

Amritsar:-

Amritsar, as the name suggests, is rightfully a pool of nectar. Located in the state of Punjab, Amritsar is one of the most important pilgrimage centres especially for the Sikhs in the country. The city is characterised by some of the must visit religious, historical as well as contemporary sites of importance. The Golden Temple, where Sikhs from all over the world come to pay their reverence to Guru Granth Sahib and take a dip in the Amrit Saras Kund (Pool of Immortality) for spiritual purification is the major landmark of the place. Amritsar is also characterised by the hard working and warm-hearted people.

Golden Temple:

Located in the heart of the city is the Golden Temple, the most visited tourist attraction of Amritsar. Characterized by its four entrance doors (called deoris) in all four directions and the tastefully decorated shrines, in terms of art and architecture, the Golden Temple welcomes everyone regardless of the religion or faith one follows. The stunning sanctum, shimmering in the water of the holy tank, flanked by spotlessly clean marble walkways and pavements makes it breathtakingly beautiful.

Sri Harmandir Sahib, also known as Sri Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple, (on account of its scenic beauty and Golden coating for English speaking world), is named after Hari (God) the temple of God. The Sikhs all over the world, daily wish to pay visit to Sri Amritsar and to pay obeisance at Sri Harmandir Sahib in their Ardas

Jalianwala Bagh:

A historical monument that tells the sad story of mass killing during the independence movement in India, Jalianwala Bagh is another must visit in this city. Here lies the memorial of the martyrs of the 1919 massacre by British General Dyer. Presently the place also has a park. The Martyr's Gallery is open from 9 am to 5 pm in summers and from 10 am to 4 pm during winters. The 1919 Amritsar massacre, known alternately as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Urdu: جلیانوالہ باغ *Jallianwala Bāga Hatyākāṇḍ*) after the Jallianwala Bagh (Garden) in the northern Indian city of Amritsar, was a massacre ordered by General R.E.H. Dyer. On Sunday April 13, 1919, which happened to be 'Baisakhi', one of Punjab's largest religious festivals, fifty British Indian Army soldiers, commanded by Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, began shooting at an unarmed gathering of men, women, and children without warning. Dyer marched his fifty riflemen to a raised bank and ordered them to kneel and fire. Dyer ordered soldiers to reload their rifles several times and they were ordered to shoot to kill. Official British Raj sources estimated the fatalities at 379, and with 1,100 wounded. Civil Surgeon Dr Smith indicated that there were 1,526 casualties. However, the casualty number quoted by the Indian National Congress was more than 1,500, with roughly 1,000 killed.

Wagah Border :

One of the many nearby places to visit from Amritsar is the Wagah Border. Located on the Indo-Pakistan border, Wagah is 28 kilometers from the main town. A good number of visitors come to this place to see the change of guards ceremony and the flag hoisting and lowering activities which are done with great skill and precision by the border security forces of both the countries. A site you cannot afford to miss.

Durgiana Devi Temple –Hindu Temple :

It also houses a wonderful temple dedicated to the Hindu goddess Durga. Easily accessible from the Golden Temple, the Durgiana Mandir also offers puja to deities of Lakshmi and Narayana. Supposedly built during the 16th century AD, the temple lies in the middle of a medium sized lake giving it a wonderful overall view. The temple, a massive structure, was built on the style of the nearby Golden Temple. Worth a visit. Durgiana Temple is a premier Hindu temple of Punjab (India) situated in the city of Amritsar. This temple derives its name from the Goddess Durga and it is also called by the name of Lakshmi Narayan Temple. The temple was constructed by Guru Harsai Mal Kapoor on the pattern of the Sikh Golden Temple and it is located near the Lohgarh gate. It is sometimes called Silver temple for its carved silver doors. The temple complex has some historic temples such as Sita Mata and Bara Hanuman.

Delhi:

Akshardham : (Delhi)

Akshardham is a Hindu temple complex in Delhi, India. Also referred to as *Delhi Akshardham* or *Swaminarayan Akshardham*, the complex displays millennia of traditional Indian and Hindu culture, spirituality, and architecture. The building was inspired and moderated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the spiritual head of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, whose 3,000 volunteers helped 7,000 artisans construct *Akshardham*. The temple, which attracts approximately 70 percent of all tourists who visit Delhi, was officially opened on 6 November 2005. It sits on the banks of the Yamuna adjacent to the 2010 Commonwealth Games village. The monument, at the center of the complex, was built off of the Vastu Shastra and Pancharatra Shastra. The complex features a large central monument crafted entirely of stone, exhibitions on incidents from the life of Swaminarayan and the history of India, an IMAX feature, a musical fountain, and large landscaped gardens. The temple is named after a belief in Swaminarayan Hinduism

Jama Masjid :

The largest in India, and the final architectural extravagance of Shah Jahan; Jama Masjid is the great mosque of Old Delhi. It has three great gateways, four angle towers and two minarets constructed of alternating vertical strips of red sandstone and white marble. Broad

flights of steps, lead up to the imposing gateways. The Eastern gateway was originally, only opened for the emperor, but is now only open on Friday and Muslim festival days. So large is the mosque's countryard, that it can hold 25,000 people.

