**Visit the rich cultural city of Bikaner**

Popularly known as ‘the camel country, Bikaner is one of the three great desert kingdoms of Rajasthan. If you want to witness the rich art and culture, magnificent architecture, and festivals with color marvels, you should plan a trip to Bikaner. Another reason for visiting Bikaner is to know about the Camels, the ship of the desert, in detail.

Bikaner was named after the Rajput king Rao Bika, who established the kingdom in 1488. Jangladesh was the earlier name of this region, which was a barren land then. Bikaner was a prominent place in the trading route between central Asia and Gujarat, India, due to water availability in the Thar desert during medieval times.

## History of Bikaner:

Bikaner was a princely state of Rajasthan. The history of Bikaner is as old as the culture of Bikaner. Bikaner is known in India for its Junagadh Fort. According to the information obtained through archaeological records, Bikaner was established in 1448 AD by Rao Bikajo. It is said that his father was planning to attack a kingdom from the Maharajas of his princely states once in his court. Rao Bikaji was playing with his friends at a distance from his father. Rao Bikaji guessed his father's secret talk. This made his father happy and he handed over one of his kingdoms.

When Bikaner was established, Bikaner used to be a princely state. It is said that the establishment of Bikaner was done with the mother's permission. According to archaeological papers, Bikaner was established in 1448 AD.

It took a total of 24 years to build Bikaner. Rao Singh founded Bikaner in 1448. But in 1465, the work of establishing Bikaner was started. Rao Bikaji fought with many rulers of Rajasthan during his lifetime. They had also captured some areas of Jaisalmer.

The name of Bikaner is counted in the list of the largest cities of India. This is because most of the part of Bikaner was forest, and due to this, Bikaner is also known as Junglee Bikaner. It is said that Bikaner is always blessed by Karni Mata, due to which there is never any shortage of food grains here. Many rulers have ruled Bikaner, but Rao Bikaji, Lunkarnasar, Ganga Singh, etc.

## Information about the geographical nature of Bikaner and the climate of Bikaner-

Bikaner is also a very important district from a strategic point of view, as Bikaner shares its border with Pakistan. A straight line of 168 kms connects with Pakistan. The Government of India has stationed its soldiers on the 168 km line of Bikaner.

The climate of Bikaner is quite hot. You will get to see sand's dunes far and wide. Here in the summer, the wind blows vigorously. It becomes difficult for the farmers to cultivate because some farmers are dependent on rain. From March to August it is very hot. However, after 10 o'clock in the night, the cold airwaves start blowing. The climate here is hot in summer and cool in winter. In winter, you do not feel cold during the day.

## Places Of Interest in Bikaner

## Junagarh Fort

Junagarh fort holds the distinction that it was uncaptured by any enemies, constructed by Raja Rai Singh in the 16th century, the most distinguished general in Emperor Akbar’s court. Later in the 20th century, the ruling family moved to Lalgarh Palace. The fort houses many palaces and temples, which are turned into museums now as they provide an insight into the grandiose living style of the Rajput Kings. Built with red sandstone and marble, the courtyards, balconies, kiosks, and windows of the fort give a feast to visitors’ eyes. Some places here are, Karan Mahal, Phool Mahal, Anup Mahal, Ganga Mahal, Chandra mahal, Har Mandir, Ratan Behari temple etc.

## Lalgarh palace

The Lalgarh palace, constructed in 1902 by Maharaja Ganga Singh,results from mixed architecture styles of Rajputs, Islamic and Europe, conceptualized by Sir Swinton Jacob. This palatial fantasy construction is made entirely of red sandstone, the color/shade of the beautiful structure changes as the day proceeds. Laxmi Niwas Palace, now a luxury hotel, also stays nearby, earlier a residence of Maharaja Ganga Singh, has Indo-Saracenic architectural construction style. Now it is turned into Heritage Hotels under the National Heritage Trust Management.

## Havelis of Bikaner

Many Havelis, aristocratic homes, also housed in Bikaner, famous being Rampuria cluster of Havelis around 400 years old. All aspects of Havelis, entrances, latticed windows, Divankhanas, jharokhas, basements or Gumaharias are exceptionally beautiful. The golden work of the highest quality leaves and flowers in the Jharikhais astonishing. The Victorian influence is seen in the design apart from the Mughal and Rajput era style. Other famous Havelis, also rich in splendor, are Rikhji Bagri ki Haveli, Haveli of Bhairondan, Daga Chowk Havelis and Sampatlala Agarwal Haveli.

## Temples of Bikaner

One of the unique temples worshipped by all is Karni Mata Temple, a reincarnation of Goddess Durga, a Hindu warrior sage of the 14th century as per locals. Located at about 30km from Bikaner, this temple is known not only for its architecture or location but for about 25,000 rats that inhibit andfreely meander around the temple complex. People from all over the world try to please the god by offering food, sweets, milk to these rats, and they consume the rats’ leftovers. One can see these creatures everywhere in the temple premises, passing over the visitors and devotees. Hurting or killing the rats is considered a crime here. The temple is made of marble material and the idol of Karni Mata, 75cm tall, is sitting with a Trishul in one hand.

