foundries in the world, Jaigarh cannon foundry was built under Bhagwan Das. The collection of the foundry includes a furnace, a lathe, tools and a number of cannons. After Bhagwan's adopted son, Man Singh I, brought all information related to gunpowder from Kabul, cannons began to be made in Jaigarh. There is a point inside the foundry, known as Damdama, where ten cannons were kept in a row, facing the Delhi Road.

Diya Burj

Diya Burj (the turret of lamps) is a seven-storied structure that represents the highest point in the Jaigarh fort. The edifice offers an amazing view of the Jaipur city. The water supply and storage system of the fort is an amazing feat in itself. Sagar Talav, with octagonal bastions and huge dams, is one of the biggest reservoirs of the fort. Apart from that, there are a number of baolis (step wells) and temples inside the complex. The most prominent temples are Shri Ram Hari Har Temple and Kal Bhairava Temple.

Museums

The museums situated inside the Jaigarh Fort house an amazing collection of paintings, photographs, puppets and ancient coins. Other items displayed inside the museum include a balance for measuring explosives, a 16th century coin container, etc.

Palace Complex

The entire palace complex of the Jaigarh Fort was built by various kings, over a period of two centuries. The palace begins with the Diwan-i-Aam (Hall of Public Audience). Then, we come across the Khilbat Niwas (Commanders' Meeting Hall) and an open pillared hall, Subhat Niwas. The luxury suites, namely Aram Mandir (Rest House) and Vilas Mandir (Pleasure House), are definitely worth visiting. The pavilions surrounding the courtyard have a labyrinth of passages and offer excellent views of Amber Fort.

Lakshmi Vilas Palace

Lakshmi Vilas Palace is one of the most beautiful palaces inside the Jaigarh Fort. The palace stands adorned with exquisite blue frescoes. One can also see the remnants of an old Mughal garden. There is also a little 'theater' hall, where dance, music recitals and puppet shows used to be held for the entertainment of the royals.

Jaisalmer Fort

Jaisalmer Fort, also known as the Sonar Quila (Golden Fort), is situated on the outskirts of the Jaisalmer city of Rajasthan. The fort was so named since it is situated amidst the golden vastness of the desert sand.

The golden hues of the desert ambience, along with the setting rays of the sun, make the color of the fort look like that of gold.

The fort of Jaisalmer swathes a whole township within its complex, including numerous havelis, temples, residential complexes and a number of other structures.

The fort stands proudly amidst the golden stretches of the great [Thar Desert](#), on Trikuta Hill, and has been the scene of many battles.

It was built in 1156 AD by the Bhati Rajput ruler Rao Jaisal, from where it derives its name.

With the opening of the trade routes at the time of the Rajputs, the merchants started acquiring power as well as noble status in the royal courts of the Bhatti rulers. Inspired by the royals, they started constructing havelis, with intricately decorated walls and ceilings and heavily carved outdoors and interiors. Some of the havelis even outshined the palaces constructed by the royals. The craftsmen were usually Muslims, who displayed rare architectural purity.

The sculptural filigree, screen windows, delicate pavilions and beautiful balconies used by them to fill up the facades display amazing exquisiteness. Some of these havelis are still inhabited by the descendants of the wealthy merchants. The residential complexes inside the fort include the ones used by armies and traders, especially the ones that fell on significant trade routes. The magnificent temples of Jaisalmer fort are also worth visiting.

These include a group of Jain temples, dating from 12th century to 15th century. Standing tall at a height of approximately 30 meters over the city, the Jaisalmer fort is surrounded by massive battlements. Walking down the narrow lanes of the fort is an experience in itself. The entrance to the Sonar Quila or Jaisalmer fort is provided through its four main gates, namely Ganesh Pol, Suraj Pol, Bhoot Pol and Hawa Pol.

Outside the Jaisalmer fort is the main market place called Manek Chowk. From the walls of the Jaisalmer fort one can have a marvelous view of the Old City and the adjoining desert.



Location: Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

Founded In: 1156 AD

Built by: Rao Jaisal

At present, merchants and shop owners, living within the walls of the fort, crowd the fort. Small lanes inside the fort are surrounded with houses, temples and shops. Being part of the Desert Triangle and the venue of the Desert Festival, Jaisalmer is accessible by rail, road and air. Jaisalmer is also covered by the "Palace on Wheels".

Jama Masjid

Jama Masjid (जामा मस्जिद, مسجد جامع), also known as Masjid-i-Jahan Numa (the 'World-reflecting Mosque'), is the largest as well as the most significant mosque in the capital city of Delhi and in India.

The mosque dates back to the year 1656 and was built under the patronage of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. Its cost of construction, in those times, was approximately Rs.10 lakhs (1 million).

Jama Masjid also claims the distinction of being one of the biggest as well as most famous mosques in India. It is situated at the beginning of Chandni Chowk, a very busy market of Delhi.



Location: Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi

Founded By: Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan

Founded In: 1656

Commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, built this mosque in the year 1650 AD and completed in the year 1656 AD, it is the largest and best-known mosque in India. It lies at the beginning of the Chawri Bazar Road, a very busy central street of Old Delhi.

Originally called the Masjid-i-Jahan-Numa, or "mosque commanding view of the world", the Jama Masjid stands at the center of the erstwhile capital city of the Mughals, Shahjahanbad.

The courtyard of the mosque is so huge that it can accommodate approximately twenty-five thousand worshippers at a time. The northern gate of the Jama Masjid houses several relics in a closet, including a copy of the holy Koran written on deerskin. The floor plan of the Jama Masjid is quite similar to that of the Moti Masjid of Agra. However, Jama Masjid is much bigger and much impressive than its counterpart. The height at which the mosque is built further adds to its majesty and grandeur.

Three gates, one in the east, one in the north and one in the south, provide the entrance to the courtyard. One has to climb a flight of steps, built of red sandstone, in order to reach the courtyard. The northern gate comprises of 39 steps, while the southern one has 33 steps. The eastern gate of the mosque was meant for the royals and has 35 steps. In the past, these steps were used to house food stalls, shops and street entertainers. Come evening and the eastern side used to get converted into a bazaar for poultry and birds.

There was also a madrassa near the southern side of the mosque. However, it was pulled down after the 1857 War of Indian Independence. The facade of Jama Masjid faces west and its other three sides are

covered with open arched porticoes. Each portico has a soaring tower-like gateway in the middle. Jama Masjid of Delhi is 261 feet (80 m) in length and rises to a height of 90 feet (27 m). The roof of the mosque stands covered with domes, which are adorned with gold on the top.

The domes are flanked on the either side by two huge minarets, standing tall at a height of 130 feet. These minarets comprise of 130 steps and are vertically striped with white marble and red sandstone. Three projecting galleries divide the minarets, which are crowned with open twelve-sided domed pavilions. Even the backside of the mosque has four minarets, but they are much smaller in size. Beneath the dome is a huge hall, with seven arched entrances that are made of marble.

As you move further, you will come across the prayer hall, which has eleven arched entrances. The central arch is quite massive and looks like a massive gateway, with slim minarets in each corner. The top of the arch is adorned with an octagonal pavilion. Covering the arched entrances are white marble structures that are four feet long and 2.5 feet wide. These structures have been inlaid with inscriptions in black marble, which provide details about the history of the Jama Masjid of India.

The foundation on which the mosque stands is about five feet (1.5 m) from the pavement of the terrace. The interiors of Jama Masjid are reached either from eastern, northern or southern entrance. The flooring of the mosque is made up of white and black marble, which creates the same pattern that is usually seen on the Muslim prayer mat. There are 899 places for worshipers, marked with the help of a thin black marble border. On the occasion of Muslim festivals of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Zoha, Jama Masjid is beautifully decorated.

Janjira Fort

The Murud town of Maharashtra used to serve as the capital of the Siddi rulers of Janjira.

Today, the most popular attraction of the town is the Island Fort of Murud-Janjira.

Janjira Fort is situated 2 km inside Murud and is one of the most prominent sea forts of India.

The walls of the fort rise to a height of 40 ft and, even after so many years of bashing by sea waves from all the four sides, stand as sturdy as ever.

It is said that Janjira Fort could not be captured by any enemy for a period of almost 350 years.



Location: Murud, Maharashtra

Founded By: Buran Khan

Founded In: 15th century

Janjira fort name was originated from Arabic word Jazeera which means island. Some of the people also split the name as “Jal Jeera” meaning fort in the water, also known as ‘Fort Mehroob’.



Mighty rulers like Shivaji, Sambhaji and the Peshwas tried to take over the fort. Even the Marathas, British or Portuguese could never be successful in occupying it. Janjira Fort was initially a structure of wood made by the Murud fishermen, with the purpose of protecting their village from the sea pirates. It was Buran Khan, the minister of Nizamshah (the ruler of Ahmed Nagar), who got the wooden structure demolished. Then, he laid down the foundation of Janjira Fort, one of the most

unassailable stone forts of India.

Numerous towers and turrets adorn the fort. These towers and turrets were used for keeping huge guns, in preparation of any attack by the enemies. In the past, Janjira Fort was the proud owner of approximately 500 canons. However, today, only a few of them have survived. The most famous canons kept inside the fort are Kalal Bangadi, Chavari and Landa Kasam. The



interiors of the fort comprise of two huge water tanks. Then, there are a number of tombs inside the fort that are worth having a look at.

The main entrance of Janjira Fort is adorned with a stone carving, which illustrates six elephants trapped by a single tiger. This carving is believed to be a symbol of the bravery of the Siddi rulers. There are also two sweet water lakes inside the fort, which exist even in the present times. Janjira fort comprises of nineteen burjs in toto, with each burj bearing huge guns on it. Apart from the fort, there are a number of other structures in the murud town that are worth a visit. Some of these are situated near the Janjira fort itself.

To the northwest of Janjira Fort, we see the Padmadurg Fort that was built by Shivaji, one of the greatest rulers of Maharashtra. Though not as massive as Janjira, it is quite impressive. To the north of Murud, we have the Shrine of Dattatreya, representing the Trinity of Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. Tourists going to Murud should also visit the Palace of the Nawab as well as the Janjira Caves. Last but not the least, there are the two virgin beaches of Nandgaon and Kashid, situated a few kilometers from Murud.

Jantar Mantar Delhi

Jantar Mantar of New Delhi is one of the oldest astronomical observatories in India as well as the world. It is situated at a distance of approximately 250 meters from the famous shopping center of Connaught Place.

The observatory dates back to the year 1724 and was built under the patronage of Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur.

He built the Jantar Mantar of Delhi after studying Hindu and Muslim astronomical works thoroughly.

It serves as perfect example of the technological innovations of that time.

Jantar Mantar of Delhi, is an astronomical observatory with masonry instruments. Jantar Mantar in Delhi is a remarkable and curious creation of Raja Jai Singh II, the mathematician and astronomer king. Jantar Mantar has instruments that can graph the path of the astronomical universe.

The name of this noteworthy astronomical observatory, Jantar Mantar means 'instrument for calculation.' There is a colossal Samrat Yantra at the periphery of Jantar Mantar. To the south of Samrat Yantra there is an amazing instrument called Jai Prakash. The Jai Prakash of Jantar Mantar in Delhi has two concave hemispherical structures and used for determining the position of the sun and celestial bodies. Jantar Mantar is built of brick rubble that is plastered in lime.

Jantar Mantar of Delhi is one of the five observatories that were built by Sawai Jai Singh II. The other four observatories are located in the cities of Jaipur, Varanasi, Ujjain and Mathura. All these observatories were built somewhere between 1724 and 1730. There is a very interesting story behind the establishment of the Jantar Mantar of Delhi. Jai Singh was very much interested in two things - art and science, mainly astronomy. He once heard an argument between the Hindu and Muslim astrologers at the court of Muhammad Shah.

They were fighting over the issue of certain planetary positions. The positions were to be known with accuracy so as to arrive on an auspicious hour for the emperor to go on a mission. Jai Singh offered his help in rectifying the available astronomical tables. The Mughal emperor readily accepted the offer and this incident led to the construction of Jantar Mantar in Delhi, where the movements of the celestial



Location: Parliament Street, Near Connaught Place (New Delhi)

Founded By: Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur

Founded In: 1724

Type of Structure: An Astronomical Observatory

Status: Protected Monument under ASI Act

Interesting Facts: Jantar Mantar was the logo of the 1982 Asian Games

bodies, including sun, moon and planets could be observed. There are six main instruments inside the Jantar Mantar Observatory.

You can see the following instruments inside the Jantar Mantar of Delhi.

- Samrat Yantra
- Jai Prakash
- Ram Yantra
- Niyati Chakra
- Misra Yantra

All these instruments can be used for various astronomical calculations. Today the historical structure is encircled by new office buildings. Jantar Mantar of Delhi is even used by modern day scholars to ascertain the location of the heavenly bodies in our universe.



Samrat-Yantra

The most important instrument kept inside Jantar Mantar is Samrat-Yantra, a huge sundial. It is an equinoctial (equal hour) dial, which comprises of a triangular gnomon. The hypotenuse of the gnomon is parallel to the earth's axis. Either side of the gnomon is attached with a quadrant of a circle, which is parallel to the plane of equator.

Jai Prakash Yantra

Jai Prakash Yantra is used to determine the position of Sun, along with other heavenly bodies. This instrument was designed by Jai Singh and is made up of two concave hemispherical structures.

Ram Yantra

To the south of the Jai Prakash Yantra is Ram Yantra. A circular structure, it has a tall pillar in the middle. Jai Prakash Yantra was used for reading azimuth (horizontal) and altitude (vertical) angles.

Misra Yantra

Misra Yantra, a combination instrument, is sited to the northwest of Ram Yantra. The instrument is so called since it comprises of a number of instruments in one. It is much similar in appearance to the stylized 'namaste', the Indian form of greeting. The Niyta-Chakra of Misra Yantra indicates Greenwich, Zurich, Notkey (Japan) and Serichew (Pacific Ocean) meridians.

Dakshinottarabhitti Yantra

Dakshinottarabhitti Yantra is the instrument that was used for obtaining meridian altitudes. The Karkarasi-valaya of the instrument revealed the entry of the Sun in Cancer constellation.

Agra Yantra

Agra Yantra is the second quadrant on the west side of the building. It is not known for what purpose was the instrument used.

Almost all the instruments mentioned above are not functional today. This is because the markings as well as the floor measurements of the instruments have become distorted over time. A temple of Lord Bhairava, probably constructed by Maharaja Jai Singh, is situated to the eastern side of the instruments. Surrounding the instruments are blooming gardens, which are adorned with seasonal flowers. Jantar Mantar is maintained by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) and has been declared as a protected monument under the ASI Act.



Jantar Mantar Jaipur

Jantar Mantar of Jaipur claims the distinction of being the largest stone observatory in the world. It is situated near the City Palace complex and was built by Maharaja Jai Singh II in the year 1727.

It took approximately six years to complete the observatory, which was even designed by Jai Singh himself. Jantar Mantar of Jaipur is one of the five astronomical observatories

built by Maharaja all over the country.

The original name of the observatory was Yantra Mantra, meaning instruments and formulae.

However, people mispronounced the name as 'Jantar Mantar' and gradually this became the official name of the observatory. Jantar Mantar houses an amazing collection of astronomical instruments. The most applaudable feature of the observatory is that even after so many years it still provides accurate information. The scientific settings and shapes of the compound instruments of Jantar Mantar serve as a reminder of the advancement of the Medieval Indian Astronomy. The entire structure of Jantar Mantar has been constructed with stone and marble.

Metals have not been used in the construction of the observatory, since metal instruments fell short of Jai Singh's expectations. It has fourteen statistical instruments, which serve the purpose of measuring time, predicting eclipses and ascertaining other astronomical events. Jantar Mantar was renovated in the year 1901 and in 1948; it was declared as a national monument. The most popular instrument of the observatory is the Sundial, which is 27.4 m high and tells the time with an accuracy of about two seconds.

Kranti Yantra

Kranti Yantra is a large instrument, which is used for measuring the longitude and latitude of celestial bodies.

Diganta Yantra

Diganta Yantra is used to correctly ascertain the azimuth (arc of the celestial great circle from Zenith to horizon) of the planetary bodies.



