

9. GURDWARA BABA ATAL SAHIB

This 45m, 9 storey octagonal tower was once the tallest building in Amritsar. It was built in 1770 in the memory of Guru Hargobind Singh's 9 year old son, Baba Atal Rai. The Gurbilas Chhevin Patshahi says that when Baba Atal discovered that his friend Mohan had died of a snake bite, he touched his body with a stick and asked him to wake up. Mohan instantly sat up. However, this miracle angered his father who believed in displaying spiritual powers through purity of doctrine and living and not in miracles. In atonement Baba Atal went to the sacred pool, lay down and breathed his last. The nine floors stand for the nine years of Baba Atal's life. Not to be missed are the beautiful murals on the first floor.

10. BABA DEEP SINGH SHRINE

Baba Deep Singh was closely associated with Guru Gobind Singh and received his vows as a Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib. He played an important role in confronting the Afghan invaders who desecrated the Harmandir Sahib in 1757. During the fight, he was mortally wounded. Yet, he held his head in place with his left hand, fought with his sword in the right and managed to reach the hallowed precincts of the Temple before he collapsed.

11. NISHAAN SAHIBS (FLAGSTAFFS)

On the side of the Akal Takhat are the two Nishaan Sahibs. These are two tall speared poles, one taller than the other to represent Miri and Peeri. The taller pole represents the spiritual aspect or Peeri and indicates its primacy over the temporal aspect or Miri. The Nishaan Sahibs are linked by a shield and crossed sword.

13. SRI AKAL TAKHT SAHIB

The foundation of the Akal Takht was laid by Guru Hargobind Singh on 15th June, 1606 on assuming spiritual and temporal powers. During the period of Mughal hostilities against the Sikhs, he added a martial tone to the movement. The two swords worn by him, one of Peeri (spiritual office) and the other of Miri (temporal authority) at the time of his assumption of Guru Gaddi are preserved in the Akal Takht. Each night, the Guru Granth Sahib is brought in procession to the Akal Takht to "rest" and in the early hours of the morning it is carried back in a golden palanquin to the Harmandir Sahib.

14. DARSHANI DEORI

At the shore end of the causeway lies the entrance to the Harmandir Sahib through an imposing and highly embellished gateway known as Darshani Deori or gateway for viewing. It is believed that the large silver gates that adorn the Darshani Deori belong to the famous Somnath temple, which had been taken away by Mahmud of Ghazni during one of his invasions and were later recovered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh's armies and fixed in the Harmandir Sahib.

15. HAR KI PAURI

It is the most sacred point of the Sarovar, which Sri Guru Arjan Dev himself consecrated. Here, marble steps descend into the Sarovar, where visitors cup the water of the sacred pool into their hands and sprinkle it over their heads as an act of worship.







16. KARHA PRASAD

While returning via the causeway towards the Darshani Deori, the traditional prasad, Karha Prasad, is distributed. It is made of whole wheat, flour, sugar and clarified butter; prayers are recited while it is being prepared.

18. BER BABA BUDDHA JI

Turning to the last corner of the Sarovar (pool) is an ancient Zizyphus tree. Its branches and trunk are so ancient that it has a steel support attached. Baba Buddha Ji sat at this spot with his digging implements and building materials while the pool was being lined with bricks. He also supervised the construction of Sri Harmandir Sahib and was the first Head Granthi (priest) of the Golden Temple.

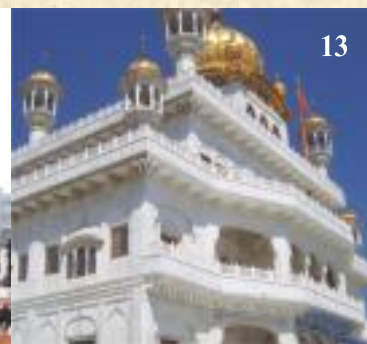
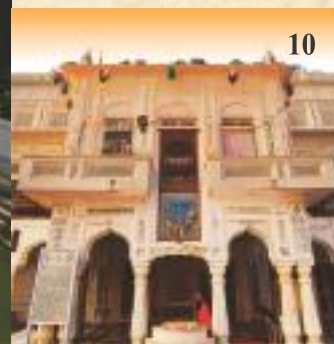
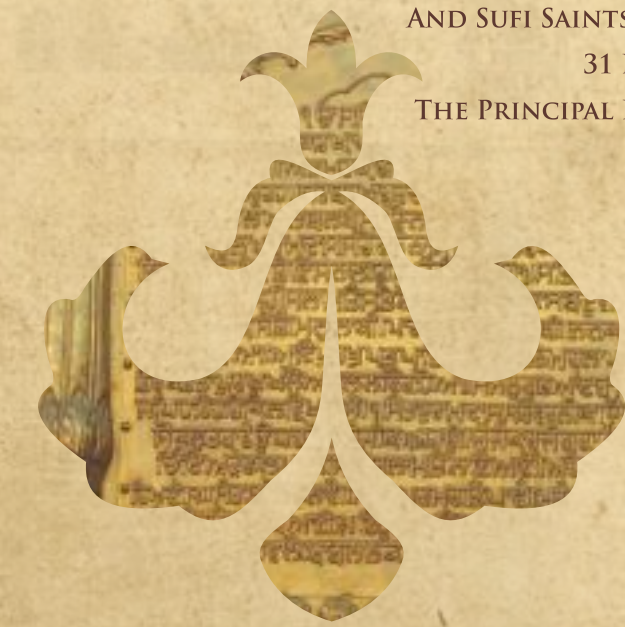
ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION :

