

# Of Faith and Flavours



*A*mritsar is history, traditions, culture and crafts – all wrapped into one, and perhaps the best way to experience it would be by walking along its streets and lanes. Morning is the ideal time for a heritage walk, for that is when the city is still waking up - and that is how I explored Amritsar. You pass through *Katras* (fortified residential units), *Akharas* (wrestling arenas), *Bungas* (rest houses), *Havelis*, and *Hattis* or shops, each showcasing how Amritsar founded around 1574, was developed.

## DATE WITH HISTORY

The starting point is the historic rust-hued Town Hall, built in 1870. This towering edifice was used by the British as an entertainment space, with live bands playing every evening. Its top floor has a bell that would be rung whenever the British had to communicate a message to the people. Today, Town Hall's premises share space with the famed Partition



## IF BRICKS COULD SPEAK...

Make it a point to observe the Nanakshahi bricks, unique to Sikh architecture. Thin, red in colour, hand-moulded, and clay-fired, these bricks have low porosity and are used in the construction of many of the buildings here. Another important element is the Pinjara woodwork and wood-carving technique, which can be spotted

in a fair number of the city's older structures. Spend time at Darshani Deori, the place where Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind would stand and gaze upon the Golden Temple, when the views were unobstructed — don't forget to admire the archway's stunning ceiling, all painted and gilded. And as you make your way towards the end of Bartan Bazaar, you will catch glimpse of a revered banyan tree, which has witnessed the creation of Amritsar.

Then there's the Thakurdwara Dariana Mal, whose colonial-era design is accentuated with frescoes of intricate floral patterns and detailed ornamentation. Also check out Chaurasti Attari, whose four passages house 32 shops; it was built in the early 1600s by the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, who had invited the traders here and often spent time with them. Meanwhile, located at Katra Hari Singh is the city's first mint, or Taksal, where

### Clockwise from Top

*The buzzing streets of Amritsar around the Golden Temple*

*Makke de Roti and Sarsoon ka Saag is among the most popular dish*

*Walking along the lanes*



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thousands of coins have been minted over the years. And as you end the walk through an ancient passage, it is impossible not to appreciate how beautifully the city straddles the past and the present — as good a reason for you to add Amritsar to your travel wish-list this year.

## FOOD FOR THE SOUL

The food scene in Amritsar is an ode to, and a reflection of, Punjab's culinary exuberance. While in town, you can't miss Amritsari kulcha and chole, Amritsari Machhi—a fried fish especially popular at the *Makhan Fish*

## BAZAARS OF WONDER

Amritsar is also a shopper's delight. Stop by the bustling and bursting-with-variety Hall Bazaar near the Golden Temple, Katra Jaimal Singh Market for vintage Punjabi clothes and footwear, and Guru Bazaar for traditional jewellery. Keep your eyes peeled for the hand-embroidered and colourful Phulkari, textiles, shawls, and Punjabi juttis, and (among other food items) papads and wariān—especially in the shops around Sri Harmandir Sahib. And pick up some delicious local pickles, a great way by which to remember your visit to this many-splendored city ●

### Below & Inset

*The Golden Temple is known to offer langar to thousands of devotees everyday.*

*Amritsar is a shopper's paradise with shops selling colorful garments and juttis.*



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