Location: Jaipur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Maharaja Jai Singh II

Founded In: 1727 -1733

Significance: Largest stone astronomical observatory in the world

Status: National Monument

Small Ram Yantra and Large Ram Yantra

Both of the Ram Yantras, Small Ram Yantra as well as Large Ram Yantra, are deployed for the purpose of finding the altitude and the azimuth. However, the large yantra is 10 times larger than the smaller one and is more accurate by 2 seconds.

Chakra Yantra

Chakra Yantra gives the angular measurement of an object from the equator.

Jai Prakash Yantra

Jai Prakash Yantra determines the precise coordinates of celestial bodies. It has a small iron plate, which is strung between the crosswire. This plate is used to know the longitude and latitude of the sun as well as and the zodiacal sign it is passing through.

Rashivalayas Yantra

Rashivalayas Yantra is quite similar in operation to the Samrat Yantra. The yantra has a separate sundial for each of the zodiac signs. Five sundials, those belonging to Gemini, Taurus, Cancer, Virgo and Leo, lie at the back from north to south. Opposite them are the ones related to Aries and Libra, followed by those of Aquarius, Pisces, Capricorn, Scorpio and Sagittarius. Using this yantra, one can taking readings the moment a zodiacal sign crosses the meridian.

Dakshina Yantra

Dakshina Yantra is basically a wall that is aligned with the north-south meridian. It helps in determining the position and movement of the celestial bodies at the time when they are passing over the meridian.

Disha Yantra

Disha Yantra performs only one function, which is to point towards the northern direction.

Unnathamsa Yantra

Unnathamsa Yantra helps in finding the elevation of the astronomical bodies. The best part is that you can take readings anytime, and that to from any portion of the dial.

Raj Yantra (King of Instruments)

Raj Yantra, the King of Instruments, is used in the preparation of the Hindu calendar. For the purpose, a telescope is fixed over the central hole and a sighting bar is attached at the back. The plain disk is used to record the sightings.

Narivalya Yantra

Narivalya Yantra is a sundial, which has two dials. One of the dials faces north when the sun is in the Northern Hemisphere, while the other faces south for the rest of the year.

Dhruva Yantra

Dhruva Yantra determines the position of the Pole Star at night, along with that of the 12 zodiac signs.

Samrat Yantra

Samrat Yantra is a triangular structure, with a huge sundial. The arc on its left displays the time from sunrise to midday and the one on its right displays the time from midday to sunset.

Jewish Synagogue

Jewish Synagogue of Kerala is situated in Mattancherry, which lies at a distance of approximately 10 km from Ernakulam. The synagogue (the worship place of the Jews) dates back to the year 1568 and claims the distinction of being the oldest surviving synagogue, not only in India, rather in all the commonwealth countries of the world.

Jewish Synagogue is believed to serve as a testimony to the fact that mutual harmony, between the people of different religions, existed in the state of Kerala even centuries back.

The entire monument has been adorned with magnificently painted Chinese tiles. The best part is that no two tiles adorning the Jewish Synagogue are similar to each other. Belgian chandeliers and impressive lighting make up the interiors of the synagogue. The synagogue still houses the rolls of Old Testament, along with the old copper plates, inscribed in Hebrew, which have records of the grants and privileges given to the rulers of Kochi.

Then, there is a rich collection of souvenirs, which were gifted to the kings of Kochi, as a mark of the affection and respect. The most impressive as well as the most popular souvenirs comprise of the carved crowns in wrought gold and silver, presented by the visitors. Jewish Synagogue is not only known for its architectural beauty. Rather, it serves as a significant symbol of the religious and cultural heritage of the Jews. The synagogue was partially ruined in the 1662 wars. However, the Dutch got it rebuilt and also added some structures to it.



Location: Mattancherry, Kochi (Kerala)

Founded In: 1568

Junagarh Fort

Junagarh Fort is situated in the Bikaner city of Rajasthan, quite near the public park.

The fort was originally called **Chintamani** and was renamed Junagarh or "Old Fort" in the early 20th century when the ruling family moved to [Lalgarh Palace](#) outside the fort limits.

The fort complex was built under the supervision of Karan Chand, the Prime Minister of Raja Rai Singh, the sixth ruler of Bikaner, who ruled from 1571 to 1611 AD.



Location: Bikaner, Rajasthan

Founded By: Raja Rai Singh

Founded In: Between 1589 and 1594

The fort is a splendid piece of architecture and is adorned with towers that seem to be soaring into the sky. Junagarh Fort was built under the aegis of Raja Rai Singh, a general in the army of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. The foundation of the fort was laid down in the year 1589 and it took approximately 5 years to complete the monument.

Enclosing the Junagarh fort of India is a wall that is almost 986 meters in length.

A series of thirty-seven pavilions festoon the fort, which comprises of a number of palaces inside its complex. Apart from that, there are also several public court buildings and intimate zenanas (women's quarters) inside it. The zenanas were meant to hide the women of the court from the vision of the courtiers. The interiors of the Junagarh fort have been ornamented with beautiful Rajput paintings, amazing mirror-work and awe-inspiring lacquer-work. Windows and balconies, arranged in a series, lend the fort a domestic character.

The picturesque location of Junagarh Fort adds to its beauty and splendor. One of the few forts in Rajasthan to be built on plain land, it remained unconquered for close to 400 years. One of the reasons for this was its setting, which helped the fort in blending with the sandy desert, thus providing it with a natural camouflage. One of the most exquisite features of the Junagarh Fort is a raised platform made of sand. The fakirs used to dance barefoot on this platform. Then, there is a well inside the complex, which is approximately 450 feet deep.

The excellent library of the fort has a rich compilation of Persian manuscripts and ancient Sanskrit books, along with an impressive armory. There are two main entrances to the Junagarh Fort of Rajasthan. One of them is known as Karan Pol and it lies in the east, while the other is Chand Pol and it lies in the west. The moment you step in through the Karan Pol, the first sight that comes across is that of the Sati Sthambs, imprinted with symbolic hands of the royal ladies who committed the act of sati.

More sati symbols can be found on the left side of the next gate, which is called the Daulat Pol. From Daulat Pol, one reaches the Fateh Pol. All these gates have been equipped with heavy wooden doors, which have iron plating. Before the other gates were built, the main entrance to the fort used to be provided by the Suraj Pol, the Sun Gate. The other gateways are believed to have been built under the reign of Maharaja Gaj Singh. In front of the Suraj Pol lies the courtyard that houses the Joramal Temple.

On crossing the Suraj Pol, one comes across the statues of Jaimal and Patta, seated on top of elephants. Both of them were teenage generals in Maharana Udai Singh's army and fought fearlessly during the annexation of Chittor fort. These statues are believed to serve as the guardians of the fort. Different rulers added different structures to the Junagarh fort. The last structure, being the new majestic staircase, was added by Maharaja Ganga Singh. The stone carvings adorning the fort and palaces lend it a great degree of magnificence.

The numerous palaces, temples and pavilions of the Junagarh fort are built in red sandstone and have exquisitely carved windows, balconies, towers and kiosks. One must not miss the Moon Palace, which is decorated with mirrors, paintings and carved marble panels. The Phool Mahal, Flower Palace, is adorned with glasses and mirrors. Then, we have the Karan Mahal, built in the commemoration of the victory over Aurangzeb. Anup Mahal is a multi-storied palace, used as the power chambers by the rulers.

The brilliantly preserved rooms of the Anup Mahal today exhibit the treasures belonging to the Royal family. One must also visit the Ganga Niwas, Dungar Niwas, Vijai Mahal, and Rang Mahal. There is also a museum in the Junagarh fort. This museum houses an impressive collection, comprising of illuminated manuscripts, jewelry, jars, carpets, arms and weapons, treaties, decorations and 'Farmans'.

Khajuraho Temples

Khajuraho Temples are situated in a village in Madhya Pradesh, bearing the name of Khajuraho. The rural ambience and the rich cultural heritage of the village serve as the perfect backdrop to the temples, which depict the sensual pleasures enjoyed by human beings. Khajuraho temples also reflect the maturity of the people belonging to that decade. One of the most popular tourist attractions of India, the temples were constructed somewhere between 950 and 1050 AD, under the rulers of Chandel Empire.



Initially, the number of temples in the Khajuraho complex was eighty-five. However, with the decline of the Chandela Empire, the temples went into neglect and were damaged by the ravages of nature. They were once again discovered in the 20th century and restoration work on them was started. Presently, only twenty-temples have survived. The murals adorning the interiors of the Khajuraho temples serve as an illustration of the lifestyle and times of the Chandela

Location: Madhya Pradesh

Founded By: Rulers of Chandela Empire

Founded In: Between 950 and 1050

Status: World Heritage Site

rulers.

Each of the temples comprises of three main compartments i.e., the entrance (ardhamandapa), the assembly hall (mandapa) and the actual sanctum (garbha griha). The temples have been divided into three groups, based on their geographical patterns, namely western, eastern and southern. The theme of the Khajuraho temples is mainly the celebration of woman and her countless moods and aspects. The temples, built of sandstone, have also been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Western Group of Temples

The best as well as the largest group of temples in Khajuraho comprises of the Western Group.

Kandariya Mahadeo

Kandariya Mahadeo is the largest temple in the Western group. It comprises of about 900 statues, of which the grandest idol is that of Lord Shiva, which rises to a height of 31 m. The sanctum houses the Shiva Lingam, while the main shrine has carved images of various Gods, Goddesses and apsaras (heavenly maidens). The entrance arch, pillars and ceilings are also beautifully carved. The outer walls of the transept have three horizontal panels, which depict deities of the Hindu pantheon and groups of lovers.

Chaunsat Yogini

Chaunsat Yogini is the oldest surviving temple of the western group. It was constructed in the year 900 and is dedicated to Goddess Kali. Initially there were 65 cells in the temple, out of which only 35 are left. However, the image of Goddess Kali that was enshrined in the temple could not survive the travails of time.

Chitragupta Temple

Chitragupta Temple is dedicated to Surya, the Sun God. The inner sanctum of the temple has a 5 feet high image of the Sun God, who is shown riding a chariot. One can also see images depicting royal processions, group dances and other scenes of sheer luxury.

Vishwanath Temple

Vishwanath Temple is dedicated to Lord Brahma, one of the Hindu Trinity of Gods. Lions guard the northern entrance of the temple, while the southern steps are flanked by elephants. Opposite this temple is the shrine of Nandi Bull.

Lakshamana Temple

Lakshamana Temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and houses three-headed idols of Vishnu's incarnations, Narasimha and Varaha. The rafter on the entrance shows the Holy Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva with Goddess Lakshmi.

Matangeshwara Temple

Matangeshwara Temple is situated outside the grounds of the western group. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and enshrines an eight feet high lingam. To the south of the temple is the open air Archaeological Museum, which exhibits an amazing collection of statues and frescoes collected from the area.

Eastern Group of Temples

Parsavanath Temple

Parsavanatha Temple is the largest Jain temple of the eastern group, dedicated to Lord Parsavanath. The northern wall of the temple is adorned with sculptors that depict everyday activities, like a young girl removing a thorn from her foot. There is also the bull emblem of first Tirthankara, Adinath.

Ghantai Temple

Ghantai Temple is another Jain temple. It is known for an amazing frieze, which exhibits the 16 dreams of Mahavira's mother, along with a multi-armed Jain goddess perched on a winged Garuda.

Adinath Temple

Adinath Temple is the last one of the three Jain temples in the eastern group. It is dedicated to Adinath, the first Jain Tirthankara.

Hindu Temples

There are three Hindu temples in this group, namely the Brahma temple, the Vamana temple and the Javari temple.

Southern Group

The Southern Group of temples lies at a distance of approximately 5 km from the Khajuraho village.

Duladeo Temple

Duladeo Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and stands adorned with sensual images of the apsaras (heavenly maidens).

Chaturbhuji Temple

Chaturbhuji Temple enshrines an intricately carved image of Lord Vishnu.

Khajuraho Dance Festival

Khajuraho Dance Festival is organized here on an annual basis. It is held in the month of March and artistes from all over the country come to Khajuraho to participate in this festival.

Kumbhalgarh Fort

Kumbhalgarh fort is situated approximately 64 km to the north of the Udaipur city. The fort is believed to be the second most significant bastion in the Mewar region of Rajasthan, after the Chittorgarh fort.

It dates back to the 15th century and was constructed by Rana Kumbha. Kumbhalgarh fort is nestled in the Aravali Ranges and because of such hostile topography; it counts amongst the few forts in India that have remained unconquered till date, except for one single seizure.

The one time that Kumbhalgarh fell was to the combined army of Mughals & Amber rulers.

The main reason for the defeat was acute scarcity of water. The fort served as a refuge to numerous rulers of Mewar, including Udai, the Baby King of Mewar. Another feather in the cap of the Kumbhalgarh fort is that it was the birthplace of King Maharana Partap, one of the most popular rulers of Mewar. The huge fort houses numerous structures inside its complex and is like a city in itself. There are a number of palaces in the Kumbhalgarh fort, of which the most beautiful one is the Badal Mahal, Palace of the Clouds.

Even the several temples inside the fort are worth mentioning. The height at which Kumbhalgarh fort is situated makes it the perfect place to have a bird's eye view of its surroundings. The walls enclosing the fort are quite thick and have a circumference of approximately 36 km. It is said that the width of the walls is enough to accommodate eight horses abreast. Even the ruins situated inside the compound offer amazing views. Renovations were undertaken at the fort in the 19th century, under the orders of Maharana Fateh Singh.

He pulled down the palace built by Rana Kumbha and constructed an inner fort in its place. Thus making Kumbhalgarh fort the only fort in India that has a fortress within itself. The inner fort is known as the Kartargarh Fort. This fort comprises of 365 temples and shrines, of which one is dedicated to Lord Shiva and houses a huge Shiva Lingam. Situated near the Kumbhalgarh fort is the Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary, known for its rich flora and fauna. It is one of the few sanctuaries in India that allow people on horseback.



Location: Near Udaipur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Rana Kumbha

Founded In: 15th Century

Lake Palace

One of the most beautiful palaces of Rajasthan is the Lake Palace (formerly known as **Jag Niwas**), which lies in the city of Udaipur. Built on an island in the middle of the picturesque Lake Pichola, the palace covers an area of approximately 1.5 hectares. The scenic locales, pictorial setting and serene environs of the Lake Palace make it look like a palace straight out of a fairy tale.

It was built under the reign of Maharana Jagat Singh and dates back to the year 1743. The palace was built to serve as the summer residence of the royals.



Location: Udaipur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Maharana Jagat Singh

Founded In: 1743

Status: Converted into a Five-Star Hotel

The decorations adorning the Lake Palace speak volumes about the excellence craftsmanship of the artisans of that time. Further enhancing the beauty of the palace are the exquisite textiles and handicrafts that have been used throughout to create an ethnic look. Lake palace has now been converted into a five star hotel. The moment tourists enter the premises of the palace; they are greeted with the soothing murmur of the rippling waves of Lake Pichola. Almost all the rooms in the palace provide mesmerizing views of the lake.

As you look from outside, Lake Palace comes across as a fantasy in white marble, arising out of the aqua waters of Lake Pichola. A massive rock of 4 acres serves as the foundation of the palace. It was initially known as the Jag Niwas, after its founder Maharana Jagjit Singh. If you have visited Agra, the City of Taj, you will find that some of the ornamentations of the Lake Palace are similar to the buildings at Agra. This is because Shah Jahan was quite friendly with Jagjit Singh and let him copy the embellishments from Agra buildings.

The courtyards of Lake Palace have been lined with columns, pillared terraces, fountains and gardens. The rooms stand adorned with cusped arches, inland stones of pink and green painted mirrors. The main apartments inside the palace include Badal Mahal, Kush Mahal, Ajjan Niwas, Phool Mahal and Dhola Mahal. The accommodation at the Lake Palace Hotel comprises of 83 rooms, including 17 suites and 53 deluxe rooms. The facilities provided include swimming pool, restaurant, conference hall, souvenir shops, coffee shop, bar, etc.

Trivia

As both royal abode and luxury hotel, the Taj Lake Palace has captured the affection of the likes of Lord Curzon, Vivien Leigh, Queen Elizabeth, the Shah of Iran, the king of Nepal and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy.

