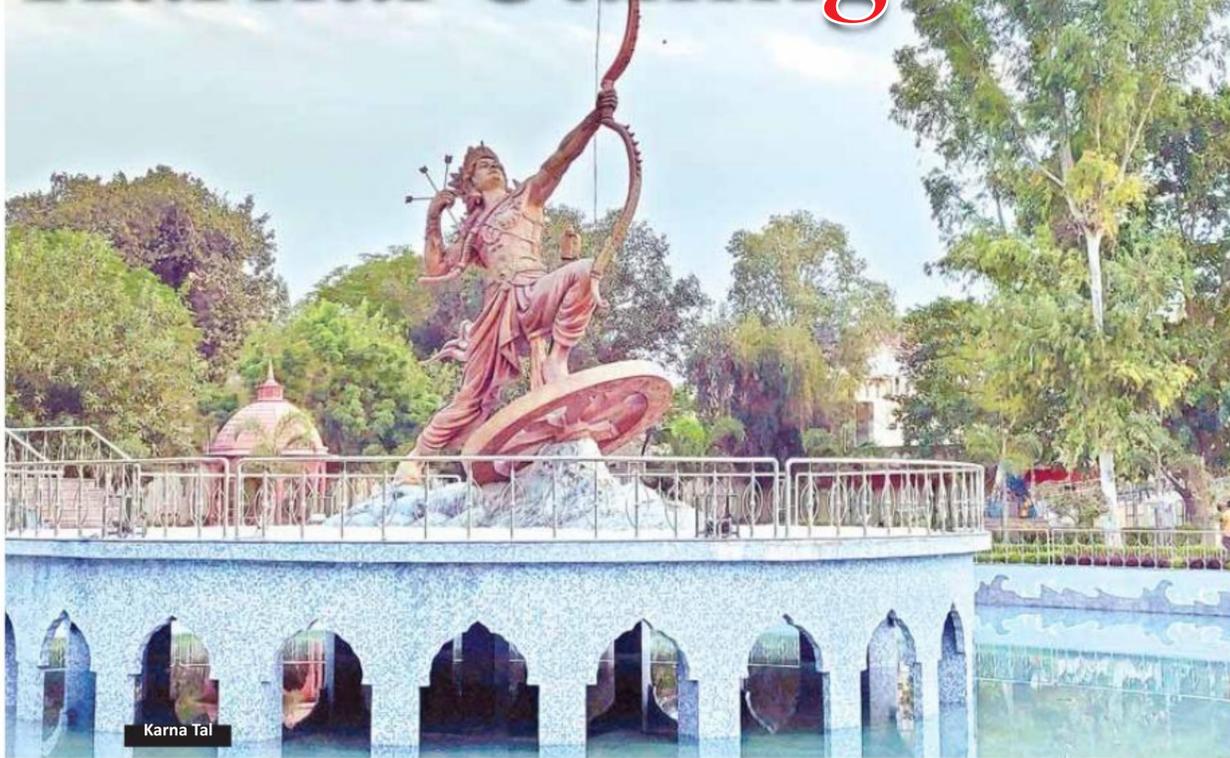


TRAVELOGUE

Karnal Calling



Karna Tal

A city named after Karna, the silent hero of the epic Mahabharata, Karnal is located between Delhi and Chandigarh

BINDU GOPAL RAO

Karnal is often referred to as the rice bowl of India and is among the oldest districts of Haryana. Believed to have been founded by Karna, the eldest son of Kunti, Karnal is also the place where Nadir Shah defeated Muhammad Shah in 1739.

Town Call

I started my exploration of Karnal by heading to the old market and found out that the city is a walled town and the old citadel is seen here as the Kot Mohalla, a fort built by Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind. As I headed to the market I observed the Government Medical College

and Hospital named after Late Dr. Kalpana Chawla, an Indian-American scientist and NASA astronaut and was told that she was actually born in a Punjabi Hindu family at Model Town in Karnal and also did her schooling here. The local market was abuzz with activity when I arrived here in the evening and my guide tells me that everything is available here. I enter through Karn Dwar - Karnal Gate into a labyrinth of small lanes that is dotted with small stores and street vendors. There is also a flower market that sells brightly strung marigold strings. My first stop is at the Shiva Temple that is a long vertical structure. What is unique is the main deity here is Shiva in the form of a statue as opposed to a linga. However what makes this temple interesting is a narrow winding staircase that has over six levels each of which have many deities at different levels and interestingly there is a balcony at each level from where you get a bird's eye view of the city as well as see some of the old buildings here. There is a gurudwara located next door as well.

