

TRAVELOGUE

Of lakes, temples and ancient rocks

NEEHARIKA SATYAVADA

Though Nizamabad as we know it today was founded in the 18th century, it is actually an ancient city whose legacy has stood the test of time. As can be seen from the ancient temples, fully functional even today and were, still are, significant not just to the Hindus but even the Jains.

One such is the Dichapally Ramalayam, locally known as Khilla Ramalayam. The sculptures on this stone temple of black and white basalt are so reminiscent of the ones on the famous Khajuraho temples, that the moniker Indur Khajuraho was bestowed on it. Indicative of a time when Nizamabad was called Indur, after the 5th century Rashtrakuta King, Indradutta, under whose rule the region had prospered. The temple itself, though, is a 14th century Kakatiya temple. It is believed that it was here in Nizamabad, on a hill in Dichapally, that Ram stopped - on his way to wage war on the Demon King Ravan, right after meeting Hanuman for the first time - and stayed a fortnight. And, it is on that very hillock that the Dichpally Ramalayam - dedicated to the Ram avatar of Vishnu was built, to mark the event.

The Sri Neela Kanteswara Temple,

From ancient temples right at the heart of the city and rock formations from eons ago to secret lakes, there is much that Nizamabad has to offer as a weekend getaway



Sri Neelakanteswara Temple in Nizamabad

right at the heart of the city, is yet another beautiful temple in Nizamabad. Originally built as a Jain temple in the North Indian Nagara style of architecture by the Satavahanas, it was later converted to a Shiva Temple. The colourful temple and the soothing reflection it casts in the water of the ancient stepwell beside it make for a beautiful sight anytime of the day.

Also, in Nizamabad, are the stunning Armour Rock Formations. These naturally weathered rocks date back over a million years. And, are so distinctively striking that they are but a natural stopover for anyone driving away from Nizamabad towards Karimnagar, and rightly so. Sitting in a cave somewhere in those rocks is the Navanatha Siddheswara Temple also known as Navanthula Siddulagutta, gutta for cave and Navanatha Siddhas for the sages who are believed to still reside in them. Inside these caves is a

Shiva temple, with an entrance that is barely three feet, and once you crouch down and go through it, the cave opens up and skylight filters in. There are many little temples along the designated route in interconnected passageways of the caves, even one dedicated to the Goddess Durga. And, just outside the exit point is a Ramalayam and a temple tank whose waters are said to have miraculous healing powers.

Then there is the Ali Sagar Lake, which is more than just an irrigation dam and reservoir. This nearly 90-year-old man-made lake lies nestled in a dense forest and is reached via a short hike along a beautiful garden and a path hewn through the fiery red boulders and emerald green forest cover. A chance to go boating in the lake, all the way to the lush green islands that dot the waterscape and a deer park on the premises make Ali Sagar a

Fact File

Nizamabad is 175 kilometres from Hyderabad and can be reached by road in less than three hours. There are also trains and buses that frequently ply between the two cities

favourite weekend haunt of the families living in the district.

Another popular lake here is the Ashok Sagar Lake which is enroute Ali Sagar, while heading away from the Nizamabad city. This too is a beautiful lake with a garden abutting it. But being easily accessible - right alongside the highway - it lacks the charm and sense of adventure that Ali Sagar boasts of.