The palace was used as shooting place for several movies :

- 1959 : the couple of movies by Fritz Lang *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb* as palace of Chandra, the maharajah of the fictitious town of Eshnapur.
- 1983 : the James Bond film *Octopussy*, as the home of titular character Octopussy (played by Maud Adams). The films was also shot in the other palaces of Udaipur Jag Mandir and Monsoon Palace.
- 1984 : the British television series *The Jewel in the Crown* as guest house of the Nawab of Mirat.
- 2001 : the Bollywood Indian film *Yaadein* directed by Subhash Ghai.
- 2006 : film *The Fall* directed by Tarsem Singh.

Lalgarh Palace

Lalgarh Palace is situated in the Bikaner city of Rajasthan. An architectural beauty, the palace dates back to the year 1902. Maharaja Ganga Singh got the famous Lal Garh Palace of India constructed in the memory of his father, Maharaja Lal Singh.

The palace was designed by Sir Swinton Jacob and its architecture represents an amazing fusion of Rajput, Mughal and European architecture.

The building was commissioned by the British-controlled regency for Maharaja Ganga Singh (1881–1942) while he was still in his minority as they considered the existing Junagarh Palace unsuitable for a modern monarch. Ganga Singh decided that the palace should be named in memory of his father Maharaja Lal Singh.

The oriental interiors and amenities of the palace are a complete contrast to its exterior appearance.

Exquisite latticework and filigree work, which adorn the Lalgarh Palace, serve as the perfect example of the exquisite craftsmanship of those times. The palace houses a rich collection of beautiful paintings and hunting trophies of the Maharajas. The blooming terraced gardens of the palace, ornamented with Bougainvillea bushes, further add to its magnificence. One can also see peacocks strolling around the palace, which has now been partly converted into a heritage hotel.

Lalgarh palace also has a library, which is believed to have the largest collection of original Sanskrit manuscripts. The manuscripts have been written on parchments, copper and gold or silver plaques. The museum of the palace is situated in the Ganga Niwas building. It boasts of a unique collection of miniature paintings, manuscripts, weaponry, photographs and albums, along with a bi-plane that dates back to the World War I. A part of the Lalgarh Palace still serves as the residence of the royal family.



Location: Bikaner, Rajasthan

Founded By: Maharaja Lal Singh

Founded In: 1902

Architect: Sir Swinton Jacob

Leh Palace

The most popular attraction of Ladakh, apart from its numerous monasteries, is the Leh Palace. The ruined palace comes across as a mesmerizing piece of architecture and is visited by tourists in large numbers.

Leh palace was built in the 17th century by King Singe Namgyal as the royal residence.

Leh Palace is perched at the edge of the Namgyal hill and overlooks the entire Leh town below. The palace was constructed in the 17th century, to serve as the residence of King Singge Namgyal. It is quite similar in appearance to the Potala in Lhasa, though it is much smaller in size.



Location: Leh, Ladakh Valley

Founded In: 17th century

Built by: King Singe Namgyal

Leh Palace of India comprises of nine stories in toto.

It has been deserted since the 1830s, when the royal families of Ladakh were exiled to the Stok Palace. Years of neglect have resulted in the palace being reduced to ruins. Towering above the Leh palace is a huge tower, known as the 'Victory Tower', which was built to celebrate the victory of the Ladakhi soldiers in the early 16th century, over the attacking army of Balti Kashmiris. However, the canon balls fired by the Kashmiris have left the palace quite weak.

Presently, Leh Palace has been converted into an office for Indian Government's archaeological conservation organization. It has been built as per the medieval Tibetan architectural style. The walls of the palace are huge and inclined, while the wooden balconies seem to be protruding. The flaking murals of Leh Palace serve as a window to the erstwhile grandeur and magnificence of the ruined apartments. The fourth story of the palace houses the Dukhar temple, which enshrines thousand-armed image of its deity, Goddess Tara.

The construction of the palace on the Tsemo Hill was initiated by Tsewang Namgyal, the founder of the Namgyal dynasty of Ladakh in 1553 and was completed by his nephew Sengge Namgyal.

Lodi Tomb

Lodi Tomb is one of the popular monuments of Delhi, situated inside the premises of the picturesque Lodi Garden. The tomb is situated in the southern portion of New Delhi, adjacent the Indian International Center.

The tomb is the last resting place of one of the great rulers of India, Sikandar Lodi. However, it is not the only tomb built inside the Lodi Garden. Apart from Lodhi Tomb, the garden also houses the tomb of Muhammad Shah, Shish Gumbad and Bara Gumbad.



Location: Lodi Gardens, New Delhi

Founded In: 1517-1518

Entombs: Sikandar Lodi

It is believed that all of these tombs are the snippets of a city, which was supposed to have been built here. Lodi Tomb is octagonal in shape and is built as per the exquisite Mughal architectural style. Infact, the tomb is said to have served as revival of the Sayyid architectural style, which boasted of octagonal plan, deep veranda and tall arches. The tomb of Sikandar Lodhi is adorned with a double dome on top and is entered from a huge gateway, which faces south.

The tomb of Mohammed Shah, the last of the Sayyid dynasty rulers, the earliest of the tombs in the garden, was built in 1444 by Ala-ud-din Alam Shah as a tribute to Mohammed Shah.

Another tomb within the gardens is that of Sikander Lodi, which is similar to Mohammed Shah's tomb, though without the *chhatris*, it was built by his son Ibrahim Lodi in 1517, the last of Sultan of Delhi from Lodi dynasty, as he was defeated by Babur, First battle of Panipat in 1526, this laying the foundation of the Mughal Empire.

In the centuries, after the 15th century Sayyid and Lodi dynasties, two villages grew around the monuments, but the villagers were relocated in 1936 in order to create the gardens. During British Raj, it was landscaped by Lady Willingdon, wife of Governor-General of India, Marquess of Willingdon, and hence named the 'Lady Willingdon Park' upon its inauguration on April 9, 1936,^{[5][6]} and 1947, after Independence, it was given its present name, Lodi Gardens



Mohammed Shah's Tomb



Sheesh Gumbad



Bara Gumbad tomb and
mosque, Lodhi Gardens

Lotus Temple

Lotus Temple of Delhi is an architectural wonder, which is not dedicated to any particular God. It is situated in the Kalkaji area of South Delhi. The temple has been built in the shape of a lotus, thus the name 'Lotus Temple'. It is made up of marble, cement, dolomite and sand and is also known by the name of Bahai Temple.

No single faith dominates this temple and there is no religious restrictions have been placed for entering its premises. People come here, not for worship, but for meditating and to feel at peace with themselves.

Built as per the modern architectural style, Lotus Temple of India represents serenity, harmony, tranquility and calm. People from all races, religious backgrounds and cultures visit the Lotus temple to feel one with nature as well as the fellow humans. The temple represents Bahai faith, an independent world religion. This religion is based on the principles of humanity and compassion, is broad in its outlook and scientific in its method. The youngest religion of the world, the Bahai Faith believes in one single race i.e., humanity.

While building the Bahai Temple of Delhi, the architects made use of traditional means of construction, along with Western engineering designs. It took approximately 10 years and about 800 engineers, technicians, artisans and workers to construct this amazing piece of architecture. Fariborz Sahba, a Canadian architect of Iranian origin, was the main person behind the design as well as management of the project. The main aim behind the construction of this temple was to teach people the triviality of material possessions.

The Bahai temple of India is one of the seven temples of Bahai Faith built throughout the world. The structure of the temple comprises of three ranks, each comprising of nine petals. Each of them bounces up from a podium, which raises the building above the surrounding plains. The first two ranks of the petals have been curve inwards and encircle the inner dome. The third layer takes an outward curve in order to form a kind of covering over all the nine entrances of the temple.

The lotus petals have been constructed of reinforced white concrete and are covered with white marble panels. Nine arches, which mainly support the entire edifice, enclose the central hall. The exterior of the Lotus temple comprises of nine reflecting pools, which are built in such a way that they look like the green leaves of the lotus flower. Since there are practically no straight lines in the architecture of the temple, the architect faced great difficulties in designing and erecting the structure.



Location: Kalkaji, South Delhi

Founded In: 1986

Dedicated To: No Particular God

Other Name: Lotus Temple

Architect: Fariborz Sahba

The construction work of the Bahai Temple was undertaken by the local laborers of Delhi. The temple was inaugurated and opened up to the general public in December 1986. Till date, it has seen the influx of more than 50 million visitors, making it one of the most visited tourist destinations of the world. People come here to understand as well as practice the teachings of the Bahai Faith, which include the presence of a single God, oneness of religions and oneness of mankind.

Awards:

- 1987, the architect of the Bahá'í House of Worship, Mr. Fariborz Sahba, was presented the award for excellence in religious art and architecture by the UK-based Institution of Structural Engineers for producing a building "so emulating the beauty of a flower and so striking in its visual impact".
- 1987, the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture, Affiliate of the American Institute of Architects, Washington, D.C., gave their First Honour award for "Excellence in Religious Art and Architecture" 1987 to Mr. F. Sahba for the design of the Bahá'í House of Worship near New Delhi.
- 1988, the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America conferred the Paul Waterbury Outdoor Lighting Design Award - Special Citation for Exterior Lighting
- 1989, the Temple received an award from the Maharashtra-India Chapter of the American Concrete Institute for "excellence in a concrete structure".
- 1994 edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica, in its 'Architecture' section gives recognition to the Temple as an outstanding achievement of the time.
- 2000, Architectural Society of China as one of 100 canonical works of the 20th century in the recently published "World Architecture 1900-2000: A Critical Mosaic, Volume Eight, South Asia".
- 2000, GlobArt Academy, based in Vienna, Austria, presented its "GlobArt Academy 2000" award to the architect of the Lotus Temple, Fariborz Sahba, for "the magnitude of the service of [this] Taj Mahal of the 20th century in promoting the unity and harmony of people of all nations, religions and social strata, to an extent unsurpassed by any other architectural monument worldwide."

Lohagarh fort

Lohagarh Fort popularly known as the Iron fort was constructed in the 18th century in the district of Bharatpur.

Lohagarh fort or the Iron fort was built in the early 18th century by the Jat ruler, Maharaja Suraj Mal. The Lohagarh fort is a living testimony to the chivalry and bravery of the Jat rulers of Bharatpur.

Due to its impregnable defenses the fort came to be known by name of Lohagarh. The fort of Lohagarh is amidst calm and serene surroundings. It is surrounded by lush green vegetation and a man-made island. Though Lohagarh fort lacks the flamboyance of other forts of the region but its strength and magnificence is matchless.



Location: Bharatpur, Rajasthan

Founded In: 18th century

Built by: Maharaja Suraj Mal

Some fascinating monuments in the fort are Kishori Mahal, Mahal Khas, Moti Mahal and Kothi Khas. Suraj Mal built the Jawahar Burj and Fateh Burj inside the fort to commemorate his victories over the Mughals and the British.

There is an Ashtadhatu (eight-metalled gate) gateway, having paintings of huge elephants while the one facing the south is called Chowburja (four-pillared) gate. Because of all these abovementioned qualities and features the Lohagarh fort was able to thwart many British attacks. The British laid siege to the Lohagarh fort four times but had to raise the siege on all occasions.

The fort is surrounded and safeguarded by a deep water body. The entrance gate of Lohagarh fort has a long history to tell. The gate actually belonged to the Chittorgarh fort but it was seized by Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi. Again, in the 17th century the gate was brought back to Bharatpur by the Jat army men from Delhi.

Mahabodhi Temple

Mahabodhi Temple ("Great Awakening Temple") is one of the most revered Buddhist pilgrim destinations in India. It is situated in Bodhgaya, which lies at a distance of approximately 96 km from Patna, the capital city of Bihar.

The temple was built on the site where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and became Lord Buddha. Thus, the name of the temple was kept as Mahabodhi temple, meaning 'Great Awakening' temple. The holy Bodhi tree under which the enlightenment of Lord Buddha took place is situated to the west of the temple.

The Maha Bodhi Temple of Bodh Gaya was constructed in 250 BC, approximately 250 years after the Enlightenment of Lord Buddha. After embracing Buddhism, Emperor Ashoka visited Bodh Gaya with the purpose of building a monastery and shrine.

It is believed that it was the Emperor who laid the foundation of the Mahabodhi Temple of Bihar. He also built the diamond throne, known as the Vajrasana, in order to mark the exact spot where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment.

With the early Islamic invasions, like the one by Muhammad bin Qasim, Buddhism started experiencing a decline in India. It was with the emergence of the Pala Empire in the northeast parts of the country that the religion again surged, with special emphasis on the Mahayana sect. With the defeat of Palas, Buddhism's position again started deteriorating. Around 12th century, Muslim armies invaded Bodh Gaya as well as the surrounding areas. During this period, the Mahabodhi Temple experienced major disrepair and was almost left deserted.

It was in the 16th century that a Hindu monastery was established near Bodh Gaya. With time, the monastery's abbot assumed the title to the surrounding land and claimed ownership of the Maha Bodhi Temple also. The decade of 1880s saw the revival of the temple, undertaken by the British government. Sir Alexander Cunningham supervised the restoration work. In the year 1949, the control of Mahabodhi temple was handed over to the state government of Bihar, which established a temple management committee for its maintenance.

Mahabodhi Temple of Bodhgaya is one of the oldest surviving brick structures in eastern India. It is believed to be the perfect example of Indian brickwork and was a strong influence in the development of later architectural traditions. The temple rises to a height of 55 m. It is adorned with a huge central tower, which stands enclosed within four smaller towers. Stone railings, which are approximately two meters in height, are seen encircling the Maha Bodhi Temple of Bodh Gaya.



Location: Bodh Gaya, Bihar

Founded By: Ashoka

Founded In: 250 BC

The railings were built in two phases and have been built using two different materials. The earlier railings date back to somewhere around 150 BC and are made of sandstone. They are adorned with images like those of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, being bathed by elephants and Surya, the Sun God, riding a chariot drawn by four horses. The later ones were constructed in the Gupta period (300-600 AD) and are made up of unpolished coarse granite. They have figures of stupas (reliquary shrines), garudas (eagles) and lotus flowers.

In June 2002, the Mahabodhi Temple became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, specifically nominated for the international World heritage program.

Meenakshi Temple

Meenakshi Amman Temple, also known as the Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, is situated in the holy city of Madurai.

One of the most visited pilgrimages of Tamil Nadu, the temple is devoted to Lord Shiva (in the form of Sundareswarar or the Beautiful Lord) and his consort, Goddess Parvati (in the form of Meenakshi or the Fish-eyed Goddess).

There are very interesting legends surrounding the establishment of the Sri Meenakshi Temple of India.

It is said that Lord Shiva appeared in the city of Madurai, in the form of Sundareswarar.

He came with His divine group of followers, with the purpose of marrying Pandya King Malayadwaja Pandya's daughter, Meenakshi, believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Parvati. It is because of this reason that the Minakshi Amman Temple was established in the Madurai city of Tamil Nadu. This temple counts amongst the four most sacred abodes of Goddess Parvati in India. The second legend goes that Indra, the God of heaven, found Shiva's idol, in the form of the lingam, in Madurai and went on to build the Meenakshi Temple.

Even today, during festive processions, a model of Indra's vehicle accompanies the idol of the deity. The temple is known throughout the world for its breathtaking architecture and stands adorned with 12 magnificently sculptured and painted gopurams (towers). Though the temple has been mentioned in Tamil literature since antiquity, its present structure is believed to have been built in the early 17th century. The history as well as the time of construction of the original Meenakshi Amman Temple is not known.

It is said that the temple was pillaged by Malik Kafur, a Muslim invader, in the year 1310. Almost all the ancient features and elements of the temple were destroyed at that time. Arya Natha Mudaliyar, the Prime Minister of the first Nayak of Madurai, was the person responsible behind the reconstruction and restoration of the Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple. The period of 1623 to 1659 saw valuable contribution being made to it by Thirumalai Nayak. He also got the Vasantha Mandapa constructed.

The sanctum sanctorum of the temple is more than 3500 years old, while the outer walls were made about 1500-2000 years back. The entire temple complex spreads over an area that measures about 45 acres. The tallest tower surrounding the temple is the Southern tower, which rises to a height of over 170 feet. The shrine of Lord Shiva is situated in the heart of the complex and also houses a remarkable



Location: Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Founded In: 17th century

Dedicated To: Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati

sculpture of Nataraja, the dancing form of Shiva. Numerous other structures also make up the complex.

