

MOULDING MINDS

soulsafari

Crumbling majesty of the Bahamani Tombs

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Bidar dates back to the third century BC but its most prominent landmark the Bidar Fort was built by the first sultan of the Bahamani Dynasty, Ala Ud Din Bahaman Shah when he set up his capital there 589 years back!

Built on the brink of the Deccan Plateau, this fort has been damaged and renovated many times and is considered to be one of the strongest and the better-preserved medieval forts in the country. In spite of its size, layout and beauty, the most striking feature of its architecture is the use of encaustic tiles with Persian inscriptions that still preserve the blue of their colour. A tour of the Rangeen Mahal in the fort is a must; this is where all the ornate workmanship is. So much so that, after a trip to the fort you will notice blue fragments of tiles on every heritage monument in and around Bidar.

Right in the centre of the town are two famous landmarks, the Chaubara and the Madrasa Mahmud Gawana. Once a watchtower, the 22-metre cylindrical Chaubara is now a popular clock tower that serves as the heart of the town from where all the roads lead to different parts of Bidar. The Madrasa was built by Mahmud Gawan, the prime minister of the kingdom in 1466 and he was also a figure of cultural significance in the history of Bidar. It was everything that one could

The city of whispering tombs

If you love visiting places of historic significance and can't get enough of architecture, Bidar is one road trip that you must take from Hyderabad. Also, don't forget to shop for some Bidriware when you are there

think of, with everything from a library, lecture halls, housing for the professors and students to a mosque, all designed around an open courtyard. Do not let the façade on the main road deceive you, for you can still see all this though in ruins, from the side.

The Bahamani Tombs, located at Ashtur, which is about 4 km away from the Fort, are huge majestic structures and no visit to Bidar is complete without a trip to these. Some of them are in a state of despair today, but even these crumbling mausoleums stand as a beautiful remnant of the art of an era gone by. En route to Ashtur just before you get to the Tombs, you will find to your left the expansive and peaceful resting place of Hazrat Khalil Ullah, also known as the Chaukhandi. The octagonal structure is beautiful in its simplicity and clean lines. Little wonder then that it is known as 'The City of Whispering Tombs', for there are more. Of the 61 listed monuments of Bidar, 30 are tombs!

The most frequented tourist destination here though remains the Guru Nanak Jhira Sahib Gurudwara; people from all faiths come here, even straight from the airport to get the holy water from spring in the Gurudwara. The structure itself is modern day religious splendour in full scale, probably the grandest. The Jharani Narasimha Cave Temple is yet another popular destination of a

different faith in the largely Islam dominated Bidar. Pilgrims wade through waist deep water in the underground cave to get a darshan of the Lord Narasimha Swamy.

Bidriware, the art of silver inlay in black metal has Turkish, Persian and Arabic influence in its origin and is a native of the town of Bidar, which even has the Geographical Indication Tag for it. Thanks to its wealthy patrons, this is one art form that has survived since the 14th century and continues to thrive even now, though whittled down from furniture for the sultans then to earrings for the lady of today. But, neither the quality nor the price of the Bidriware available in the cities or online compares to what you would find here on Choubara Road!

FACT FILE

135 km from Hyderabad, just across the state border in Karnataka is Bidar. Leave early morning and you should be there in less than 2-and-a-half hours, in time for when the Fort opens at 9:30 am. Visit the Madrasa Mahmoud Gawan in the town on the way to Choubara Road for some quick souvenirs. Leave town to go the tombs in Ashtur and stop at the Gurudwara Nanak Jhira Sahib on the way back to Hyderabad.



