



Crumbling relic of an ancient time

A testimony to time and history

Sitting atop a hill is Elgandal Fort, the crown jewel on the tourist map of Karimnagar. Once, the capital of Telangana, this ancient fort has been held by five major dynasties over time – Kakatiyas, Bahamanis, Qutb Shahis, Mughals and Asaf Jahis

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Situated on the bank of the Manair tributary of the Godavari River, on the outskirts of the town of Karimnagar is the Elgandal Fort. Although it is not clear when exactly the fort was built, according to some of the inscriptions available, it is believed that the village of Elgandal or Veli-gandula has been around since the 1202 AD. Assumed to have been built by the Kakatiyas, Elgandal was the district capital till 1905 and the headquarters of Karimnagar during the rule of Nizams.

In 2014, the Telangana Government had decided to restore this once important fort and turn it into a popular tourist spot.

Though there is evidence to the extent of some benches scattered around the place and some lights on the ground probably for a Light and Sound Show in the future, there isn't much else to show for this Rs 4.61 crore project as of now.

The most prominent and also the most strikingly beautiful feature of the Elgandal Fort, is the Alamgir Mosque and its three minarets. These spires stand out from afar; even on a cloudy day when most of the relics of this fort are lost in the foliage. Popularly known as the Teen Minar, these minarets on the mosque built by Zafar Ud Dowla in 1754 AD oscillate when shaken. Although it is a quite a steep climb up to the Teen Minar along winding, worn down steps it remains

the highlight of the fort and is not missed if one is upto it. Most of the tourists, I noticed preferred to sit down for a picnic at any of the numerous shady avenues on the two-mile fort grounds.

Other notable features include the 12 feet deep contour trenches around the fort walls where crocodiles once resided as protection against enemy intrusion and a 10-kilometre underground tunnel connecting to the neighbouring village. In spite of the crumbling walls, this time-ravaged relic stands in testimony to time and history, what with the fort being populated not only with Dargahs of great Muslim saints but also the

home to shrines dedicated to Neelakanta and Narasimha Swamy. I even chanced upon a Hanuman etched onto the hillside, still, a fresh orange and Urs is celebrated in honour of the saints whose tombs are here, every year even today.

Fact File: Referred to as Elgandal Khilla locally, this hill fort is 21km from the Karimnagar Railway Station and can be reached by road through the Elgandal Village. You can also use Google Maps to navigate and don't forget to stop at the Do Minar, which is supposed to mimic the Charminar in its size, along the way.



Strikingly beautiful Teen Minar



Along the Manair River Bank