Meenakshi Nayakkar Mandapam

Meenakshi Nayakkar Mandapam is a huge hall, adjoining Ashta Shakthi Mandapam. It comprises of 110 pillars, which are adorned with the figures of a peculiar animal called Yalli, with the body of a lion and the head of an elephant.

Potramaraikulam (Golden Lotus Tank)

Potramaraikulam is a huge tank, where devotees take bath in the holy water. The area surrounding the temple used to serve as the meeting place of Tamil Sangam, the ancient academy of poets. The works of its members were judged by throwing them in the water. The ones that did not sink in the tank were considered worthy of attention. A pillared corridor surrounds the holy tank.

Oonjal Mandapam and Killikoontu Mandapa

The western side of the tank houses the Oonjal (swing) Mandapam and Killikoontu (parrot cage) Mandapam. The golden idols of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar are placed on the swing in the Oonjal Mandapam every Friday. The parrots kept in the Killikoontu Mandapam recite Meenakshi's name.

Swami Sundareswarar Shrine

The shrine of Lord Sundareswarar (Lord Shiva) is situated to the north of Killikoontu Mandapam. On the way to the temple, one comes across a huge idol of Lord Ganesha, called Mukkurini Pillaiyar, unearthed by King Thirumalai Nayakar. The outer corridor of the temple comprises of the stump of the Kadamba tree, along with Kadambathadi Mandapam and Velli (Silver) Ambalam, a huge hall. The hall houses an image of Nataraja, covered with silver leaves.

Thousand Pillar Mandapam

There is a massive hall in the Meenakshi Amman Temple, which comprises of 985 magnificently sculptured Dravidan columns. Known as the Thousand Pillar Mandapam, this hall also houses an art museum, with a rich collection of icons, photographs, drawings, etc.

Musical Pillars

To the west of the Thousand Pillar Mandapam are the Musical Pillars. The specialty of these pillars is that each one of them produces a different musical note, when struck.

Kalyana Mandapa

Kalyana Mandapa lies to the south of Thousand Pillar Mandapam. It serves as the venue of the marriage festival of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, held every year during the Chitirai Festival in mid-April.

Vasantha Mandapam (Pudhu Mandapam)

Thirumalai Nayakkar built the Vasantha Mandapam, also known as Pudhu Mandapam. Every year, the hall plays host to Vasanthosavam, the Spring Festival, held in the Hindu month of Vaikasi (April/May). The pillars of the hall are adorned with elaborate sculptures of Lord Shiva and Goddess Meenakshi, scenes from their wedding, along with the figures of ten of the Nayak Kings and their consorts.

Festivals

The most famous as well as the most significant festival celebrated at the Minakshi Sundareswarar Temple is Meenakshi Thirukalyanam, the divine marriage of Goddess Meenkashi with Lord Shiva. It is celebrated every year, in the month of April. Other festivals organized at the temple include Ther Thiruvizhah (Chariot festival) and Theppa Thiruvizhah (Float festival). Apart from this, major Hindu festivals, like Navratri and Shivratri, are also celebrated here.

Mehrangarh Fort

Mehrangarh Fort of Jodhpur is the most impressive as well as the biggest fort of Rajasthan. Infact, the fort is famous for being one of the largest forts in the whole of India.

One of the most popular tourist destinations of Rajasthan, Mehrangarh Fort is perched at a height of approximately 400 feet above the city. It is bounded by imposing thick walls and comprises of a number of structures inside its complex, including several palaces with sprawling courtyards. The fort was built under the patronage of Rao Jodha in 1459, the fifteenth Rathore ruler.



Location: Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Rao Jodha

Founded In: 1459

Rao Jodha acceded the throne in the year 1458 and one year after his accession, laid down the foundation of the Mehrangarh Fort. The main reason for the establishment of the fort was that Mandore fort was no longer considered as secure and there was a need to move to a safer place. There is a very interesting story behind the establishment of the Mehrangarh Fort. The construction work for the fort was started on a hill, known as Bhaurcheeria, the mountain of birds. At that time, it was occupied by a hermit, known as Cheeria Nathji, the lord of birds.

To build the fort, Cheeria Nathji was forced to leave his cave. Angered by this act, the hermit cursed Rao Jodha, saying that his citadel will suffer from the scarcity of water. To escape the effects of the curse, Jodha built a house and a temple in the fort, near the hermit's cave, to appease God. Jodha then took the extreme step to ensure the prosperity of his fort. He buried a man alive in its foundations, by promising to look after his family throughout their life. Today, Mehrangarh Fort boasts of being the pride of Jodhpur.

The walls of the fort rise to a height of 36 m, with their width being approximately 21 m. There are three magnificent gates inside the fort complex, each constructed to commemorate some victory. The numerous palaces situated inside the fort are adorned with exceptional decorations. The most exquisite amongst these are Moti Mahal (Pearl Palace), Phool Mahal (Flower Palace), Sheesh Mahal (Mirror Palace), Sileh Khana and Daulat Khana. Mehrangarh Fort also houses a rich collection of artifacts.

Main Attractions

Chamunda Mataji Temple

Chamunda Mataji Temple was built by Rao Jodha, who brought the main idol from the old capital of Mandore in 1460. The temple sees exceptionally large crowd during Dussehra celebrations.

Period Rooms

There are a number of period rooms inside the Mehrangarh Fort.

Moti Mahal

Moti Mahal is the largest period room of the fort. Raja Sur Singh built the palace, which has five alcoves leading onto hidden balconies. It is believed that these balconies were intended to be used by his five queens, for listening in on the court proceeding.

Sheesh Mahal

Sheesh Mahal has been as per the typical Rajput architectural style. The palace is adorned with exquisite mirror work, an intricate mosaic of tiny fragments. The work has been superimposed over painted religious figures of plaster.

Phool Mahal

Phool Mahal, built by Maharaja Abhaya Singh, is the most splendid period room of Mehrangarh. It was intended to be used as a chamber of pleasure. Here, the Maharajas used to watch girls dancing under a ceiling of gold filigree.

Takhat Vilas

Takhat Vilas served as the residence of Maharaja Takhat Singh, the last ruler to stay in the Mehrangarh Fort. The ceiling of the palace has been adorned with splendid glass balls.

Galleries

The several galleries of Mehrangarh fort are definitely worth a visit.

Howdah Gallery

Howdah is the name given to the two-compartment wooden seat tied to the back of an elephant. The front compartment is large and has a raised protective metal sheet, while the rear one is small. The front one was meant for the kings or royalty and the rear one was for the bodyguards. One can still see some howdahs of that period in the gallery.

Palanquin Gallery

Palanquins were used as a means of travel by the ladies of the royalty, till the second quarter of the 20th century. Numerous decorated palanquins can be seen in this gallery.

Daulat Khana

The Daulat Khana houses a rich collection of fine and applied arts of the Mughal period.

Armory

The gallery that used to serve as the Armory exhibits an assortment of rare weapons, dating back to every period in Jodhpur. The display includes sword hilts in jade, silver, rhine horn, ivory, shields studded with rubies, emeralds and pearls, guns with gold and silver work on barrels, personal swords of emperors, etc. Then, there is the Khanda of Rao Jodha, which weighs over 7 pounds, along with the swords of Akbar and Timur.

Painting Gallery

The painting gallery houses a rich compilation of Marwar paintings.

Turban Gallery

Turban Gallery displays different types of turbans that used to be worn by the people of Rajasthan in the past.

Folk Musical Instruments Gallery

This gallery houses various types of folk musical instruments, some of them characteristic of a particular group or community and some, of a particular region.

Moti Masjid (Agra)

Moti Masjid of Agra is situated inside the premises of the famous Red Fort of the city.

Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan got this magnificent monument built inside his fort.

The construction work on the mosque was started in the year 1648 and was completed in 1654.

Moti Masjid is built out of pure white marble, which gives the look of pearl color. Infact, it is this pearl color of the mosque that led to its naming as the Moti Masjid, with the term 'Moti' meaning 'Pearl' and 'Masjid' meaning 'Mosque'.

The architectural beauty of the Moti Masjid serves as the perfect example of the exquisite craftsmanship of the artisans of India. The mosque was intended to serve as the private worship place of the royal members of the court. It is situated near the 'Diwan-E-Aam', the hall where the emperor used to hold public audiences. The prayer hall of the mosque lies on its western side. Moti Masjid of India is flanked, on the northern, the southern as well as the eastern side, by a porch, which is adorned with twelve pillars and an arch.

Beyond these cloisters lies the main sanctuary. Crowning the mosque are three huge and magnificent domes. Its parapets are lined with a series of domed kiosks, which have been designed as per the Hindu architectural style. There are seven bays inside the mosque that divide it into several aisles. Piers and overhead arches hold all these aisles together. The main entrance to the Moti Masjid is situated on its eastern side. Situated on the banks of river Yamuna, the mosque comes across as the perfect example of Shah Jahan's architecture.

The main pulpit of the mosque is reached after climbing four steps, quite unlike the usual mosques with a three-steps pulpit. On either side of the main prayer hall is another prayer hall, meant to be used by the women. These separate prayer halls stand adorned with marbled lattice worked screens. The western wall of Moti Masjid stand marvelously ornamented with carved and inlaid mihrabs. Anyone visiting the Taj Mahal must make sure to visit the Red Fort and in it, the magnificent Moti Masjid.



Location: Red Fort, Agra (Uttar Pradesh)

Founded By: Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan

Founded In: 1648-1654

Moti Masjid (Delhi)

The **Moti Masjid** (مسجد یموت, *Pearl Mosque*) is a large white marble mosque built by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb at the Red Fort complex in Delhi, India, from 1659-1660.

A mosque by the same name was also built in 1645 CE by Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb's father, inside the Lahore Fort in Lahore, Pakistan.

Another small mosque by the same name, was built for private prayer, by Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707-1712) and Aurangzeb's son, close to the *Ajmere Gate* of the dargah of Sufi saint, Qutbuddin

Bakhtiar Kaki at Mehrauli, and is an imitation of the one inside the Red Fort of Delhi.



The Pearl Mosque inside the Red Fort in Delhi

Moti Masjid (Lahore)

Moti Masjid (مسجد یموت), one of the "Pearl Mosques", is a 17th century religious building located inside the Lahore Fort. It is a small, white marble structure built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, and is among his prominent extensions (such as Sheesh Mahal and Naulakha pavilion) to the Lahore Fort Complex. The mosque is located on the western side of Lahore Fort, closer to Alamgiri Gate, the main entrance.

After the demise of the Mughal Empire, the mosque was forcibly converted into a Sikh temple and renamed *Moti Mandir* during the period of the Sikh rule under Ranjit Singh Sikh Confederacy (1716–99).



Mysore Palace

Mysore Palace (also known as the *Amba Vilas Palace*) is one of the most prized possessions of the Mysore city of Karnataka. The foundation of this magnificent palace was laid down in the year 1897 and it took approximately five years for the monument to be completely ready.

The palace used to serve as the official residence of the former royal family of Mysore and also housed the royal durbar (offices). Mysore Palace of Karnataka is officially known as the 'Amba Vilas' and counts amongst the numerous historic palaces of the city.

Mysore is commonly described as the *City of Palaces*, however, the term "Mysore Palace" specifically refers to one within the old fort. The Wodeyar kings first built

a palace in Mysore in the 14th century, it was demolished and constructed multiple times. The current palace construction was commissioned in 1897, and it was completed in 1912 and expanded later around 1940.

One of the largest palaces in India, Mysore Palace of Karnataka is a fine example of unique blend of different styles of architecture. The Mysore Palace is one of the most attractive and gorgeous monuments in Karnataka. It is also known by the name of Amba Vilas and was the residence of Wodeyar Maharaja. The Mysore Palace was rebuilt in 1912 after the original palace was destroyed in a fire accident in the year 1897. It was re-designed in Saracenic style by a famous British architect Henry Irwin. One can see the blend of different forms of architecture and design in the Mysore Palace.

Wodeyar kings, who used to rule over the Kingdom of Mysore till India attained independence, built a palace in the city in the 14th century. However, the palace was partially damaged in 1638, after being hit by lightning. Thereafter, it was renovated as well as extended. However, by the late 18th century, it again fell into neglect. The palace was demolished in 1793 and another palace was built in its place. In 1897, a fire occurred in the palace during the wedding of Princess Jayalakshmanni and it came down to ruins.

Finally, in the year 1897, Kempananjammani Vanivilasa Sanndihana, the Queen-Regent of Mysore ordered the construction of another palace at the same site. She commissioned British architect, Henry Irwin, to build the palace using different styles of architecture. The construction was completed in 1912, at a cost of approximately Rs. 42,00,000. There is dominance of Indo-Saracenic style in the architecture of the Mysore Palace, which has been beautifully blended with Hindu, Muslim, Rajput, and Gothic styles.



Location: Mysore (Karnataka)

Founded By: Maharaja of Mysore

Founded In: 1897 – 1912

Architect: Henry Irwin

The palace is a three-storied stone structure and stands adorned with pink marble domes and a 145 ft high, five-storied, tower. It has been constructed out of gray granite and is encircled by a large blooming garden. The facade of Mysore Palace is flanked by seven expansive arches, out of which the central one is supported by soaring pillars. The central arch is also adorned with a remarkable sculpture of Gajalakshmi, the goddess of wealth, who is always shown being flanked by elephants on both sides.

Mysore Dasara Festival

Every year, Mysore Palace serves as the venue of the Mysore Dasara Festival, held in the autumn season. During the festival, the entire palace is lit up with thousands of bulbs. A stage is put in the palace grounds, where artistes from different parts of the country come and perform. On the tenth day of the festival, known as the Vijaya Dashami, a parade originates from the palace grounds, with ornamented elephants and other floats.

Main Attractions

Diwan-e-Khas

Diwan-e-Khas is the hall used by the king for holding private rendezvous. It is an impressive room, which is entered through an exquisitely carved rosewood doorway, inlaid with ivory. The central knave of the hall, stands ornamented with elaborately gilded columns, stained glass ceilings, decorative steel grills, chandeliers with fine floral motifs and mosaic floor inlaid with semi-precious stones.

Gombe Thotti

Gombe Thotti, also known as the Doll's Pavilion, is a gallery that has a rich collection of traditional dolls, dating back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Apart from that, the gallery also houses an amazing assortment of Indian and European sculptures and ceremonial objects, like a wooden elephant howdah bedecked with 84 kg gold.

Kalyana Mandapa

Kalyana Mandapa served as the marriage hall of the royalty. It is basically a huge pavilion, in the shape of an octagon. The pavilion has a multihued stained glass ceiling, adorned with peacock motifs arranged in geometrical patterns. It is said that the entire structure was fashioned in Glasgow city of Scotland. Even the floor of the Mantapa is ornamented with the peacock theme and has a peacock mosaic. On the walls of the palace are exceptional oil paintings, illustrating the royal procession and Dasara celebrations of that time.

Temples

There are twelve Hindu temples inside the Mysore Palace complex. The oldest temple dates back to the 14th century, while the latest one was built in 1953. The most famous temples include the Someshvara Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lakshmiramana Temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

Public Durbar

Public Durbar, or the Diwan-e-Aam, is the hall where the king used to hear the petitions of the general public.

Armory

Mysore Palace also houses an armory, with a rich collection of different types of arms that were once used by the members of the royal family. These include weapons that were used in the 14th century (like lances, cutlasses, etc), as well as early 20th century (like pistols).

Padmanabhapuram Palace

Padmanabhapuram Palace is a beautiful monument, situated in a small village near Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala. The distance between the two places is approximately 65 km. The palace is situated inside an old granite fortress, which is around four km in length.

It was constructed somewhere around 1601 AD, under the patronage of Iravi Iravi Varma Kulasekhara Perumal, the erstwhile ruler of Travancore.



Location: Near Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Founded By: Iravi Iravi Varma Kulasekhara Perumal

Founded In: 1601

The capital of Travancore got shifted from here to Trivandrum in the 18th century. Located at the foot of the Veli Hills, Padmanabhapuram Palace serves as the

perfect example of traditional Kerala architecture. With the river Valli flowing nearby, it presents a picturesque sight. There are a number of structures, including a sprawling courtyard, which make up the entire complex of the Padmanabhapuram Palace of India.