Sights & Sounds

Karna Tal is a water tank named after Karna and is believed to be the site where

he camped during the war and gave gold equal to his weight in charity to the Brahmins of the region. Known for his generosity, Karna was tested by Lord Krishna on his last day when he disguised himself as a Brahmin and asked for gold. At that time Karna had no gold but pulled out his golden teeth which Krishna refused to accept as it was not clean. At that time, Karna is believed to have shot

an arrow into the ground from which a freshwater spring emerged with which he washed his tooth and offered it to the Brahmin (Lord Krishna). Moved by this Lord Krishna is said to have revealed his true form to Karna and granted him immortality. This is the same spot that the Karna Tal is now located. A larger than life statue of Karna aiming an arrow



Karnal lake



Karneshwar Mahadev Temple

Karnal Trivia

- Karnal is known for the manufacture of agricultural implements and spares.
- Karnal was constituted a municipality in 1867 and was used by East India Company army as a refuge during the Indian Rebellion of 1857
- A horse fair is held annually in Karnal.
- The city is called the rice bowl of North India with several varieties of rice being cultivated here.

occupies the center stage of this small park that is a walking spot for the locals. Also stop by the Atal Park, a fairly large lung space where locals relax over conversations especially in the evening.

Spiritual Sojourn

Considering its links with the epic Mahabharata, Karnal has several interesting places of worship as well. I started by temple run at the Karneshwar Mahadev Temple an expansive complex that has an old peepal tree where it is believed you can tie a red thread to make a wish (the thread is available with the priest at the main temple that is located on the upper level. The temple itself is a marble structure with a Shiva linga (Karneshwar)

Fact File

Reach: Karnal is located 123 kms from Delhi and 130 kms from Chandigarh both of which have airports.

Stay: At the palatial Noor Mahal Palace hotel which has been built on the lines of an old Indian palace.

– they are very large and chewy and a specialty here. Some food souvenirs to pick from Karnal are the local pickles and papads. And do dig into the chaats especially aloo tikki and lassi with a dash of cream. Karnal is a unique destination that offers a nice mix of things to do, check it out yourself soon.



Atal Park

Visiting Khajuraho has become much easier these days. To start with, there is a modern airport with a number of wide runways

SHONA ADHIKARI

India's world famous Khajuraho temples completed 1,020 years in 2019. For those who have never been to Khajuraho, whatever one reads or hears about the temples do not do justice to this UNESCO World Heritage Site. For me it was far more incredible than I had ever imagined and on my very first visit I realised that its erotic element that has been the most highlighted, is but a minuscule part of the whole.

Visiting Khajuraho has become much easier these days. To start with, there is a modern airport with a number of wide runways. On my first visit, the plane had touched down on a runway stretching out among the fields! I remember being shocked at the short bumpy runway and the choice of location!

There is a fascinating legend behind the dynasty that created Khajuraho. The creators claim their descent from the moon and Chandravaraman, the founder of the Chandela dynasty is said to be born from the union of Hemwati, the beautiful daughter of a Brahmin priest and the Moon God. In his dreams, Chandravaraman is said to have been told by his mother, to build these temples- a task achieved in an inspired burst of activity, over a span of

Khajuraho today

HERITAGE TRAIL



Khajuraho temple

100 years. With the decline of the dynasty, the temples lay forgotten for many centuries and are said to have been rediscovered only in the last two centuries.

On my first visit to Khajuraho, I reached rather late in the afternoon and sunset was not too far away. On the cab driver's advice, I restricted my visits to the eastern group of temples, located near the village and are said to be a combination of Hindu and Jain origin. The Parsvnath Temple is the largest in this group and most of the beautiful carvings that one sees printed everywhere are part of this group - the standing figure of Shiva and Parvati, usually used for posters on Khajuraho and others, such as the famous Singara figures of a graceful feminine figure applying kohl to her eyes and another removing a thorn from her feet, are all here.

Adjacent to the Parsvnath Temple is the more recently restored Adinath temple with its fine carvings running along the sides in three bands of sculpture. Within both these temples there are images of Tirthankars in black stone. According to me this temple could

well be considered one of the most graceful structures in Khajuraho.