India Gate:

This 42ms high stone of triumph, stands at the eastern end of the Rajpath. It bears the names of 85,000 Indian army soldiers, who died in the campaigns of WW I, the North West Frontier operations of the same time, and the 1919 Afghan fiasco.

Qutub Minar:

One of the earliest Muslim monuments in India, it was erected in (c.1230) by Iltutmish of the Delhi Sultanate. Built in the early 13th century, a few kilometers south of Delhi, the red sandstone tower is covered with relief work and has a symbolic function, its a Victory Tower, for glorifying Islam's victory against idolators. The highest monument of India, Qutub Minar is 72.5 m high, tapering from 2.75 m in diameter at its peak, to 14.32 m at its base, and alternating angular and rounded flutings. An indoor staircase leads to the outside galleries, from where the muezzin calls for prayer. The monument is decked out with huge strips of Koranic verses. The surrounding archeological area contains funerary buildings, notably the magnificent Alai-Darwaza gate, the masterpiece of Indo-Moslem art built in 1311, and two mosques, including Quwwatul-Islam, the oldest in northern India, made from materials from about twenty Brahmin temples.

Jaipur :

The picturesque capital of Rajasthan, Jaipur is also known as the Pink city. The colour pink is associated with culture. There is a timeless appeal in the colourful bazaars of Jaipur ,where one can shop for Rajasthani handlooms and trinklets. Beautifully laid out gardens and parks, attractive monuments and marvellous heritage hotels, which were once the residence of Maharajas, are worthy of admiration. Not to mention the ambling camels and cheerful people in multi-hued costumes, that make your trip to the pink city a memorable one.

History : Built in 1727 A.D. by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, Jaipur displays a remarkable harmony and architectural splendour. The ancient heart of the pink city, still beats in its fairy-tale palaces, rugged fortresses perched on barren hills and broad avenues, that dot the entire city. The only planned city of its time, Jaipur is encircled by a formidable wall. A young Bengali architect, Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, formalised the plans of the city, in a grid system. The wide straight avenues, roads, streets, lanes and uniform rows of shops on either side of the main bazaars, were arranged in nine rectangular city sectors (Chokris), in accordance with the principles of town planning set down in the Shilpa Shastra - an epochal treatise on the Hindu architecture.

Culture : Hospitality is the main feature of the cultural specialities here. The city is also known for its colourful atmosphere, associated with well being and cheer.

Climate & Geographical Location : Jaipur is very hot and dry in summer and extremely cold in winter. Jaipur is located at 431 metres above sea level.

City Palace : (Jaipur)

City Palace, Jaipur, which includes the **Chandra Mahal** and **Mubarak Mahal** palaces and other buildings, is a palace complex in Jaipur city, the capital of the Rajasthan state, India. It was the seat of the Maharaja of Jaipur, the head of the Kachwaha Rajput clan. The Chandra Mahal palace now houses a museum but the greatest part of it is still a royal residence. The palace complex, which is located northeast of the centre of the grid patterned Jaipur city, incorporates an impressive and vast array of courtyards, gardens and buildings. The palace was built between 1729 and 1732, initially by Sawai Jai Singh II, the ruler of Amber. He planned and built the outer walls, and later additions were made by successive rulers right up to the 20th century. The credit for the urban layout of the city and its structures is attributed to two architects namely, Vidyadar Bhattacharya, the chief architect in the royal court and Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, apart from the Sawai himself who was a keen architectural enthusiast. The architects achieved a fusion of the Shilpa shastra of Indian architecture with Rajput, Mughal and European styles of architecture.