Mantrasala (King's Council Chamber)

Mantrasala, or the King's Council Chamber, is the place where the king used to hold consultations with his ministers. It is a magnificent structure, adorned with colored mica windows and exquisite latticework. The flooring of the chamber is also very tastefully done in dark color and has a perfect finish. It has been constructed with a mixture of diverse stuff, like burnt coconut shells, egg white, etc.

Thai Kottaram (Mother's Palace)

Thai Kottaram, also known as the Mother's Palace, dates back to the mid-16th century. It has been designed as per traditional Kerala architectural style and is believed to be the oldest structure in the entire palace. There is an inner courtyard, called 'nalukettu', with sloping roofs and four pillars that seem to be supporting it.

Ekantha Mandapam (Chamber of Solitude)

Ekantha Mandapam is known as the 'Chamber of Solitude' and is situated in the southwest corner of the Mother's Palace. The chamber is festooned with elaborate woodcarvings, of which the most beautiful one has meticulous and attractive floral designs.

Nataksala (Hall of Performance)

Nataksala is the place where dance performances used to take place. The hall was built under the aegis of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, the erstwhile ruler of Travancore. It is also known as the Hall of Performance and has solid granite pillars and gleaming black floor. The wooden enclosure of the hall has

peepholes, which were used by the royal ladies to watch the performances.

Central Building

The central building of Padmanabhapuram Palace is a four-storied structure, situated in the heart of the palace. The top floor of the building, known as Upparikka Malika, used to serve as the private worship chamber of the royals. The walls of the top floor have been ornamented with exquisite murals that date back to the 18th century. Most of these murals exhibit scenes from the puranas, while some depict the social life of the Travancore during that time.

Just below the worship chambers are a number of rooms, one amongst which was once the bedroom of the King. The ornate bedstead of the ruler can still be seen there. It was received as a gift from the Dutch merchants and is composed of 64 types of herbal and medicinal woods. Almost all the rooms of this building have built-in recesses in walls, which were used for storing weapons like swords and daggers.

Thekee Kottaram (Southern Palace)

Thekee Kottaram is the name given to the southern palace, which is believed to be as ancient as the Thai Kottaram. Presently, it has been converted into a heritage museum, where one can see antique household articles and curios being displayed.

Other Structures

- A Big Hall (where ceremonial feasts were held on auspicious occasions)
- Bathing Pond (used by the royalty)
- Clock Tower (with a 300 year old working clock)
- Secret Passage (for the escape of king, his family members & their staff)

Collection

- A variety of weapons that were used in war, including swords and daggers
- A wooden cot made of upto 64 wooden pieces of the trunks of various medicinal trees
- Brass lamps and wood & stone sculptures
- Chinese jars, all gifted by Chinese merchants
- Furniture items and large mirrors made of polished metal
- Paintings illustrating incidents from the history of Travancore.

Palitana Temples

The ancient city of Palitana is situated in Gujarat, at a distance of approximately 51 km to the southwest of Bhavnagar. Known for its amazing Jain temples, the city forms a part of the Saurashtra region. Palitana Jain temples are believed to be the largest cluster of Jain temples in the whole of India. There are a total of 863 temples in the city, which are found spreading from base of the Shatrunjaya hill to its peak. You will have to climb almost 3950 steps, spanning 3.5 km, to reach the Jain temples of Palitana.



Location: Palitana, near Bhavnagar (Gujarat)

Number of Temples: 863

Founded In: 11th to 12th century (initially) and 16th century (the present ones)

Dedicated To: Jain Tirthankaras

All these temples do not date back to the same time. Rather, there were built in two different phases, with the first one starting from the 11th century and ending somewhere in the 12th century. This period also served as the revival time of the temple architecture all over India. The second phase started from the 16th century onwards. The reason for the two different phases is that Muslim invaders destroyed the temples, which were built in the 11th century, during the 14th and 15th century.

Thus, the temples were rebuilt in the 16th century and it is these reconstructed temples that we see today. There is no single person who can be credited with the construction of the Palitana Jain Temples. In effect, these temples reflect the effort and devotion of the wealthy Jain followers. With time, the successive followers of the Jain community started designing their own temples. They cleared the ridge of the hill for the purpose, leveled it into terraces, built the temples and walled them, covering a large area in the process.

Almost all the Palitana Jain Temples have been constructed on a common plinth. With each successive temple, the spire above the ceiling goes higher, giving the look of rising mountain peaks. The spires of the Jain Temples at Palitana have been beautifully festooned and sculpted with geometrical and floral ornamentation. The marble used for making the spires was brought from Rajasthan and then, block-by-block, it was taken uphill and the carvings were done on the site.

However, the architects as well as artisans working on the temples had to come down from the sacred hill before sun down every day, but were allowed to work in the rains. A number of the smaller temples at Palitana have chief walls built of white plaster, while the marble has been used for domes and spires. All the temples are dedicated to the Jain Tirthankaras and are believed to be one of the most sacred Jain pilgrim destinations in India. Nobody is allowed to visit the temples after dusk, not even the priests.

The temples are surrounded by strong walls and have been grouped into nine enclosures. Each of the enclosures has a central temple in the middle, which is surrounded by a number of minor temples. One of the most significant temples of the group is the Chaumukh Temple, which enshrines a four-faced deity of Adinathji. The deity has been placed on a marble pedestal and the shrine is open on all the four sides. The temple dates back to the early 17th century and stands divided into smaller structures, each of them crowned by a dome.

The structures that fall the innermost form a cross and are symbolical of the five hills sacred to the Jains. The most magnificent as well as the most profusely decorated Jain temple at Palitana is the Adishwar Temple. The ornate pillars and roofs of the temple are adorned with delicately cut marble, in the shape of dragons. Other significant Jain Temples of Palitana include Sampreti Raja Temple, Kumarpal Temple, and Rampal Temple. One must also visit the Muslim shrine of Angar Pir situated near the Adishwar temple.

Pattadakal Temple

Pattadakal is a beautiful city situated in the state of Karnataka. In the past, it was a part of the Chalukya Dynasty and it was during their rule that the city managed to attain an amazing blend of architectural styles belonging to the northern and the southern parts of India. Forming a part of the Pattadakal Temples are nine Hindu temples as well as a Jain temple. The sculptural art adorning the temples is characterized by elegance and elaboration.



Location: Pattadakal, Karnataka

The narrative art of the temples depicts different episodes from the great Hindu epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, the holy book Bhagavata Purana as well as the tales of Panchatantra. Four Hindu temples at Pattadakal have been built as per South Indian Dravidian architectural style. Four others are based on the Nagara architectural style of North India. While, the architecture of the ninth and the last, known as the Papanatha Temple, comes across as a combination of different styles.

Sangamesvara Temple

Sangamesvara Temple, built by Vijayaditya Satyasraya, boasts of a simple but huge structure. It is the oldest one of the Pattadakal Temples and was built under the patronage of Vijayaditya Satyasraya.

Virupaksha Temple

Virupaksha Temple was built somewhere around 740 AD, by Queen Lokamaha Devi. The main reason behind the construction of the temple was to commemorate the victory of Lokamaha's husband, Vikaramaditya II, over the kings from the south.

Jambulinga Temple

Jambulinga Temple is a small temple, which enshrines an exquisite image of Dancing Lord Shiva, with Goddess Parvati and Nandi Bull by His side. It has been built with a northern style tower, which has a horseshoe-arched projection on its facade.

Mallikarjuna Temple

The second queen of Vikaramaditya II built Mallikarjuna Temple, along with Virupaksha Temple, to commemorate the victory of the Chalukyas over the Pallavas. The largest of all Hindu temples at Pattadakal, the Mallikarjuna Temple is ornamented with rich sculptural works.

Jain Temple

The Jain temple is situated on the Pattadakal-Badami Road, approximately half a kilometer from the temple enclosure. A ninth century temple, it has been built in the Dravidian style and stands adorned with some stunning sculptures

Patwon ki Haveli

Rajasthan is home to some of the most magnificent havelis (mansions) in the whole of India. One such haveli is the Patwon ki Haveli, or Salim Singh ki Haveli, situated in the city of Jaisalmer. Infact, it is considered to be the one of the largest as well as the finest haveli of Rajasthan. The haveli has been named after Salim Singh, the prime minister of the erstwhile state of Jaisalmer. Patwon ki Haveli is beautifully constructed and stands covered with an arched roof. Exquisitely carved brackets, in the shape of peacocks, adorn its roof.



Location: Jaisalmer

Founded In: About 300 years ago

Salim Singh ki Haveli comprises of five stories presently. However, it is said that initially, the haveli was seven stories high. The two additional wooden stories made the haveli as high as the palace of the Maharaja of Jaisalmer. Upset by this fact, the Maharaja ordered the demolition of the two topmost stories. Located just below the hill, Patwon ki haveli has been separated into six apartments that are decorated with wonderful carvings. Two of these have been converted into the office of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

The owners of the Patwon ki haveli still occupy some of its apartments. Beautiful paintings and dazzling mirror work festoon some of the inner walls of the haveli. Then, we have the delicately carved pillars that add to the magnificence of the haveli. One of the apartments also has gorgeous friezes painted on its walls. The corridors of Salim Singh ki Haveli are huge, its rooms massive and its hallways fascinating. Its gateways are guarded by real-looking tuskars, which have been made of sand stones.

There are a large number of balconies in the Patwon ki haveli, numbering somewhere around thirty-eight. The most interesting feature is that all the thirty-eight balconies have different designs. The frontal facade of the haveli looks very much ship-stern, which has resulted in it being referred to as the Jahaz Mahal (Ship Palace) also. The spectacular blue cupola roof dazzling with exquisite stone carvings, screen windows and magnificent murals of the Patwon ki haveli definitely make it a place worth visiting.

Purana Qila

Old fort of Delhi is situated near the Pragati Maidan area of the city. It is believed that the site where the fort is built used to house the capital of Pandavas, of the great Indian Epic Mahabharata.

Old fort has served as the seat of administration for numerous emperors who have ruled over Delhi, including the legendary ruler Prithviraj Chauhan. Even though the citadel is now in ruins, its splendor is still not fully lost.

The initial fort was constructed by Sher Shah Suri, after demolishing Dinpanah, the city of Humayun.

Consequently the fort is considered to be 'the first city of Delhi'.



Location: Near Pragati Maidan, Delhi

Founded By: Sher Shah Suri and Humayun

Founded In: 1538-1545

The corners of the Purana Quila of Delhi, along with its western wall, have strong fortresses. Its ramparts are approximately 2 km in length and are flanked by three double-storied main gates the north, south and west, with 'chhatris' on top. The northern gateway of the fort is known as the 'Talaqi-Darwaza' i.e., the Forbidden Gate. It stands adorned with exquisite marble carvings, depicting lions engaged in fierce battle with a man. The exteriors of the gate were once ornamented with colored tiles, whose remnants are still visible.

It is said that though Sher Shah laid down the foundation of Old Fort, he could not live to see it being fully completed. The fort was finished, or at least renovated, by Humayun when he recaptured Delhi. This is the reason why its southern gate is known as Humayun Darwaza. Encircling the northern as well as the western side of the fortress is a moat. Along with that, there is also a causeway that links it with the main land. The excavations carried out at the fort some time back came up with relics that date back to around 1000 BC.

These findings confirm the belief that Purana Quila was built on the site of Indraprastha, the capital of Pandavas. The relics, including punch-marked coins, human and animal terracotta figurines and inscribed terracotta seals, seem to belong from the Mauryan period to early Mughal period. Out of the few buildings of Old Fort that have withstood the travails of time, one is the mosque built by Sher Shah. It dates back to the year 1541 and is built as per architectural styles, ranging from the Lodi style to that of the Mughals.

Then, we have the Sher-Mandal was built by Humayun, a double-storied octagonal tower that has been built of red sandstone. There is an octagonal chhatra, festooned with glazed tiles and carved and painted plasterwork on the interiors, which seems to be crowning the tower. It is believed that the tower used to serve as the library of Emperor Humayun. The same place also served as his deathbed, when he fell

down from it and died. One of the main attractions of Purana Quila is a Sound and Light Show, where 5000 years of history of Delhi is displayed.

As you enter the main gate of the Old Fort, you will come across a small archaeological museum. It houses numerous artifacts belonging to the Mughal period. Then, there are relics belonging to the Mahabharata era, including archaic pottery and other pieces of art and handicrafts. Apart from these artifacts, the other items excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India comprise of material belonging to the Gupta period (like coins) as well as post-Gupta period. The main attractions near the Old Fort include a lake with boating facilities and a Zoological Park.

Qutub Minar

The Qutub Minar is constructed with red sandstone and marble, and is the tallest minaret in India.

The Construction was begun by qutub-ud-din Aibak in 1192 and was completed by his son-in-law cum successor, Iltutmish.

Its foundation was laid down in the 1199 and it was completed in three stages. The highest stone tower of not only India, but also the whole world, Qutab Minar of New

Delhi rises to a height of approximately 72.5 meters. From the top to the bottom, the monument has a total of 379 steps.

The minar narrows down from the bottom to the top. It has a diameter of 14.3 meters at the bottom, while at the top it comes down to only 2.7 meters. The entire edifice has been constructed with the help of red and buff sandstone and serves as the perfect example of Indo-Islamic architecture.

The construction of the Qutub Minar was started by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak in 1199 and it was finished by his successor and son-in-law, Iltutmish. The Qutub Minar was named after the Sufi saint, Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. Though the exact purpose of the Qutb Minar is not known but it is believed that it served as a minaret to the adjoining mosque and was used by the muezzins to call the faithful to prayer.

Only the ground floor and the first floor of Qutub Minar were constructed by Sultan Qutub-ud-Din Aibak. Later, Iltutmish added three more floors to it. Projecting balconies, supported by stone brackets, encircle all the floors of the monument.

These brackets have been adorned with honeycomb design, which is more visible in those of the first floor. The first floor of the minar as well as its balcony has a curved and fluted design. By the time we reach the second floor, only the curved design remains, while the third floor boasts of only the fluted design. Floral motifs and arabesques adorn the monument, which was repaired by Firoz Shah Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodi. The inscriptions on the surface of the floor tell us that Firoz Shah renovated the top floor and added marble to the building.

All the artisans employed for the construction of Qutub Minar were Hindus and even the raw material for the monument was obtained from existing Hindu and Jain temples. Since human and animal figures are not allowed in Islam, the motifs illustrating them were later disfigured. There are a number of structures inside the complex of Qutab Minar, all of which have been declared as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.



Location: New Delhi

Founded By: Qutub-ud-Din Aibak

Founded In: 1199

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site

Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque

Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, constructed by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, dates back to the year 1198. The oldest mosque in the capital city built by the Delhi Sultans, it stands on the site where once 27 Hindu and Jain temples stood. These temples were razed to construct the mosque and one can still see their carved columns and architectural appendages supporting the cloisters of the mosque's courtyard. Later, Iltutmish and Ala-ud-Din Khalji erected an arched screen and enlarged the mosque.

Iron Pillar

The Iron Pillar is situated inside the premises of the Qutub Minar complex. It was constructed in the 4th century and bears an inscription about its construction. The inscription states that the pillar was constructed as a flagstaff, in the honor of Lord Vishnu and in the memory of Chandragupta II, a Gupta King. The Iron Pillar is made of 98% wrought iron and has lasted for 1,600 years without rusting.

Tomb of Iltutmish

Iltutmish Tomb is a simple square chamber, which has been constructed of red sandstone. Built in the year 1235, this monument stands carved with inscription and geometrical and arabesque patterns in Saracenic tradition, on its entrances as well as the whole interiors. It is said that in the past, the tomb had a dome also. However, it fell down because the walls could not stand its heavy weight.

Alai Darwaza

Alai Darwaza is the name given to the southern gateway of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. Ala-ud-Din Khalji got the gateway constructed in the year 1311. It boasts of being the first gateway with a horseshoe arch and true dome. Along with that, it was also the first structure, which employed Islamic principles of construction and decoration.

Madrassa

A madrassa was also constructed by Ala-ud-Din Khalji, towards the southwest of Qutub Minar. It was intended to provide religious education to the children.

Alai Minar

Another one of Ala-ud-Din Khalji's constructions, Alai Minar was intended to be double in size to the Qutub Minar. However, the monument could not be fully completed. Only the first story, with a height of 25 m, was fully built. Alai Minar is situated to the north of the Qutub Minar.