-  Visitors are required to remove their shoes and deposit them at the Joda Ghar (Shoe Bank) located to the left on entering the complex.
-  Wash your hands and feet before entering the holy place.
-  Keep your head covered at all times. Scarves to cover your head are available at the entrance.
-  Water is served as part of the volunteer service by devotees within the holy premises.
-  Read carefully the instructions on photography displayed in different parts of the premises of the Golden Temple.
-  Langar is served throughout the day. The Langar is a community kitchen run by volunteers who prepare and serve food.



the Golden TEMPLE demystified

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE OR HARMANDIR SAHIB IS LOCATED WITHIN A SACRED TANK (SAROVAR) IN THE HEART OF THE WALLED CITY OF AMRITSAR. GURU AMARDAS (THE 3RD GURU) DISCOVERED THIS SITE AND GURU RAMDAS BEGAN THE EXCAVATION OF THE SAROVAR IN 1573. RAMDAS PUR, LATER CALLED "AMRITSAR" OR "THE SACRED POOL", WAS ALSO FOUNDED IN 1573. GURU ARJAN DEV (THE 5TH GURU) BUILT THE HARMANDIR SAHIB IN THE SAROVAR'S CENTRE TO HOUSE THE SRI GRANTH SAHIB, THE HOLY BOOK OF THE SIKHS, WHICH HE HAD COMPILED. THE TERM 'SIKH' IS DERIVED FROM THE PALI TERM 'SIKHA' LATER 'SHISHYA' IN SANSKRIT AND MEANS STUDENT OR DISCIPLE. THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB CONTAINS THE BANI OR WORD OF THE 6 SIKH GURUS AND ALSO OF HINDU AND SUFI SAINTS. THIS UNIQUE SACRED TEXT IS SET TO 31 RAGAS AND IS SUNG BY THE DEVOTEES. THE PRINCIPAL BELIEF OF THE FOLLOWERS OF SIKHISM IS FAITH IN THE WAHEGURU OR THE UNIVERSAL GOD, "IK OANKAR". THE THREE PILLARS OF SIKHISM ARE 'KIRAT KARO' (LIVE BY THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOUR), 'NAAM JAPO' (REMEMBRANCE OF THE WORD BY RECITATION) AND 'WAND CHHAKO' (SHARE WITH OTHERS).



12. GURDWARA LAACHI BER

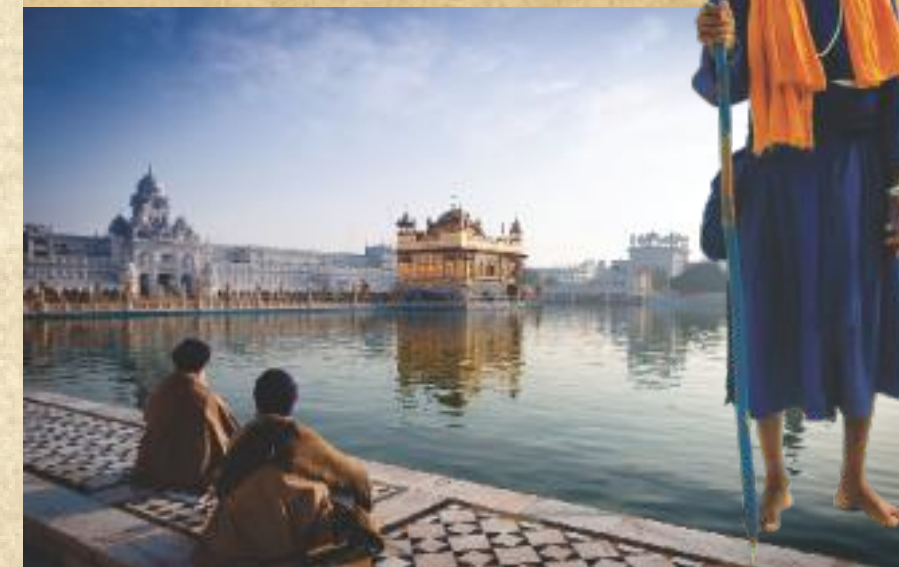
Located around the corner at the site of a Zizyphus tree is the Gurdwara Laachi Ber. It is named after the size of its berries that are only as large as the fruit of the small cardamom, known as "laachi" in Punjabi. During the occupation of the Harmandir Sahib by Massa Ranghar, the overlord; the place of worship was used as a den for drinking and dancing by nautch girls. To avenge the desecration of the holy place, two Sikhs, Sukha Singh and Mehtab Singh from a nearby village of Mirankot, killed Ranghar in 1740.

