

ABOUT THE CITY

Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, extends along the banks of the River Gomti. The creator of Lucknow as it is today was Nawab Asafud Daula. The city became known as a centre for Urdu poetry and courtly diction, and reached its acme during the reign of Wajid Ali Shah who was a connoisseur of music and poetry.

HISTORY

Lucknow is a city synonymous with the Nawabi Culture. The imperialistic splendour and magnificence of the Nawabi Era has been glorified and eulogized down the ages by writers, poets and historians alike. At the same time its mystical elegance and amorous ethos has caught the fascination of many world famous romantics. Known for its Adab and Tehzeeb (cultural refinement), Lucknow is also associated with its legendary hospitality, leisurely moods of life, fabled edifices steeped in history, world renowned cuisine and exquisite Sham-e-Avadh. Tremors of time have not effaced Lucknow of its cultural heritage and traditions, which once contributed in creating the city incomparable in its times.

As the 18th century seat of the Nawabs of Avadh, Lucknow flourished becoming an important political and cultural centre, rivalling Delhi in its patronage to art and literature. It was during this time that culture and architecture synthesized emerging in a distinct form now so typical to the Lucknow culture. The peace and prosperity under the governance of the nawabs brought about a cultural renaissance in Avadh. Musicians and dancers flocked to Lucknow giving birth to new musical forms and instruments under the patronage of the royalty. Art forms like Kathak, Thumri, Khayal, Dadra, Qawalis, Ghazals and Shero Shairisaw their finest hour. In this era major stress was laid on even minor details like the art of dressing, apparels (libaas) and jewellery all symbolic of a genteel lifestyle. The legacy of the exquisite embroidery still lives on with equal zest in today's modern era. Culinary skills, too, reached heights of excellence as the nawabs were not only gracious hosts but also extremely fond of good nutritious food. Thus emerged the skillful art of slow cooking. The royalty of Avadh was also famous for indulging in extravagant pastimes like elephant and rooster fights and kite flying, a game that still evokes passionate involvement among the flyers and the bystander alike. The field of architecture saw re-interpretation of the existing styles and experimentation in the fusion of the occidental and the oriental style of architecture. The magnificent edifices standing proudly among the architectural skyline of the city are living examples of the nawab's architectural ingenuity.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Rumi Darwaza

The 60 feet high Rumi Gate was constructed under Nawab Asaf-us-Daula in 1786. It is said to be identical in design to an ancient portal at Constantinople. Its uppermost part consists of an eight faceted chhatri, approachable by a staircase.

Asafi Imambara (Bara Imambara)

Also known as the Bara Imambara, it was built by Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula in 1784 and is one of the architectural wonders of that era. Its central hall is said to be the largest vaulted chamber in the world. Except for the galleries in the interior, there is no woodwork in the entire structure. It has large underground passages which have been blocked up. A staircase from outside leads to a series of labyrinths known as Bhool-Bhulaiyan which is a complicated entanglement of zig-zag pass. Visitors are advised to visit only with authorized guides. Within the compound of the Imambara is the grand Asafi Mosque. Shahi Baoli is another attraction here.

Chhota Imambara

Though Popularly called as the Chhota Imambara, the Hussainabad Imambara stands to the west of Bara Imambara. Built by Nawab Mohammad Ali Shah (1837-42), it is more ornate in design with exquisite chandeliers, gilt-edged mirrors, silver mimbar and colourful stuccos which adorn the interiors. A golden dome and fine calligraphy on the exterior of the building makes it a truly exceptional monument of Mughal architecture (open : 0600 hrs to 1700 hrs.).

Jama Masjid

The construction of Jama Masjid, to the north-west of Hussainabad Imambara, was started in 1832 AD during the reign of Mohammad Ali Shah but was completed after his death by his begum, Nawab Malika Janah. It is entirely free from the pseudo-Italian art then in vogue in Lucknow and reflects the Mughal style of architecture.

Clock Tower & Picture Gallery

Near Rumi Darwaza, this 221 ft. high Clock Tower was built in 1887 to mark the arrival of Sir George Couper, the first Lieutenant Governor of the United Province of Awadh.

Hussainabad Picture Gallery

Nawab Mohammad Ali Shah built it as a 'Baradari' - literally meaning 'having 12 doorways.' It is now used as a gallery for display of life size portraits of the Nawabs of Avadh (Near the Clock Tower, housed in an imposing building, is a picture gallery which has a fine collection of portraits of the rules of Awadh.

Shahnajaf Imambara

This white domed mausoleum owes its existence to Ghazi-ud-din Haider, who on the bank of the Gomti near Sikanderbagh reproduced a copy of Hazrat Ali's burial at Najaf in Iraq. Ghazi-ud-din Haider, and later his three wives, were buried here. The silver tomb of Ghazi-ud-din Haider lies in the centre of this building and is flanked by the more imposing silver and gold tomb of Mubarak Mahal on one side.