Rashtrapati Bhavan

Rashtrapati Bhavan is the name given to the official residence of the President of India. It is situated in New Delhi, near the magnificent India Gate.

Before India's independence, the Bhavan used to serve as the residence of the Governor-General of India and was known as the 'Viceroy's House'. This name continued to be used even after independence and it was only in the year 1950 that it was changed to 'Rashtrapati Bhawan'. The area in which this monument is situated is known as Lutyens' Delhi.



Location: New Delhi

Architect: Edwin Lutyens

It was in the Delhi Durbar year of 1911 that the decision to shift the capital of India to Delhi was taken. British architect Edwin Landseer Lutyens was hired to design and build the entire area of New Delhi and within it, the Governor-General's residence that later came to know the 'Viceroy's House'. Along with Edwin, Herbert Baker was appointed to work as the architect of the Rashtrapati Bhawan. It was also decided that the architecture of the President's House would be basically classical, but with an Indian motif.

The monument is entered through Gate 35, which is located on Prakash Vir Shastri Avenue. The top of the monument seems to be crowned with an ancillary dome-like structure, known as 'Chattri'. The eastern facade of the monument has twelve unevenly spaced columns, with the Delhi order capitals. A blend of acanthus leaves and four pendant Indian bells, one on each corner, adorn these capitals. The front portion of the Rashtrapati Bhavan is devoid of windows, except for the wings at the sides.

The monument, then 'Viceroy's House', was completed in the year 1929 and its official inauguration ceremony took place in 1931. It took approximately seventeen years to complete the magnificent building and on the eighteenth year after its completion, India attained independence. After independence, the ceremonial Governor-General continued to occupy the building. It was in 1950 that India became a republic and nominated the first president, who took over the 'Viceroy's House' and renamed it as the 'Rashtrapati Bhavan'.

Apart from the Indian style, one can also see Mughal and European colonial architectural elements in the construction of the building. There are 340 rooms in the Rashtrapati Bhawan, which cover a floor area of 200,000 square feet. 700 million bricks and 3 million cubic feet of stone were used for constructing the edifice, which has only minimal usage of steel. The entire building has been built

around huge courtyards, with a number of squares and open inner areas within. The president stays in a separate wing, while the guests stay in another wing.

There is a Viceroy's wing, meant to be used by the president. However, it is so flamboyant that the first president of India decided not to stay there. He stayed in the guest wing and so have all his successors till date. The wing is a separate four-floor apartment, having its own courtyards. The heart of the President's House comprises of the Durbar's Hall, which was initially the 'Throne Room' housing the thrones for the Viceroy and his wife. The hall has columns made by combining vertical lines with the motif of a bell.

There is a 2-ton chandelier in the hall, which brightens up its otherwise simple interiors. There is one room in each corner of the hall, comprising of the two state drawing rooms, a state supper room and the state library. The hall serves as the venue of all the official ceremonies, such as the swearing in of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Members of Parliament. The President of India also gives away the Arjuna Awards for Excellence from the confines of the Durbar's Hall only.

The interiors of the Durbar's Hall as well as most of the other rooms of the Bhawan are quite simple. Heavy stonework and shapes have been used to present an image of simplicity rather than elaborate ornamentation. Other rooms inside the Rashtrapati Bhavan include State Dining Hall, Sitting Rooms, Billiards Rooms, State Ballroom, State Drawing Room, etc. Near the Viceroy's stairs, we see eight marble lions spilling water into six basins.

The main dome of the President's house involves a fusion of Indian and British architectural styles. The Jaipur Column is situated in the center of the main court in front of the President's House. It is approximately 145 meters high and was received as a gift from the Maharaja of Jaipur. Surrounding the Bhawan are the exceptionally charming Mughal Gardens. The base of the President's House has a huge courtyard, known as Vijay Chowk.

Trivia

The President of India does not occupy the Viceroy Wing; rather he stays in one of the guestrooms. This trend was started by the First President of India, who found the Viceroy Wing too ostentatious. Rashtrapati Bhavan is the biggest President's residence in the whole world. The Rose Garden of Rashtrapati Bhavan is open to public every year, in the month of February. Steel was not used in the construction of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Red Fort

The Red Fort of Delhi serves as an articulate reminder of the grandeur of the Mughals. It is also known as the 'Lal Quila' and finds a mention in the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list. Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan got the fort constructed, when he shifted from Agra, as the venue for his new capital, Shahjahanabad - the seventh Muslim city in Delhi. The fort was built, completely of red sandstone, at the eastern edge of Shahjahanabad. Infact, Red Fort gets its name from the massive red sandstone wall enclosing it.



Location: New Delhi

Founded By: Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan

Founded In: 1638-1648

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site

The Red fort contains all the paraphernalia of the Mughal government- halls of public and private audience (Diwan-i-am and Diwan-i-khas), domed and arched marble palaces, plush private apartments, a mosque (Moti Masjid) and richly designed gardens. Though the Red fort had to face the wrath of Nadir Shah in 1739 and the British soldiers during the revolt of 1857, it still remains an impressive testimony to the Mughal splendor and might.

The Red Fort also has the Diwan-i-Am (the Hall of Public Audiences). It was the place where the Emperor would hear complaints of his subjects. In the Diwan-i-Khas (the hall of private audiences) the Emperor held private meetings. This hall is made of marble. The Peacock Throne adorned this hall. It was carried away to Iran by Nadir Shah in 1739.

The wall measures approximately 2.5 km in length, while its height varies from 16 m on the riverside to 33 m towards the city. Situated along the Yamuna River, the fort mostly stands surrounded by a moat that was fed through the river. In the northeastern corner of Lal Quila, one can see an older fort. Known as Salimgarh, this fort was built as a protection by Islam Shah Suri, in the year 1546. The foundation of the fort was laid down in 1638 and it took approximately 10 years to complete it fully.

As per another belief, the old fort is the ancient city of 'Lal Kot', invaded by Shah Jahan. In the year 1783, Red fort fell to the Sikhs, who entered it and occupied the Diwan-i-Aam. At last, the entire city of Shahjahanabad was surrendered by the Mughal wazir in cahoots with his Sikh Allies. The Revolt of 1857 saw the Red Fort of Delhi being used as the headquarters. Later, British army claimed its occupation and destroyed numerous pavilions and gardens. It was only in 1903 that restoration program on the fort was undertaken.

Diwan-i-Aam of the Red Fort is a massive pavilion, where the Emperor used to listen to the petitions of the public. In the middle of the eastern wall of the pavilion, one can see an ornamented throne-balcony that was used by the emperor. The design of the balcony was based on the throne of Solomon. Just behind the throne are the imposing private apartments of the Emperor. These apartments stand adorned with a row of pavilions, which used to provide magnificent views of the Yamuna River.

An incessant water channel, known as the Nahr-i-Behisht or the 'Stream of Paradise', runs through the center of all the pavilions, connecting them in the process. The water channel draws water from the Yamuna itself, with the help of a tower in the northeastern corner of the fort, which is known as the Shah Burj. The basic architectural style of the Red Fort of Delhi reflects Islamic influence. However, each of the pavilions has some elements that are characteristic of the Hindu architecture, which is a typical trait of Mughal buildings.

The two pavilions that lie in the southernmost corner of the fort used to serve as the zenanas (or women's quarters). One of them is known as Mumtaz Mahal and has been converted into a museum. While, the larger as well as the more flamboyant one is the Rang Mahal (pleasure palace). It stands festooned with a gilded ceiling and a marble pool, which is fed by the Nahr-i-Behisht. The third pavilion from the south is known as the Khas Mahal. This palace used to house the remarkable royal chambers.

It comprises of a suite of bedrooms, prayer rooms, a veranda and the Mussaman Burj, a tower. The tower was used by the emperor to come in front of his people in a daily ceremony. The next pavilion that you will set your eye upon is the Diwan-i-Khas, the ostentatiously decorated hall where all the private meetings of the Emperor, along with the ministerial and court gatherings, used to take place. It is the most magnificent pavilion in the entire Lal Quila and is festooned with stone-studded and gilded patterns on the columns.

The original ceiling of this hall was made of silver and inlaid with gold. However, this ceiling was later replaced with a painted wooden one. The next pavilion in the fort comprises of the hammam, or the Turkish style baths. Marble and colored stones were used to ornament the entire structure. Moti Masjid, or the Pearl Mosque, lies to the west of the baths and was added to the Red Fort in the year 1659. It was built to serve as the private mosque of Emperor Aurangzeb, the successor of Shah Jahan.

The mosque is a small three-domed structure of white marble, with exquisite carvings and a three-arched screen. The northern portion is covered by a formal garden known as the Hayat Bakhsh Bagh, or the 'Life-Bestowing Garden'. In the middle of the garden are two bisecting channels of water. On both the ends of the channel, we see pavilions. The third pavilion in the garden is situated at the intersection point of the channels and was built by Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor, in the year 1842.

Lahore Gate

Lahore Gate provides the main entrance to the Red Fort. Flanked by semi-octagonal towers, the gate is so named because it faces west, towards the city of Lahore. Aurangzeb constructed the ramparts before

the original Lahore gate, with the aim of making entry into the fort more difficult. It is at the top of this fortification that the Prime Minister of India hoists the national flag every year, on the Independence Day.

In 1986, all the windows of this gate were blocked with red sandstone for security reasons. In the year 1965, a lift was constructed just before the Lahore Gate and is now mainly used during the Independence Day celebrations. There are a number of structures inside the Lahore Gate. The wooden doors of the Lahore Gate are covered with bronze. It is said that these doors were so heavy that elephants were used to open and close them.

Chatta Chowk

Chatta Chowk comprises of the apartments that flank the passages one comes into after entering the Lahore Gate. Another name for the chowk is Meena Bazaar and it was one of the first covered bazaars of the 17th century. During the Mughal era, shops were located on the upper as well as lower arcades and used to sell silks, jewelry, gems, silver ware and other artistic objects. However, today the shops occupy the lower arcade only and the items sold by them include souvenirs, eatables and drinks. Natural sandstone was used to make the arcades of the Chatta Chowk. The shops that were situated in the lower arcade had cusped arches.

Naubat Khana (Naqqar Khana)

Naubat Khana, also known as Naqqar Khana, is the Drum House that was used for playing music in the Mughal era, five times a day. Large musical instruments like kettledrums, hautboys (shehnai) and cymbals were kept in the music galleries of the house. Another name for the place was Hathipol as everyone, with the exception of royal princes, had to dismount from their elephants (hathi) here only.

A red sandstone structure, it is rectangular in shape and is adorned with carved designs that were originally painted with gold. In the interiors of the Naqqar Khana, a combination of colors was used to paint different layers. The first floor of the edifice has been converted into a War Memorial Museum. It houses a rich collection of arms and armaments that were once used by the Mughal Emperors. Along with that, one can also see paintings of various kings and rulers and a brief narration of the Revolt of 1857.

Sound and Light Shows

One of the major attractions of the Red Fort comprises of the Sound and Light Shows that showcase particular phases of Delhi's history. The shows are held both in Hindi as well as in English.

Rock Fort Temple

Rock Fort temples are situated in Trichy, a small city in Tamil Nadu. They are counted amongst the most visited pilgrim destinations of the state and stands perched on a hill. The entire Rock Fort temple complex mainly comprises of three temples, namely the Manikka Vinayaka Temple, the Uchhi Pillayar Koyil and the Taayumaanava Koyil (Shivastalam).

The stone hill on which the temple complex is sited seems to be rising brusquely from the plains, to tower over the nearby city. The entire complex rises to a height of approximately 83 meters.

The most famous landmark of Tiruchirapalli, the Rockfort temple complex is believed to be older than even the rocks of Greenland and the Himalayas. The hall of the temple is adorned with 100 pillars and its Vimana is enclosed in a gold cover. The southern side of the rock, on which the Rock Fort temples stand, has exquisite rock-cut cave temples. These caves are believed to have been carved at the time of the Pallavas and are adorned with exceptionally magnificent sculptures.

The temple has also been the venue of the Carnatic wars fought during the British-French conflict, in the 18th century. The founders of the city of Tiruchirapalli, the Nayaks, got the Rockfort Temple built. The main deity of the Shivastalam temple is Kangaala Moorthy, one of the 64 manifestations of Lord Shiva. The temple is entered through a flight of covered stairs and the first site that one encounters on entering the temple is that of two more temples. The Tayumanavar temple is situated to the west of the entrance and the Uchipillayar temple to its east.

Six worship services are offered at the temple on a daily basis. The Uchhi Pillayar Koyil temple enshrines the image of Lord Vinayaka and one can have breathtaking views of the environs from this temple. Rock Fort temple complex also houses the house of Robert Clive as well as an 18th century Church, built by Reverend Schwartz of Denmark. The pinnacle of the complex is reached through a flight of 344 steps. The inscriptions at the top are said to date back to 3rd century BC. Even though, the surrounding walls of the temple are now in ruins, the main guard gate is still intact.

Festivals

Brahmotsavam festival is celebrated every year at the Rock Fort Temple, during the months of April-May. The venue of the festival is the Chittira Mandapam, which houses granite chain with nine loops. Then, we have the Aadi Pooram and the float festival in Panguni that attract tourists. Mohini Alangaram,



Location: Trichy, Tamil Nadu

Founded By: The Nayaks

Dedicated To: Kangaala Moorthy (a manifestations of Lord Shiva)

Vaikunta Ekadasi, Garuda Seva, Flower Festival and the Car Festival are the other major festivals celebrated near the temple.

Rumi Darwaza

Rumi Darwaza is a huge gateway situated in the city of Lucknow, near the Bada Imambara. An architectural beauty, it is counted amongst the most popular attractions of Uttar Pradesh. The gateway dates back to the year 1784 and was constructed under the patronage of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula. One of the most imposing structures in India, Rumi Darwaza has been built as per the Awadh architectural style. Known by the name of Turkish Gateway also, it is said to be exactly similar in design to a gateway in ancient Constantinople (Turkey).

The term "Rumi" has been derived from the word Rome, which is another name of Istanbul, the capital city of Eastern Roman Empire. Since Constantinople was earlier known as Istanbul, the name of the gateway was kept in Hindi as the 'Rumi Darwaza'. The gateway is huge in size and rises to an astounding height of 60 feet. An octagonal chattri adorns the uppermost part of the Rumi Darwaza and is beautifully carved. The chattri can be easily reached with the help of a staircase.

In the past, a huge lantern was kept on the top of the Rumi Darwaza, with the purpose of lighting it up. The gateway used to look magnificent under the light of the lantern. The sides of the arch have been decorated with carved flower buds, out of which little jets of water used to rush out. This made the Rumi Darwaza look like the gateway to Paradise. Just like Bada Imambara, the gate was also founded under the 'Food for Work' program. At one point of time in the past, Rumi Darwaza used to serve as the entrance to the walled city area of Lucknow.



Location: Near Bada Imambara, Lucknow
(Uttar Pradesh)

Founded In: Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula
Founded By: 1784

Safdarjung Tomb

Safdarjung Tomb is one of the most magnificent tombs of India, situated in the capital city of Delhi. The mausoleum serves as the last resting place of Safdarjung, the governor of Awadh and later the Prime Minister of Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah.

It was built under the aegis of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah, Safdarjung's son.

It was built in 1754 in the late Mughal Empire style, and was described as "the last flicker in the lamp of Mughal architecture".

Safdarjung's tomb was built by Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah, the son of Safdarjung. Safdarjung was the governor of Awadh and later became the Prime Minister of Muhammad Shah, the Mughal emperor.

Surrounded by blooming gardens, the entire complex of Safdarjung tomb covers an area of approximately 300 sq km. The garden of the tomb has been designed as per the Charbagh style of the Mughal gardens. It is also said that tomb of Safdar Jung is built almost on the same pattern as the Humayun's tomb. The mausoleum represents that time when the Mughal style of architecture was almost on the road to its downfall.

Safdarjung tomb has been constructed out of red sandstone and buff stone. Along with Safdarjung, the tomb also houses the remains of his wife. There are eight rooms surrounding the central chamber of the mausoleum, which is square in its shape. All the apartments in the Safdarjung Tomb, with the exception of the corner ones, are rectangular in shape. The corner ones have been built in the shape of an octagon.