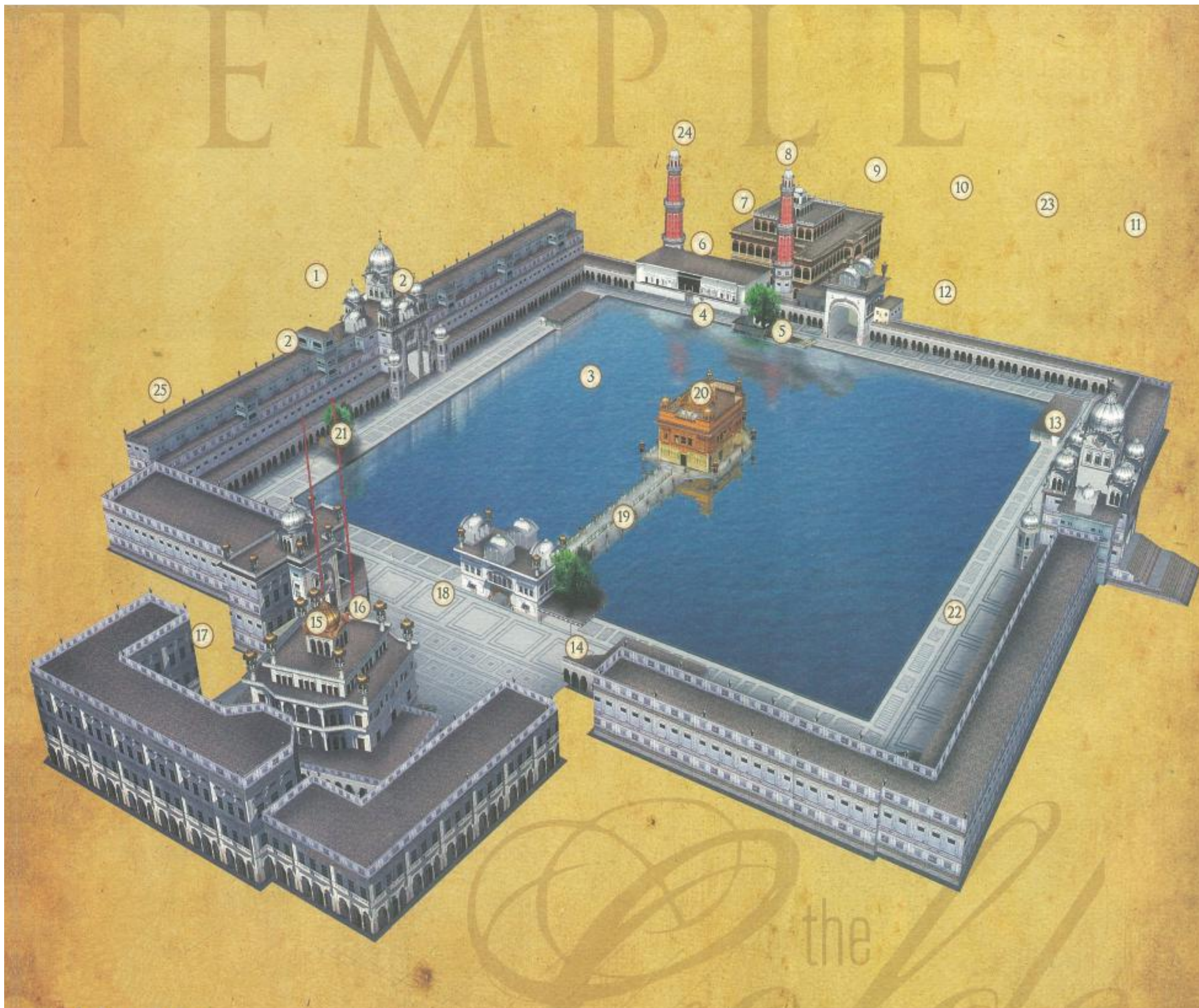
17. HARMANDIR SAHIB

The sanctum sanctorum rises from the sacred pool. Connected by a 65m causeway to the Darshan Deori, the structure has three levels. The lower floor has embellished white marble on the outer walls, while the upper walls are gold plated. The building has two components: A 1.5 m square forming a perfect cube, the 'Prakash Asthan' (the Guru Granth Sahib is placed here). With mirrors, gold plating and colourful patterns, the shrine was embellished in 1802 during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The second part houses the stairs called Har Ki Pauri that lead to the Sarovar. It is flanked by two flights of steps leading to the richly decorated upper floors. A blend of Mughal and Rajput architecture, the Golden Temple has four entrances at four directions with free entry and resonates with the singing of Shabad Kirtan throughout the day.