A third temple built around 1028 AD and is known as the Shanti Nath temple, has a four and a half metre high standing image of Adinath, known to attract pilgrims from the Digambar Jain Sect, throughout the year. There are also three Hindu temples in the group - Brahma, the Vamana and the Javari dedicated to Vishnu, with their richly carved gateways and exterior carvings. But what I found more interesting was the Hindu 1/2 Ghantai Temple (temple of bells), located within the village and is counted among the eastern group. This temple must have been a rather splendid structure, but now lies in ruins.

All that remains is the entrance doorway with its rows of heavenly bodies and the seventeen pillars carved with scrolls of bells, after which the temple is named.

Thanks to the driver I also managed a 1/2 Darshan' of 1/2 Shankar Bhagwan' at the Matangesha temple. This is part of the western group of temples, but is located outside the walls

of the complex and still in use. Not a particularly ornate temple, it was, however, clear that it dated back to the same period as the rest of the temples.

Religious sentiments appeased, I decided to call it a day. Next morning, I set out quite early for the western group of temples, but found a large number of visitors, there before me!

Here, the first temple to see is the Lakshmana Temple, dedicated to Vishnu and his incarnations. On the lintel of the entrance to the temple are carved images of the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. In the intricately carved sanctum, there are idols of Vishnu's many incarnations.

Located right opposite the Lakshmana temple, lies the Varaha Temple. Here one can see an amazing nine foot standing statue of Vishnu's 1/2 Varaha' (boar) incarnation - its intricately carved surface polished by the touch of countless hands. This rare and fully carved standing image, has hardly ever been seen or mentioned in any description of the Khajuraho temples.

But is definitely a must-see!

TRAVEL BUZZ

Winters are fun

Ice skating in South Korean capital can be a lot of fun, and affordable

SIDDHI JAIN

Ice skating and sledding are the most affordable and easily accessible winter leisure activities. The winter cold will be a distant memory as you zoom down snowy hill-tops or glide gracefully across the ice. So, brace the cold this winter and visit an ice skating rink or a sledding park to make some unforgettable winter memories in South Korea.

Seoul Plaza Skating Rink

Filled with an enthusiastic atmosphere and nestled among the tall skyscrapers, Seoul Plaza Skating Rink offers an opportunity to experience skating within the city center. The seasonal skating rink is available till February 9, 2020. The rink operates on a one hour-skate, 30 minute-resurfacing schedule, so it's a good idea to check when the next skate session will start before you enter. Tickets are sold on-site and include admission and ice skates, as well as helmet and knee pad rentals for a safe experience. Seoul Plaza Skating Rink is affordable and one of the most convenient skating rinks found in Seoul due to its location at the center of the city. It also has several attractions nearby, including Deoksugung Palace and Insa-dong.

Lotte World Indoor Ice Skating Rink

Lotte World Indoor Ice Skating Rink is located on the 3rd basement floor of Lotte World, one of the major amusement parks in Korea. Despite, being so far underground, the giant



glass ceiling lets in natural sunlight, providing a refreshing atmosphere. At night, moving laser lights make the ice rink come alive with a festive ambience. Around the ice rink are family restaurants and cafés where you can enjoy a nice cup of coffee or a pleasant dinner while enjoying the view of the rink.

Snow Buster at Everland

Everland's Snow Buster, located in Yongin, Gyeonggi-do, has a wide variety of high-speed sledding runs. The park offers a family course, safe for even little children; the racing course, with a height of 120 meters; and the express course. To reach the top of the run, simply use the lift. Heaters are placed around the area for riders to warm up when needed.

Seoulland Sledding Hills

Seoulland Sledding Hills, lo-

Along with winters cold bite, the season also brings the gifts of snow and ice. South Korea's winter offers plenty of activities and opportunities to indulge in fun activities

ated within close proximity of Seoul in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi-do, provides the ultimate experience for a family winter outing. The park's concept focuses on the cartoon characters from 'Larva,' making it popular among children. The slope is divided into separate sections for adults and children to ensure the safety of all visitors. At the playground adjacent to the slopes, you can enjoy other winter activities by making a snowman or engaging in a snowball fight. The playground also has a snow sledding area exclusively for toddlers and young children.