

Prayagraj: The City of Confluence

Prayagraj, one of the most historically and culturally significant cities in India, is located in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. It is famous for its spiritual heritage, political significance, and academic excellence. The city is particularly well-known for the **Triveni Sangam**, the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers. This makes Prayagraj one of the holiest places for Hindus.

History of Prayagraj

Prayagraj has a rich historical background dating back thousands of years. It was known as Prayag in ancient scriptures and was revered as a place of great religious importance. The Mughal emperor Akbar renamed it **Ilahabas**, which later evolved into **Allahabad**. In 2018, the city was officially renamed back to **Prayagraj** to reflect its ancient heritage.

The city has played a crucial role in India's freedom struggle, serving as a political hub for leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Lal Bahadur Shastri. The famous **Anand Bhavan**, the ancestral home of the Nehru family, stands as a testament to this legacy.

Major Tourist Attractions in Prayagraj

1. Triveni Sangam

- The most sacred spot in Prayagraj.

- The confluence of three rivers—Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati.
- Devotees take a dip in the holy waters, especially during the **Kumbh Mela**, the largest religious gathering in the world.

2. Kumbh Mela

- Held every **12 years**, with an **Ardh Kumbh** every **6 years**.
- Attracts millions of pilgrims, sadhus, and tourists from around the world.
- Devotees believe that bathing in the Sangam during the Kumbh washes away all sins.

3. Anand Bhavan and Swaraj Bhavan

- The residence of the Nehru-Gandhi family.
- Served as the headquarters of the Indian National Congress during the freedom movement.
- Swaraj Bhavan, located nearby, was the birthplace of Indira Gandhi.

4. Allahabad Fort

- Built by Emperor **Akbar** in 1583.
- Features a grand structure with high walls, but entry is restricted as it is under the Indian Army.
- Houses the mysterious **Ashoka Pillar**, a 35-ft-high sandstone pillar inscribed with Mauryan emperor Ashoka's edicts.

5. Khusro Bagh

- A beautiful **Mughal-era garden** and burial complex.
- Houses the tombs of **Prince Khusro**, the son of Emperor Jahangir.
- Famous for its intricate Mughal architecture and serene environment.

6. All Saints Cathedral (Patthar Girja)

- A magnificent **Anglican church** built during the British era.
- Known for its Gothic architecture and stunning stained-glass windows.

7. Chandrashekhar Azad Park (Company Garden)

- Dedicated to **freedom fighter Chandrashekhar Azad**, who sacrificed his life here in 1931.
- A beautiful park with statues of national leaders.

8. Alfred Park

- The largest public park in Prayagraj.
- A great place for morning walks and family outings.

9. Bharadwaj Ashram

- An ancient ashram believed to have been visited by **Lord Rama** during his exile.
- Associated with **Maharishi Bharadwaj**, a great sage of Hindu mythology.

10. Mankameshwar Temple

- A famous **Lord Shiva temple** located on the banks of the Yamuna River.
 - A significant pilgrimage site, especially during **Mahashivratri**.
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Festivals and Cultural Significance

Prayagraj is a city that thrives on religious and cultural celebrations. Some of the most prominent festivals include:

- **Kumbh Mela** – The grandest spiritual gathering.
 - **Magh Mela** – An annual fair held at the Sangam during **January-February**.
 - **Diwali & Holi** – Celebrated with immense enthusiasm.
 - **Navratri & Dussehra** – The entire city comes alive with fairs and celebrations.
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Educational and Literary Significance

Prayagraj is also known for its **prestigious educational institutions**, including:

- **University of Allahabad** – One of the oldest universities in India, established in 1887.
- **Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology (MNNIT)** – A premier engineering institute.
- **Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute** – A top research institution.

Famous poets and writers like **Harivansh Rai Bachchan** (father of Amitabh Bachchan) and **Mahadevi Verma** have hailed from Prayagraj.

Food and Cuisine

The city offers a blend of North Indian flavors with its unique street food culture. Some must-try dishes include:

- **Kachori-Sabzi** – A popular breakfast item.
 - **Allahabadi Tehri** – A delicious rice dish similar to biryani.
 - **Chaat** – Samosa chaat, dahi puri, and aloo tikki are famous.
 - **Kulfi Falooda** – A sweet treat to beat the heat.
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Best Time to Visit

- **Winter (October to February)** – Ideal weather for sightseeing.
 - **During Kumbh Mela or Magh Mela** – For a spiritual experience.
 - **Spring (March-April)** – Pleasant climate for exploration.
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How to Reach Prayagraj?

By Air

- **Prayagraj Airport (Bamrauli Airport)** connects the city to major destinations like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru.

By Train

- **Prayagraj Junction** is a major railway station with direct trains from all parts of India.

By Road

- Well-connected via **NH-2 (Delhi-Kolkata Highway)** and **NH-27**.
- Regular buses from Lucknow, Varanasi, and Kanpur.