Residency

Built for the British Resident during 1780-1800, it was originally a large complex of many buildings. It was the scene of dramatic events during the first war of independence in 1857. The main building overlooks the river Gomti and is surrounded by terraced lawns and gardens. Today, only the scarred ruins bear witness to the turmoil of 1857. SOUND & LIGHT SHOW is an added attraction here.

Kaiserbagh Palace Complex

The construction of the Kaiserbagh palace complex was started in 1848 by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and was completed in 1850. The buildings on three sides of the Kaiserbagh quadrangle, once provided quarters for the ladies of Wajid Ali Shah's harem. In the centre stands the white Baradari, a grand white stone edifice which was earlier paved with silver.

Tombs of Saadat Ali Khan & Khurshid Zadi

The imposing twin tombs of Nawab Saadat Ali Khan and his wife Khurshid Zadi, stand near the historical Begum Hazrat Mahal Park.

Shaheed Smarak (Martyrs' Memorial)

On the bank of the river Gomti, stands in a beautiful park, this white marble memorial, dedicated to the martyrs who laid down their lives during the Freedom Movement of India.

Dilkusha

Dilkusha Kothi set amidst lush green, was built in the Gothic style. The Kothi and its adjoining magnificent garden were created by Nawab Saadat Ali Khan. It is almost an exact replica of an English country house called Seation Delavel, built in 1721.

Vidhan Sabha Bhawan (The Council House)

Its foundation was laid in 1922 by Sir Harcourt Butler and the construction was completed in six years. Its octagonal shaped chamber has a domed roof decorated with peacocks in fully plumed splendor.

Gurudwara At Yahiyaganj

This Gurudwara is associated with the memories of Guru Teg Bahadurji and Guru Govind Singhji who had stayed here in 1671 and 1672, respectively. An art gallery depicting various events of Sikh Panth has been established here.

SHOPPING

A shopping in Lucknow which had firm cultural links from medieval time of the nawabs. In spite of its shayri and mujras, the noble city of Lucknow is famous for cotton textiles and chikankari work from the ancient times. Perfumes of Lucknow are well known in India. The major shopping markets are Hazratganj, Yahiyaganj, Aminabad, Kapoorthala, Janpath, Chowk, Bhootnath & Gomti Nagar.

Lucknow is an old style shopper's paradise. The city is fit for those who hate Hyper-Malls and still believe that the art of shopping is a divine gifted quality that can only be mastered upon in the congested alleys of old bazaars and not in some air-conditioned malls located in a plush locality. Lucknow has a number of sites to go shopping. Blended in history, these shopping places also are used as the popular means of passing time and lazy strolling. This does not come as a surprise for a city that is not only famous for its lethargy but also have a sense of pride over it.

The most favored and flocked shopping destinations of the city are located in old Lucknow area. Among them, Hazrat Gunj (named after Begum Hazrat Mahal) is most frequented. Hazratganj market has a big shopping area where the buildings are of colonial style building. Hazrat Gunj is actually a fashionable bazaar that overflows with shops and restaurants. Strolling leisurely in Hazrat Gunj and stopping for a bit of window-shopping or meeting friends at your favorite corner is a popular pastime here.

Aminabad is considered not only the busiest market in the city but is also counted among the top bazaars in India in terms of trade volume. You will find each and everything under its roof. Nevertheless Aminabad is famous for jewelry and pickle shops. Chowk in old Lucknow is also considered a major market. The area is best to pick up Chikankari cloths and antique pieces. While doing the rounds of the shops, a visit to Nakhas, the Sunday market, is obligatory. A colorful, noisy pavement bazaar, it is a veritable storehouse of antiques and curios. The must buys in Nakhas are antique Paandan, Khaasdan and all kinds of other such charming objects d'art. Nakhas also has a famous bird market.

The first thing that comes to mind while talking about shopping in Lucknow is of course the famous Chikan work of Lucknow. Lucknow chikan is perhaps one of the finest works of embroidery that one can find here in India. It is known for its exquisite style and fine needlework and is unparalleled when it comes to refinement. The Mughal queen Noor Jehan revived this style in 655 AD in India. Lucknow Chikan Kari gained an entirely new look as it was much preferred and supported by the Mughal rulers. This led to further refinement and improvement of the Lucknow Chikan embroidery work. Today, Lucknowi chikankari is synonymous with fashion and is worn by almost every celebrity at least once.

Lucknow is also famous for its shops of jewellery and ornaments. Right from the nose pin to the waistband, you name it and they will have it. These exquisite works of jewellery are exclusive and are found only in Lucknow. The jewellery pieces have unique work of metal ornamentation that looks splendid. Another famous type of jewellery found there is the Jadau, which means jewellery in which gems are studded. Lucknow is famous for its big danglers and Jhumkas that are found in the wardrobe of each and every girl.