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the Golden TEMPLE

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25. INFORMATION OFFICE

THE PRECINCT OF THE HARMANDIR SAHIB IS IN A LOW LYING AREA. THIS IS INTERPRETED AS AN EXPRESSION OF HUMILITY AND SUBMISSION TO THE TRUTH. THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR THE HARMANDIR SAHIB WAS LAID IN 1588 BY MIAN MIR, A SUFI SAINT WHO WAS A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF GURU ARJAN DEV. THE HARMANDIR IS ACCESSIBLE DAY AND NIGHT TO PEOPLE OF ALL FAITHS. THERE ARE NO DOORS TO ITS 5 DEORIS (GATEWAYS).

1. MAIN ENTRANCE AND CLOCK TOWER

The northern gateway to the holy place is a 20th century building, a blend of Indian and Islamic styles with elements of Rajput and Mughal architecture. This space evolved since 1862, when the British built a Victorian style clock tower after demolishing the Bunga of Kanwar Naunihal Singh.



2. CENTRAL SIKH MUSEUM

The Central Sikh Museum is housed on the second floor of the northern gateway, with an access through a narrow staircase. Established in 1958, it displays important religious documents, old coins, paintings, old hand-written manuscripts and weapons used by great Sikh warriors and artefacts from Sikh history. The museum is open on all days and the entry is free.

3. PARIKRAMA (CIRCUMAMBULATORY ROUTE)

The Sarovar (pool) is enclosed by a circumambulatory path on all sides, known as the Parikrama. Five shrines - the Laachi Beri, Beri Baba Buddha Ji, DukhBhanjani Beri, Ath-Sath Tirath and Baba Deep Singh Shaheedi Asthan, are located on it. Geometric patterns or bold floral designs and arabesques adorn its marble floors. It is obligatory to cover one's head at all times while walking through the Parikrama and entering the sanctum sanctorum.

4. SAROVAR (POOL OF NECTAR)

Amrit Sarovar or the pool of nectar is believed to have healing powers and pilgrims come to bathe in its sacred waters. The Sarovar is associated with the famous story of a leper who was healed by these waters. It is believed that Duni Chand, a revenue collector, got his seventh daughter, Rajni, married to a leper as punishment for declaring that it was God and not her father who gave her food. Once, Rajni left her husband by the pool, where he saw crows diving into it and turning white on emerging from it. Realising that the pool was magical, he took a dip in its waters and was healed.

5. GURDWARA DUKH BHANJANI BER

This marks the spot where Rajni left her husband to rest. People take a dip in the sacred water here. The trunk of the old tree still stands. The marble platform next to the old tree is the place from where Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th guru of the Sikhs observed the excavation and lining of the pool.

6. ATH-SATH TIRATH (68 HOLY PLACES)

The gilded chhatri (umbrella like structure) built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh marks Guru Ramdas' return from a long tour of Hindu holy places with Guru Amardas. While the pool was being dug, he declared that this spot would be holier than the famed 68 pilgrimage places of India.



7. RAMGARHIA BUNGA

Located on the south eastern edge are two watch towers. This is the Ramgarhia Bunga, built by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, head of the Ramgarhia Misl, in the late 18th century. Around 1762, after the desecration of Harmandir Sahib by Ahmed Shah Abdali, prominent Sikh Sardars built pucca Bungas around the Parikarma to protect the central shrine and lodge pilgrims. It is the only example of Bunga left today. There is a deep well on the premises and the granite slab brought from the Red Fort of Delhi by the Ramgarhia Misl when they attacked and looted Delhi is also here. Apparently, the coronations of all Mughal Emperors were done on this slab and its removal would end the Mughal rule in India.

8. GURU KA LANGAR

Reflects the principles of 'Pangat' (a line) and 'Sangat' (community). This tradition of sitting together and sharing meals was started by Guru Nanak, the 1st Guru to break all caste-class barrier. Today, in Harmandir Sahib, a free meal is served to an average of 50,000 persons a day. It is run on donations and voluntary 'seva' (service).