Birla Temple: (Jaipur)

Biral Mandir, Jaipur is a hindu temple located in Jaipur, India and is part of one of the several Birla mandirs located all around the country. The grand Temple is located on an elevated ground at the base of Moti Dungari hill in Rajasthan. The Temple is sometimes also referred to as the Laxmi Narayan Temple

Chokhi Dhani , Ethnic Village :

Capturing the spirit of Rajasthan and ensuring the perfect Rajasthani experience is Chokhi Dhani, **a unique Village Resort**. Chokhi Dhani literally means a "fine hamlet" i.e. a **quintessential village** that offers an ideal pastoral experience. Away from the urban life the quaint mud and thatch dwellings in the resort give the **right blend of traditions - modern amenities** in typical ethnic environment

Amer Fort :

Amber Fort (Hindi: अमर क़िला, also spelled and pronounced as Amer Fort) is located in Amber (a town with an area of 4 square kilometres (1.5 sq mi)), 11 kilometres (6.8 mi) from Jaipur, Rajasthan state, India. It is one of the principal tourist attractions in the Jaipur area, located high on a hill. The ancient citadel, the capital of the ruling Kachhawa clan of Amber from 1037 to 1727 AD, was shifted to present day Jaipur in 1727. Amber Fort is known for its artistic style, blending both Hindu and Mughal elements. The fort with its large ramparts, series of gates and cobbled paths, overlooks the Maota Lake, at its forefront. The aesthetic ambiance of this formidable fort is seen within its walls on a four level (each with a courtyard) layout plan in well turned out opulent palace complex built with red sandstone and marble consisting of the Diwan-e-Aam or the "Hall of Public Audience", the Diwan-e-Khas or the "Hall of Private Audience", the Sheesh Mahal (mirror palace) or Jai Mandir, and the Sukh Niwas where a cool climate is artificially created by winds that blow over the water cascade within the palace. Hence, the Amer Fort is also popularly known as the Amer **Palace**. The palace was lived in by the Rajput Maharajas and their families. At the entrance to the palace near the fort's Ganesh Gate, there is also a temple dedicated to Sila Devi, a goddess of the Chaitanya cult which was gifted to Raja Mansingh when he had defeated the Raja of Jessore in Bengal (Jessore is now in Bangladesh) in 1604.

This fort along with Jaigarh Fort located immediately above on the Cheel ka Teela (Hill of Eagles) of same Aravalli range of hills, is considered as one complex, as the two are well connected by subterranean passage. This passage was meant as an escape route in times of war for the royal family members and others in the Amer Fort to shift to the more redoubtable Jaigarh Fort. Annual tourist visitation to the Amer Palace in Amer town was reported by the Superintendent of Department of Archaeology and Museums to the Amber Palace as 5000 visitors a day, and 1.4 million visitors were reported during 2007

Agra :

Agra, or the city of the Taj, as it is known all over the world, forms the first destination on the itinerary of most travelers coming into India. Forming part of the famous 'Golden Triangle' (Delhi-Jaipur-Agra), it is placed on the western bank of the Yamuna. The magnificent Taj Mahal which is the pride of this city is set around a Charbagh or 'four garden' plan, which is split by watercourses - a reflection of the Persian style.

History: Agra finds mention in the Mahabharata as Agraban. This city of the Taj, was established in 1475, by Badal Singh, but came into its own when Sikander Lodi, chose it as his capital, but was eventually defeated by Babur, who laid the foundation of the Mughal empire. Agra reached its zenith during the reign of the Mughal Empire, to become the center of art, culture, commerce and learning. By mid 16th and the earlier 17th century, Agra witnessed a frenzied building activity purely in the contemporary Mughal style, and it was during this time, when the symbol of love The Taj Mahal was built.

Culture: Agra has witnessed the rise of the pomp and pageantry of the Mughal Monarchs, who lavished on this fabled city, their love and riches, bringing a change in the culture and life-style among the people. Agra is one of the most important centres for handicrafts, made of marble and soft stone inlay work. Major handicraft products of Agra, besides inlay work are leather ware, brassware, carpets, jewellery and embroidery work. The major languages spoken here are Hindi, Urdu and English.

Taj Mahal :

The Taj Mahal (Hindi: ताजमहल, from Persian/Urdu: تاج محل "crown of buildings", pronounced ; also "the Taj ") is a mausoleum located in Agra, India. It is one of the most recognizable structures in the world. It was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal. It is widely considered as one of the most beautiful buildings in the world and stands as a symbol of eternal love.

Taj Mahal is the finest example of Mughal architecture, a style that combines elements from Persian, Islamic and Indian architectural styles.

In 1983, the Taj Mahal became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. While the white domed marble mausoleum is the most familiar component of the Taj Mahal, it is actually an integrated complex of structures. The construction began around 1632 and was completed around 1653, employing thousands of artisans and craftsmen. The construction of the Taj Mahal was entrusted to a board of architects under imperial supervision, including Abd ul- Karim Ma'mur Khan, Makramat Khan, and Ustad Ahmad Lahauri. Lahauri is generally considered to be the principal designer

Agra Fort :

Agra Fort (Hindi: अकबर क़िला, Urdu: آگرہ قلعہ) is a UNESCO World Heritage site located in Agra, India. It is about 2.5 km northwest of its more famous sister monument, the Taj Mahal. The fort can be more accurately described as a walled city.