Jain Temple Bhandsaris dedicated to the 5th Jain Thrithankar, worth places to visit for its intricate mirror work, murals, and gold leaf paintings. Other places like Kodamdesar temple, Kolayat are also nearby.

## Museums in Bikaner

Prachina Museum and Ganga Government Museum are two places not to miss in Bikaner. In the Prachina museum, one can see royal costumes, textiles, and accessories of Rajasthani royalty. The ‘Poshaks’ or the garments of the women remind us of the lost craft of traditional design, style and workmanship. The family portraits displayed show how changing cultural settings affected the former rulers. In Ganga Museum,there is a rich collection of archaeological artifacts from the Harappa and early Gupta Periods. Separate sections for displaying paintings, art and craft, woven carpets. Clay pottery, ancient coins and Rajput weaponry are also there.

Rajasthan State Archives, where researchers and academicians interested in ancient administrative records can come and seek the details from the Mughals period to Persian Farmans, Nishan’s, Mansurs, etc. They can also get to see the details of other princely states of Rajasthan. Royal cenotaphs display splendid structures with intricately carved marble pillars, a treat to tourists.

## Activities Of Interest

### Wildlife safaris

There is also a wide variety of flora and fauna entertaining nature lovers in the desert. They can visit Gajner Palace and Lake, a relaxing place of the royal family, now turned into a hotel. Many animals like Nilgai, Blackbuck, wild boar and migratory birds like imperial sand Grouse can be seen at GajnerWildlife Sanctuary.

A must-visit place at Bikaner, which makes you incomplete if you don’t make a trip, is National Research Centre on Camel, located 8km from the city. Spread over 2000acre of semi-arid land, this camel research and breeding center is only one of its kind in entire Asia and is managed by the Government of India. Professionally managed by the government, it is a place one can visit with kids as they will enjoy interaction with camels. One can get to see various breeds of camel and their habitat along with some relaxing activities like camel safari, video/photography with the animals. Visitors can also taste the unique value-added camel milk and milk products like icecream and beverages from the camel milk parlor. You can distinguish between cow milk and camel milk, as the camel milk is slightly salty in taste.

## Some Tempting Foods

Bikaner Bhujia, made of moth beans, Besan flour, groundnut, and spices, is the most popular crispy snack originated from Bikaner. Gate ki Sabzi, Dal BhatiChurma, Raj Kachori, Laal Maas, Pakodi are some of the traditional Rajasthani dishes available here. One can also have different (Indian and foreign) foods at Bikaner.

Papad ki sabzi is made with authentic Rajasthani spices and papad, staple food with a burst of flavors, seen in almost all Rajasthani homes. Khasta is similar to kachori but larger in size.

Ghevar, a Rajasthani cuisine sweet made with refined flour and sugar, is associated traditionally withthe Teej festival. Various varieties of Ghevar with Mawa, plain and malai topping are also available.Suterfeni or Kesar Fini is another Bikaneri sweet, with shredded and flaky texture made with riceflour and semolina roasted in ghee and topped with nuts and Kesar for flavoring. It can be eaten with sweet milk poured on it.

## Activities

One can go sightseeing in the Bikaner cityby walk or take a camel ride. The visitors can take upCamel safari at Rao Bikaji Camel safari or with many private package organizers can be enjoyed along with thrilling experience of camping, food, and knowledge about history. One can also opt for a jeep safari in the sand dunes for a smoother and comfortable ride.

## Shopping areas

### Jewelry

Exclusive Kundan jewelry and bangles, both artificial and original gold, are available in Bikaner. These and crafted jewelry are the crowns of the Bikaner. Artificial pieces of jewelry are cheaper but equally beautiful as original ones. Though these Kundan items are available now everywhere, one can buy them here as these jewels lure you with their beauty. Lehriya, a vibrant and lightweight saree of Bikaner,is very attractive.

### Clothes & accessories

Along with these, you can buy bandhani, Sanganeriya and Gharchola. Camel leather Mojari, light and comfortable, can be paired with salwar kameez. Nokha, a small village near Bikaner, is famous for the Razais or quilts of lightweight and designer cloth. Available at affordable prices, these quilts do not compromise heating quality. A wide variety of Churan made of ginger, mango, lemon, garlic, pomegranate, and more are available to taste according to the health condition and liking.

One can go shopping at Kote Gate Market, Station Road Market for a rug, chairs, wallets from leather, wooden crafts etc., MG Road.

One can visit Bikaner in October to February according to their comfort or during the Camel festival season in the month of January held annually to witness camel rides, processions, folk dance, music and competitions, and other cultural events activities. Camels dressed in bright and vibrant colored ornaments and bridles in golden dunes are a feast to the visitors’ eyes, which is incomparable.

## Reaching Bikaner

Many transport facilities by road and rail are available to reach Bikaner from Jodhpur, Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Udaipur, Kota, etc. International and domestic flyers can reach Jodhpur Airport by flight and from there, they can travel by taxi, bus, or train for a distance of 250 km to reach Bikaner.