Supporting the dome of the mausoleum is a sixteen-sided base. Exceptionally splendid pavilions are situated on the either side of the Safdarjung tomb. They are known as 'Moti Mahal' (Pearl Palace), 'Jangli Mahal' (Sylvan Palace) and 'Badshah Pasand' (Emperor's Favorite). The tomb of Safdar Jung has been criticized numerous times for its weakness in proportions, which has led to a lack of balance in its make-up.



Location: Lodi Road, Near Safdarjung Airport (New Delhi)

Entombs: Safdarjung, the prime minister of Muhammad Shah

Founded By: Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah

Founded In: 1753-54

Sanchi Stupa

Sanchi is a village in Madhya Pradesh, believed to be one of the most important places in India associated with Buddhism. It is situated at a distance of approximately 52 km from the city Bhopal of India, also known as the City of Lakes. Sanchi is known for housing a number of Buddhist structures, like stupas, monasteries, temples, pillars, etc. Most of these structures date back to the period between 3rd century BC and 12th century AD and are a part of UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.



Location: Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh

Founded By: Maurya Emperor Ashoka

Founded In: 3rd century BC

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site

Mauryan emperor Ashoka was the founder of all the stupas at Sanchi, which were constructed in the honor of Lord Buddha. The most impressive as well as the most significant one of all the stupas is the Great Sanchi Stupa. It is a simple hemispherical brick structure, which has been built over the relics of Lord Buddha. One of the best-preserved stupas in central India, the Great Stupa at Sanchi is adorned by a chhatra, a parasol-like structure, intended to honor and protect the relics.

Surrounding the main Sanchi Stupa is a path, used for circumambulation. The path stands encircled by a railing, with four carved gateways that face the four different directions. These gateways are said to be carved somewhere around 100 AD. A unique feature of the all the stupas at Sanchi, including the Great Stupa, is that they do not have any images of Lord Buddha in human form. Inanimate figures, like footprints, tree, wheels and thrones, have been drawn or carved to represent the symbolical form of the Lord.

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However, the figure that is most extensively used to depict Lord Buddha is a lotus flower. During the Shunga period, Sanchi Stupa was extended to quite an extent. Its facade was decorated with stones, railings and staircase, along with a harmika on the top. Sculptures, with different motifs and designs, have been chiseled to ornament the railings and gates of the stupa. The gateways of the Great Sanchi Stupa have been exquisitely festooned with illustration of incidents from the life of the Buddha.

The ornamentation the stupa gateways also includes the portrayal of male and female tree spirits. Since the female tree spirits are believed to be a symbol of fertility, they are usually used by Buddhists in the form of welcoming figures. The site where the village of Sanchi stands was discovered by General Taylor, in the year 1818. Later, 1919, an archaeological museum was established in Sanchi, by Sir John Marshall.

Shore Temple

Mahabalipuram is a small city, situated at a distance of approximately 50 km to the south of the Chennai city of Tamil Nadu. It once served as port city of the Pallava rulers and is adorned with magnificent architectural beauty. The major attractions of the city are its numerous temples and rock cut sculptures, which present a wonderful amalgamation of history and natural beauty. Almost all the monuments in Mamallapuram have been built as per Dravidian temple architecture and Pallava art.



Location: Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu

Founded By: Rajasimha

Founded In: 7th century AD

Dedicated To: Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site

The Shore temple of Mamallapuram was constructed under the aegis of Rajasimha and date back to the 7th century AD. The period when the temple was built is believed to represent the pinnacle of Pallava art and architecture. Shore Temples of India are perched on a rocky protrusion, which looks over the shoreline. The temple was built in such a way so as to light it up with the rays of the rising sun and to illuminate the waters after dark. Thus, the layout of the temple is quite different from the usual temples.

Shore Temple of Mahabalipuram also claims the distinction of being the first Pallava structure to be constructed of stone, rather than being carved out of stone. The shikhar (spire) of the temple is of a towering, tiered style, and not rounded like those of the vihara design. The main shrine inside the complex is situated in the east and faces the sea. Behind this are the gateway, the forecourt and the assembly hall of the temple. There are shrines dedicated to both Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu in the Shore temple.

The sanctum sanctorum as well as the smaller temple in the west is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The walls surrounding these shrines are adorned with the images of Nandi Bull. Between these two shrines, there is a third shrine also, which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The idol of the Lord illustrates Him as reclining on the serpent Seshnag, a Hindu symbol for consciousness. The sculpted panels of this shrine portray vigorous earthly beauties, which seem to be imbued with life and display breathtaking beauty.

Sun Temple

Konark Sun Temple is a 13th century Sun Temple (also known as the **Black Pagoda**), at Konark, in Orissa. It was constructed from oxidized and weathered ferruginous sandstone by King Narasimhadeva I (1238-1250 CE) of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.

Konark Sun Temple is situated in the state of Orissa, quite near to the holy city of Puri. Dedicated to Surya, the sun God, the temple has been built as per Orissa's medieval architecture. Sun Temple of Konark also claims the distinction of being declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The architectural beauty of the temple is beyond the scope of words. The intricate and exquisite sculptural work that adorns the temple only serves to enhance its splendor. Konark Sun Temple has been built in the form of the chariot of the Sun God.



Location: Konark, Orissa

Founded By: King Narsimha Deva

Dedicated To: Surya, the Sun God

Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site

The term 'Konarka' is actually a combination of two words, Kona meaning corner and Arka meaning sun. Thus, Konark means the corner of the sun. The city got this name since it was one of the first places in India where Sun worship was undertaken. It is believed that the Sun Temple of Konark was built under the patronage of King Narashimhadev I of the Ganga dynasty. It was meant as a commemoration of his victory over Muslims. In the early 17th century, an envoy of the Mughal emperor Jahangir desecrated the temple.

After this incident, the Sun Temple of Konark fell into disuse. Another legend has it that Samba, the son of Lord Krishna, got the Konark Sun temple constructed. It is said that Samba was afflicted by the fatal disease of leprosy, which was the result of a curse given to him by his father. In order to cure himself of the disease, he underwent almost 12 years of harsh penance. Impressed with his penance, Surya cured him of his disease. Thereafter, Samba built the temple in the honor of the Sun God.

The temple has 24 chariot wheels around its base; each being 10 feet in diameter and having a set of spokes and detailed carvings. These spokes serve as sundials, which can be used to ascertain the exact time. Seven horses have been shown as dragging the temple. The entrance to the Sun Temple is flanked by two stone lions, which seem to be guarding it and are shown subduing elephants. The space around the base of the temple as well as on the walls and roof is full of carvings of animals, foliage, men, warriors on horses and sensual scenes.

There are three images of the Sun God, positioned in a way that they catch the sunrays at dawn, noon and sunset. The roof of Konark Sun Temple is pyramidal in shape and rises to a height of 30 m. The various images adorning the temple comprise of those of the deities, the Surasundaris (heavenly

damsels), human musicians, lovers and dancers. Along with that, different scenes from the courtly life have also been illustrated. The sacred pond where Samba is said to be cured from leprosy is situated quite near to the temple.

Konark Dance Festival

Every year, in the month of December, the Sun Temple of Konark plays host to the Konark Dance Festival. The festival is organized in an open-air theatre, built near the temple, which serves as the perfect backdrop to the dance performances. Dancers from all over the country congregate at Konark to take part in the festival. The dance forms performed at the festival include Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri, Kathak, Chhow, etc.

Sun Festival

Sun Festival (Magha Saptami) is also held at Konark on an annual basis. It is celebrated on the seventh day (saptami) of the bright half of the Hindu month of Magha (January/February).

Srirangapatnam fort

One of the prime attractions in Mysore, Karnataka is the famous Srirangapatnam fort. Built in the year 1537 by a feudal lord, this magnificent fort is considered to be the second toughest fort of India. The Srirangapatna Fort has four main entrances known by the names of Delhi, Bangalore, Mysore and Water and Elephant gates. The fort has a double wall defense system, which is what makes it impenetrable. The legendary Tipu Sultan's residence was inside this fort. Hence, it is also known as Tipu Sultan Fort.



Tipu Sultan was known as the Mysore Tiger since he fought the British forces here with true courage and valor. It is here that he breathed his last while fighting the British forces in Mysore during the 18th century. The credit of keeping the British away from southern India truly goes to Tipu Sultan and his father who was another courageous leader, Hyder Ali. The fort is located on an island in midst of River Cauvery. The landscape surrounding the fort is very serene and beautiful and is a must visit if you are traveling to Karnataka.

The architectural style of the fort is supposed to be Indo-Islamic and there is a Persian inscription on the gateway that announces its date of construction. There are two dungeons in the lower chambers of the fort that were used to imprison captured British officers. It is also said that Buddha visited and stayed on one of the islands near Srirangapatnam. A temple dedicated to Lord Sriranganatha is also situated over here that is yet another important landmark and tourist attraction.

Taj Mahal



Location: Agra, Uttar Pradesh

Founded By: Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan

Founded In: 1631-1648

Entombs: Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan

Area: 42 acres

Status: One of the Seven Wonders of the World UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983

Architect: Ustad Ahmad Lahauri

Famous as one of the wonders, the **Taj Mahal** at Agra, India, is epitome of true love. Taj Mahal was built by the famous Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the memory of his beloved wife (third wife), Mumtaz Mahal. The architectural beauty and magnificence of the Taj Mahal has never been surpassed. The Taj Mahal is said to be the most beautiful monument built by the Mughal rulers and it represents the zenith of the Mughal architecture. Built entirely of white marbles, the beauty of the Taj Mahal is beyond description. The beauty of the Taj Mahal has been aptly summarized by the famous English poet, Sir Edwin Arnold, as "Not a piece of architecture, as other buildings are, but the proud passions of an emperor's love wrought in living stones."

The Taj Mahal is widely recognized as "the jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage".

Ustad Ahmad Lahauri is generally considered to be the principal designer.

The Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan married Arjumand Banu Begam, better known by the name Mumtaz Mahal, in the year 1612 AD. Mumtaz Mahal was Shah Jahan's second wife. After their marriage, Mumtaz Mahal became her husband's comrade and counselor. Mumtaz Mahal became an inseparable companion of Shah Jahan on all his journeys and military expeditions and an inspiration behind Shah Jahan's acts of charity and benevolence. In the year 1631 the cruel hands of destiny snatched Mumtaz Mahal from Shah Jahan. To immortalize the memory of Mumtaz Mahal, Shah Jahan decided to build a

monument of eternal love. This monument of eternal love is none other than the spectacular and magnificence Taj Mahal.

A beautiful location on the banks of the river Yamuna was chosen and the foundation of the Taj Mahal was laid down. The master architect of the Taj Mahal was Ustad Isa. He was one of the most renowned Islamic architects of his time. Taj Mahal, the much-celebrated saga of royal love was brought to life by competent and skilled artisans from places like Delhi, Kannauj, Lahore, Multan, Baghdad, Shiraz and Bukhara. The construction work of the Taj Mahal began in 1631. More than 20,000 workmen, sculptors and master craftsmen worked painstakingly for 22 years to



carve out the most famous symbol of eternal love, the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal was built entirely in white marbles and the material was brought in from all over India and central Asia. The Taj Mahal complex was finally completed in 1653 at a cost of 32 Million Rupees (approx USD 68000) on the banks of river Yamuna in Agra, the capital of the Mughal monarchs.

The Taj Mahal stands on a raised and square platform with its four corners shortened, forming an unequal octagon. Interlocking arabesque concept is the architectural design that has been used in the construction of the Taj Mahal. In this style each element stands on its own and perfectly integrates with the main structure. The central dome of the Taj Mahal is fifty-eight feet in diameter and rises to a height of 213 feet and is flanked by four subsidiary domed chambers. There are four graceful, slender minarets in the structure of the Taj Mahal. Each of these minarets is 162.5 feet each. Precious gems and stones were used for decoration and calligraphy purposes.

The main archway of the Taj Mahal is a wonder in itself. This archway is chiseled with passages from the Holy Quran and bold scroll work of flowery pattern. The Taj Mahal mausoleum is a part of a vast complex comprising of a main gateway, an elaborate garden, a mosque (to the left), a guest house (to the right), and several other palatial buildings. The Taj Mahal stands at the farthest end of the Taj Mahal complex, with the river Yamuna behind it. The large garden contains four reflecting pools dividing it at the center.

Taj Mahal, the 'Epitome of Love', is the most prized possessions of the Indian subcontinent. The magnificent monument is renowned throughout the world for its exquisite architectural beauty. It occupies a place in the Seven Wonders of the World and has also been declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1983. Tajmahal is situated in the Agra city of India, popularly known as the 'City of Taj'. Located on the banks of the Yamuna River, the monument is built entirely of white marble.

Taj Mahal is said to be "the jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage". It is the mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal, constructed by her husband, the

Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. The construction work on the monument was started in the year 1632 and it took approximately seventeen years to complete it. Though Ustad Ahmad Lahauri is believed to be the architect of Tajmahal, there is no consensus on the issue. Approximately 20,000 laborers, engineers and architects were involved in its construction.

The stones that were used in building Taj Mahal were brought from as far away as Tibet and Sri Lanka. The monument has been built as per the Mughal architectural style, which draws heavily from Persian, Turkish, Indian and Islamic styles. When you look at the Taj mahal of Agra, the first feature that strikes you is its huge bulbous dome. It is approximately 58 feet in diameter and 213 feet in height. Constructed out of white marble and inlaid with semi-precious stones, it comes across as a splendid structure.

The marble and stones adorning the dome give Taj different hues at different times of the day. The dome stands surrounded on its four sides by four soaring minarets, each of them atleast 40 meters high. The minarets have been built in such a way that they slightly slant to the outer side and taper down with height. On one side of the Taj Mahal stands a mosque, while on the other is the Naqqar Khana. The main mausoleum is built on an elevated, square platform with four abridged corners, which seem to be forming an unequal octagon.

The concept of interlocking arabesque architecture seems to be used throughout the Taj. Going as per the concept, each feature of the monument seems to have its own identity, yet merges harmoniously with the main edifice. The tombs of Shah Jahan and his wife Mumtaz Mahal have been situated inside the Taj Mahal, in a shadowy burial crypt. The main chamber is situated just above these crypts and contains the false tombs. The chamber is surrounded by perforated marble screens, through which the sunlight comes inside.

The surface of the Taj Mahal stands ornamented with exceptionally beautiful calligraphic work. The verses and passages from the holy book of Koran have been inscribed on the walls of the monument, by inlaying jasper in the marble panels. Amanat Khan, a Persian calligrapher, can be credited with inscribing the calligraphy in an illegible Thuluth script. Standing as a proof of his work are numerous panels, which bear the signatures of the calligrapher.

Taj Mahal is situated in the northeast corner of a sprawling garden, which has a huge marble tank in its center. The entire area, right from the main gateway to the base of the Taj, is covered by the garden, known as the Charbagh. Taj garden has been designed as per the Persian style and stands divided into four parts. In each of the square, we can see 16 flowerbeds that have been divided by elevated passageways. The trees planted in the garden are either that of Cyprus (which symbolize death) or of the fruit bearing type (which symbolize life).

Taj Mahotsav

Every year, Taj Mahal plays host to the Taj Mahotsav, which is celebrated in the month of February. The festival is organized by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism and lasts for a period of ten days. The main aim behind the Taj Mahotsav is to promote the arts, crafts, culture, cuisine, dance and music of the state. It is held at Shilpgram, situated very near to the Taj Mahal.

Thirumalai Nayak Palace

Thirumalai Nayak Palace is situated in the Madurai city, at a distance of approximately 2 km to the southeast of the Meenakshi Temple. The palace was constructed by King Thirumalai Nayak of Tamil Nadu, in the year 1636, and used to serve as his official residence. An Italian architect designed the edifice as per the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. Thirumalai Nayak Palace of India, as we see today, is nothing in comparison to its original structure, which was at least four times bigger in size.



Location: Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Founded By: King Thirumalai Nayak

Founded In: 1636

Status: National Monument

The palace was basically divided into two parts, one of them is known as the Swargavilasa (Celestial Pavilion), while the other is Rangavilasa (Pleasure Pavilion). These two complexes jointly housed the royal residence, theatre, shrine, apartments, armory, palanquin place, royal bandstand, quarters, pond and even a garden. The main attraction of the Thirumalai Nayak Palace comprises of its courtyard and the dancing hall. A massive wall, with a height of almost 12 meters, used to run around the complex and was present till a century ago.