After Panipat, Mughals captured the fort and a vast treasure - which included a diamond that was later named as the Koh-i-Noor diamond - was seized. Babur stayed in the fort in the palace of Ibrahim. He built a baoli (step well) in it. Humayun was crowned here in 1530. Humayun was defeated in Bilgram in 1540. Sher Shah held the fort for five years. The Mughals defeated the Afghans finally at Panipat in 1556. Realizing the importance of its central situation, Akbar made it his capital and arrived in Agra in 1558. His historian, Abdul Fazal, recorded that this was a brick fort known as 'Badalgarh' . It was in a ruined condition and Akbar had it rebuilt with red sandstone from Barauli area in Rajasthan. Architects laid the foundation and it was built with bricks in the inner core with sandstone on external surfaces. Builders worked on it for eight years, completing it in 1573. It was only during the reign of Akbar's grandson, Shah Jahan, that the site took on its current state. The legend is that Shah Jahan built the beautiful Taj Mahal for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Unlike his grandfather, Shah Jahan tended to have buildings made from white marble, often inlaid with gold or semi-precious gems. He destroyed some of the earlier buildings inside the fort in order to make his own. At the end of his life, Shah Jahan was imprisoned by his son, Aurangzeb, in the fort . It is rumored that Shah Jahan died in Musamman Burj, a tower with a marble

balcony with a view of the Taj Mahal. The fort was the site of a battle during the Indian rebellion of 1857, which caused the end of the British East India Company's rule in India, and led to a century of direct rule of India by Britain.

Varanasi :

Varanasi, or Benaras, is one of the oldest living cities in the world. Varanasi's prominence in Hindu mythology is virtually unrivalled. Mark Twain, the English author and literature, who was enthralled by the legend and sanctity of Banaras, once wrote: "Benaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together".

One of the earliest descriptions of Varanasi is found in the Buddhist scriptures as also in the epic, 'Mahabharat'. The 'Pali' version of Varanasi was 'Baranasi' which ultimately gave birth to the name 'Banaras'. According to the 'Vamana Purana', the Varuna and Assi rivers originate from the body of the primordial person at the beginning of time itself. The tract of land lying between them is believed to be the holiest of all pilgrimages. The holy land between these two rivers is 'Varanasi'. Varanasi, also famous as Kashi (Derived from the root 'Kas' - to shine) is called the city of spiritual light.

Steeped in tradition and mythological legacy, Kashi is the 'original ground' created by Shiva and Parwati, upon which they stood at the beginning of time.

Varanasi is the microcosm of Hinduism, a city of traditional classical culture. Glorified by myth and legend and sanctified by religion, it has always attracted a large number of pilgrims and worshippers from times immemorial.

To be in Varanasi is an experience in itself... and experience in Self discovery ... an ethereal oneness of the body and soul. To every visitor, Varanasi offers a breathtaking experience. The rays of the dawn shimmering across the Ganges... the high -banks, the temples and shrines, the ashrams and pavilions along the banks bathed in a golden hue... soul -stirring hymns and mantras along with the fragrance of incense filling the air... and, the refreshing dip in the holy waters gently splashing at the Ghats.

Varanasi, the land where experience and discovery reach the ultimate bliss. Varanasi is also renowned for its rich tapestry of music, arts, crafts and education. Some of the world- renowned exponents India has produced in these fields were schooled in the Varanasi tradition and origins.

Luminaries parts, Varanasi abounds in the art of silk weaving, an exotic work of art which manifests itself in precious Banarasi silk saris and silk brocades which are cherished as collector's items across the world, even today.

Ganges Ghat :

Varanasi is symbolized by its Ghats. There are as many as 81 Ghats in Varanasi for different purposes. Some of them are related to particular deity while others are simply to bathe. Some of the important Ghats of Varanasi include Assi, Dasaswamedh, Manikarnika, Tulsi and Panch Ganga among others. Tulsi Ghat is named after the famous 16th century poet Tulsi Das, who spent many years on this Ghat composing the Ram Charit Manas. A temple dedicated to Lord Ram stands on the Ghat . Another historically important Ghat is Panch – Ganga Ghat. Panch – Ganga Ghat as its name indicates, is where five rivers are supposed to meet. Dominating the Ghat is Aurangzeb' s smaller mosque popularly called Alamgir Mosque