The main palace inside the complex was flanked by a rectangle-shaped courtyard. The courtyard stands adorned by soaring arcades, which have exquisite carvings festooning the surface. In the initial days, the main entrance to the Thirumalai Nayak Palace was situated to its north. However, in the last century, a different entrance was renovated and the palace is now entered from there only. The arches of the palace have been supported by giant pillars, which soar to a height of around 12 meters.

Joining these pillars is foliated brickwork and an entablature, which is upto 20 m high. The ornamentation done in the palace has made use of exquisite stucco, known as chunnam (shell lime). The pavilions on either side of the courtyard of Thirumalai Nayak Palace have been adorned with finials that seem to be covered with gold. To the west of the courtyard lies the Swargavilasa, which is spread over an area of approximately 75 m, from the north to the south, and 52 m across.

A flight of steps, which are guarded by stone horse riders, takes the visitors to the pavilion. The central dome of the pavilion stands supported by 12 columns, which are joined together with the help of colossal Saracenic arches. The dome is situated at a height of 25 m from the floor of the building. An octagonal drum rises from the four corner arches that have been perforated by a clerestory. The

octagonal shape gives rise to a circle after a height of 15 m. The dome, as well as the arches, of the Swargavilasa has beautiful stuccowork.

There are approximately 248 pillars inside the Thirumalai Nayak Palace, each of them being 58 feet in height and 5 feet in diameter. There is also a square building of black stone, situated inside a dome-shaped hall. The building consists of a chamber, which has been constructed out of ivory. Inside this chamber is a bejeweled throne, used by the King during the Navratri celebrations. In the western side of the Swargavilasa, the harem was situated, along with the queen's apartments. However, they are not in existence today.

The southwest portion of the complex houses a room, ornamented with black polished columns. The room was used by the queen of the Thirumalai Nayak Palace while listening to music and literary discourses. Natakshala, the drama hall, was situated in the northwest corner of the building. The roof of the hall comprised of a pointed arch of brickwork, which was made strong with the help of granite ribs that sprang from a double line of arches supported by columns. The palace also comprises of a shrine, situated in the northeast square.

This shrine was used by Thirumalai Nayak to offer prayers to goddess Rajrajeswari every morning. Then, we have the magnificent Throne Chamber. It is a massive room adorned with a raised, octagonal dome. After passing the Throne Chamber, one reaches the Dance Hall. Chokkanatha Nayak, the grandson of the King Thirumalai Nayak, was the person responsible for the destruction of Thirumalai Nayak palace. After ruining it, he took out the precious jewels and woodcarvings to use them in the construction of his own palace at Tiruchirapalli.

Restoration work was carried out at the Thirumalai Nayak Palace in the 19th century by Lord Napier, the Governor of Madras. The restoration work was done in order to make the palace ready for housing some officials of the judiciary and district administration. Presently, only the Swargavilasa and a few adjacent edifices of the Thirumalai Nayak Palace have survived. After independence, the palace was declared as a national monument and now, it is under the management and control of the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department.

Light and Sound Shows

Light and Sound shows are organized at the Thirumalai Nayak Palace for the general public. These shows illustrate the story of Silappathikaram in both Tamil as well as English language. Each show goes on for half an hour and eulogizes the virtues of the King Thirumalai.

Tughlaqabad Fort

Tughlaqabad fort, which once served as the symbol of the power of Tughlaq dynasty in Delhi, lies completely in ruins today. It is situated on the Qutub-Badarpur Road in the city, near Qutub Minar Complex. It took approximately four years to build this monument, on which construction work was started in the year 1321. The person to be credited with the construction of the Tughlaqabad fort is Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq, the founder of the Tughlaq dynasty. The fort, which once made up one-third of the capital city of India, stands towering on a rocky hill.



Location: Qutub-Badarpur Road, Delhi

Founded By: Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq

Founded In: 1321-25

The main reasons behind the construction of Tughlaqabad fort were to protect the empire from the incessant threat of Mongol attacks from the northwestern borders and serve as its capital. The fort stands adorned with enormous ramparts, fortifications and the colossal stonework. One look at the fort reminds us of the architectural talent of the Indian craftsmen of those times. A number of monuments have been built within the boundaries of the gigantic fort of Tughlaqabad.

These include outstanding palaces, impressive mosques as well as splendid audience halls. The ramparts and bastions of the fort rise to a height of somewhere between 15 and 30 meters. They have been made out of huge blocks of stone and are as much as 10 meters thick at certain points. The city of Tughlaqabad was situated on the eastern outskirts of the fort. On its southern side, we can see the mausoleum of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq, built by the ruler himself. The tomb is situated in a courtyard and has been built as per Indo-Islamic architecture.

Tughlaqabad Fort comes across as octagonal structure, with a border that is almost 6.5-km long. The fort has been divided into three parts. The eastern segment, on the Qutub-Badarpur road, is a rectangular area surrounded by high walls and ramparts. The western side once used to house a number of palaces. In the southern side of the Tughlaqabad Fort is a huge reservoir, which is linked with Ghiyas-ud-Din's tomb by a walkway.

The south eastern-corner of the fort has a mound that reaches the fortress of Adilabad. There are a number of hose gates near the mound, which were used for the purpose of controlling water for irrigation purposes. Apart from the Bijai-Mandal, a tower, Tughlaqabad Fort also houses the remnants of several halls and a long underground passageway. Even though the fort is now mostly in ruins, it stands as a testimony to the lost glory of the Tughlaq dynasty.

The Tughlaqabad fort was completed in a short period of four years (1321-25). The fort's massive ramparts and bastions (as high as 15-30 m, built of enormous blocks of stone and walls 10 m thick in places) speak volumes about the might of the Sultanate. Within fort's high walls, double-storied bastions and massive towers were housed magnificent palaces, grand mosques and audience halls. The city lay on the eastern outskirts of the massive fort. On the southern side of the fort is the tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq, which was built by the ruler himself. The tomb is enclosed in a courtyard with fortified walls and a fine example of Indo-Islamic architecture.

Umaid Bhawan Palace

Umaid Bhawan Palace is one of the most popular edifices of the Jodhpur city of Rajasthan. It is situated on top of a hill known as Chittar Hill, which is believed to be the highest point in the city. It is because of this location that the Umaid Bhawan Palace was called the 'Chittar Palace' at the time of its construction. The foundation of the palace was laid down by Maharaja Umaid Singh, in the year 1929. However, it took approximately sixteen years to complete the construction of the palace.



Location: Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Founded By: Maharaja Umaid Singh

Founded in: 1929

Architect: H V Lanchester

Umaid Bhawan Palace was amongst the last palaces to be built in India. At the same time, it was also one of the last structures built in Rajasthan, on 'food for work' basis, for drought relief. It is said that approximately 5000 men were employed in the construction of the Umaid Bhawan Palace of Jodhpur. An interesting feature of the palace is that no mortar or cement was used in its construction. Rather, carved stones were used and joined together by a system of interlocking positive and negative pieces.

When it was constructed, Umaid Bhawan Palace claimed the distinction of being the largest private residence in the world. It has a total of 347 rooms and stands ornamented with 110 feet high central dome. The architect of the palace was H V Lanchester and he designed it as per the Indo-Art-Deco style of architecture. During that time, the cost of construction came to somewhere around one crore (ten million) rupees.

The embellishments for the interiors of the Umaid Bhawan Palace were to be imported from Umaid Bhawan Palace. However, the ship bringing the same was attacked by Germans and got sunk in the sea. Thereafter, Maharaja Umaid Singh employed Stefan Norblin, a Polish interior designer, to design the interiors. The tradition of medieval palaces, where there are separate sections for males and females with separate entrances, was fully maintained. The palace is presently under the ownership of His Highness Gaj Singh, Maharaja of Jodhpur.

Umaid Bhawan Palace has now been divided into three parts. One part serves as the residence of the royal family, the second houses a museum, while the third one has been converted into a five-star hotel. Umaid Bhawan Museum displays a rich collection of pictures, arms, swords, stuffed leopards, clocks and other items belonging to the royal family. It is open to the general public from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm daily, except Sunday.

Valluvar Kottam

Valluvar Kottam is one of the most popular monuments of Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu. It is situated at the meeting point of the Kodambakkam High road and the Village road. The magnificent monument dates back to the year 1976 and was constructed in the memory of Thiruvalluvar, the classical Tamil poet-saint. He was also the author of Thirukkural, written approximately 20000 years ago. The site where the structure of Valluvar Kottam is situated once housed an unused lake.



One of the modern landmarks of Chennai, the edifice has been built in the form of a temple chariot and is made of around 3000 blocks of stone. It is believed to be a replica of the temple chariot in Thiruvavur. The bas-relief in the front hall corridors stands adorned with all the 133 chapters of the Thirukkural, which comprise of 1330 verses. Valluvar Kottam rises to a height of approximately of 39 meters and has a marvelous life-size statue of the saint. The auditorium of the buildings is colossal in size and can accommodate upto 4000 people at a time.

Location: Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Founded In: 1976

Dedicated To: Thiruvalluvar, a Tamil poet-saint

Velankanni Church

The Velankanni Church is situated in the Velankanni village, which falls in the Nagapattinam district. It lies at a distance of approximately 350 km to the south of Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu. The church is also known as 'Our Lady of Good Health' and was built in the late 16th century. Later, modifications were made to it by the Portuguese. Velankanni Church of India is a colossal structure, which has been built as per the Gothic style of architecture.



Location: Nagapattinam, near Chennai (Tamil Nadu)

Founded In: Late 16th century

The building is totally painted in white color, except for the roof that is made of tiles of striking red color. The serene and peaceful environs of the Vailankanni Church further add to its splendor. There are interesting legends associated with the construction of the church. The local tradition talks of the apparitions of Virgin Mary at Vailankanni, atleast three times. The second time the Lady appeared, she cured a crippled boy. Just the night before this cure, She had appeared in the dream of a man and asked him to build a chapel for Her.

She asked the cured boy to call that man and after both of them reached the spot of the apparition, She appeared again. Thereafter, the boy and the boy built a thatched chapel for Her and named it the 'Mother of Good Health'. The third time Virgin Mary appeared, she saved some Portuguese merchant sailors from a violent storm. They went to the Thatched Chapel to say their thanks and on their return trip, built a small permanent chapel. On their subsequent visits, they further extended the chapel.

The main statue that they had placed at the altar of the church showed The Lady holding the Baby Jesus, while standing on the globe. Velankanni Church was given the status of a Parish in the year 1771. Father Antonio de Rozario served as the First Parish Priest. In 1962, His Holiness Pope John XXIII raised it to the status of basilica. Every year, on 29th August, the feast of our lady is held at the Vailankanni Church of Tamil Nadu. Holy masses are conducted there in at least eight languages, namely Tamil, English, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Konkani, Hindi and Marathi.

Victoria Memorial



Location: Kolkata, West Bengal

Founded By: The Prince of Wales

Founded In: 1906

Memorializes: Queen Victoria

Victoria Memorial, built in the memory of Queen Victoria, is situated in Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal. The foundation stone of the memorial was laid down in the year 1906, by the 'Prince of Wales'. Apart from being a memorial, the monument was intended to serve as a tribute to the success of the British Empire in India. Lord Curzon was the one who envisaged the main idea of the erection of the Victoria Memorial Hall, which was to serve as the architectural culmination of the Kolkata city.

Even the classical style of the monument was specified by Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy. However, it was Sir William Emerson, a renowned architect, who laid down by the actual plan of the memorial. The design of the structure represents an amazing fusion of British and Mughal architecture. White Makrana marbles were used in the construction of Victoria Memorial Hall and the building was inaugurated in the year 1921. The massive hall is 338 by 228 feet and rises to a height of 184 feet.

A very interesting fact related to the memorial is that money of the British government was not used in its construction at all. Rather, the British Indian states, along with the individuals who wanted some favors from the British government, were the main contributors towards the cost of building the Victoria Memorial Hall, which came to somewhere around 10 million. The memorial is massive in its size and stands enclosed within blooming gardens that spread over to an area of 64 acres.

The top of the memorial stands adorned with a sixteen-foot tall bronze statue of Victoria. It is mounted on ball bearings and rotates with the wind. Presently, the Victoria Memorial houses a museum, where one finds an amazing compilation of the memorabilia of Victoria, paintings of British rule and other

exhibits. The collection includes weapons, sculptures, paintings, maps, coins, stamps, artifacts, textiles, etc. The Royal gallery of the Victoria Memorial houses some splendid portraits of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

Then, there are a number of paintings that illustrate the life of the Queen. However, the most remarkable painting is the one made by the Russian artist, Vassili Verestchagin. He has portrayed the scene of the state entry of Prince of Wales in Jaipur, in 1876. After India gained independence in the year 1947, certain additions were made to the Victoria Memorial. These additions comprised of National Leader's Gallery, containing the portraits and relics of the freedom fighters. One must visit the memorial at night, when it is beautifully illuminated.

You can see the following statues in the **Victoria Memorial of Kolkata**

- The statues of Motherhood
- The statues of Architecture
- The statues of Learning
- The statues of Justice
- The statues of Charity
- The statues of Art
- The statues of Prudence

All these statues were brought from Italy when the **Victoria Memorial of Kolkata** was built. The magical lighting effect every evening brings charm and beauty to the structure of Victoria Memorial. There is a 5 meter tall bronze winged figure of Victory that weighs nearly 3 tons.

The Victoria Memorial of Kolkata is one of the most popular tourist spot in the city. Victoria Memorial is also one of the few well- maintained heritage buildings that ever existed in the capital city. It is open everyday except Mondays from 10 am to 4.30 pm.

Vivekananda Memorial

Vivekananda Memorial is situated near the city of Kanyakumari, which lies at the southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula. The meeting point of Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, the city is known for its breathtaking sunrises and sunsets. It is in the sea that we see a rocky islet, at a distance of approximately 400 m from the shore.

On this islet stands a magnificent monument called the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, dedicated to Swami Vivekananda, a leader, a philosopher a social reformer.

This monument was hit by the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 26, 2004.

The memorial was built under the aegis of the Vivekananda Memorial Committee. It dates back to the year 1970 and was built in the commemoration of the visit of the great leader to the islet. Swami Vivekananda visited the city of Kanyakumari in 1892. One day, he swam in the sea and reached the islet. He stayed there for an entire night and kept on meditating. It is believed that it was here that he received enlightenment. The Vivekananda Rock Memorial was later erected in honor of his visit.

Sthapati Sri S.K. Achari was the architect of the memorial, which was later consecrated by Srimad Swami Vireshwarananda, the President of Ramakrishna Mission. The official inauguration ceremony of the monument was held in September 1970 and it was conducted by Sri. V.V. Giri, the then President of India. There are two main structures that make up the entire complex of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, namely Vivekananda Mandapam and Shripada Mandapam.

Shripada Mandapam

Each of the madapams is situated on a rock, which lie at a distance of about 70 meters. The smaller one is known as 'Sripada Parai' and is believed to be the place where Goddess Kanya Kumari meditated. Standing as a testimony to this incident are



Location: Kanyakumari

Founded By: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee

Founded In: 1970

Architect: Sthapati Sri S.K. Achari



imprints of feet, believed to be those of the Goddess. The footprints have now been enclosed in a shrine, which has been given the name of Sripada Mandapam. The shrine comprises of the sanctum sanctorum, an inner parikrama (passageway), an outer parikrama (passageway) and an outer platform all around it.

Vivekananda Mandapam

Vivekananda Mandapam is a large complex, which comprises of a number of structures. One of them is the Dhyana Mandapam, a huge meditation hall with six adjacent rooms. Visitors coming here use them for meditation purposes. Then, there is the Sabha Mandapam, an assembly hall with two rooms and a corridor. There is also an open parikrama (passageway) around the Sabha Mandapam.

Inside the hall is the statue of Swami Vivekananda in a standing posture, in which he is looking towards the 'Sripadam'. The main entrance of the Vivekananda Mandapam has the symbol 'om' written on the top, in Tamil language. The architecture of the mandapam represents an amalgamation of styles of temple architecture from different parts of India. The main entrance to the Vivekananda Mandapam is provided by a flight of steps.