



Haryana & Punjab

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

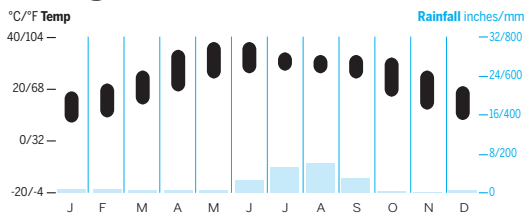
Haryana and Punjab comprise the Indian half of the erstwhile Punjab region that was tumultuously split when India and Pakistan separated in 1947. Punjab (translating to 'Five Waters') is named after the five rivers of this fertile 'rice bowl' and 'bread basket': the Beas, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej.

Hindi-speaking, primarily Hindu Haryana split from Punjabi-speaking, primarily Sikh Punjab in 1966, but they still share a capital, Chandigarh. Apart from its prodigious manufacturing and agriculture industries, and the precocious Delhi satellite of Gurgaon, Haryana is best known for the Hindu holy site of Kurukshetra.

Punjab is the home of the Sikhs, butter chicken and bhangra (music/dance). Here, *Sat Sri Akal* replaces *Namaste* as the preferred greeting, and Sikh gurdwaras outnumber Hindu temples as places of worship. Tourists and worshippers flock to Amritsar's gleaming Golden Temple, while nationalists and the curious join in the fun at Attari–Wagah's entertaining border-closing ceremony on the India–Pakistan border.

When to Go

Chandigarh



Feb–Mar Colourful kites take to the air to welcome spring during the festival of Basant.

Mar Holla Mohalla is a three-day celebration of the Khalsa (Sikh brotherhood) at Anandpur Sahib.

Dec Amritsar throbs and swivels during the three-night International Bhangra Festival.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Chandigarh International Airport

Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport (Amritsar)

Fast Facts

- » Population: 25.3 million (Haryana), 27.7 million (Punjab)
- » Area: 44,212 sq km (Haryana), 50,362 sq km (Punjab)
- » Capital: Chandigarh
- » Main languages: Hindi (Haryana), Punjabi (Punjab)
- » Sleeping prices: \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹5000, \$\$\$ above ₹5000

Top Tips

Hotels in Chandigarh and Amritsar quickly fill during weekends and festivals (book ahead). Attari is a train station near the border at Wagah, but transport from there to the border-closing ceremony is virtually nonexistent, so organise transport from Amritsar.

Resources

- » www.punjabgovt.nic.in
- » www.haryana-online.com
- » www.haryanatourism.com
- » www.citcochandigarh.com
- » www.chandigarh.nic.in
- » www.nrisabhapunjab.in
- » www.nrizone.in

Food

Punjab is a food-lover's paradise. Not only is this region home to nutty, long-grain basmati rice, that quintessential accompaniment to spicy curries, it also nurtures much of India's wheat thanks to the green revolution of the 1960s. Punjabi cooks quickly embraced the cuisine of the Mughals and their renowned barbecue techniques using the ingenious and simple tandoor clay oven. Sizzling tandoori chicken is only beaten for popularity by the world-famous butter chicken; but you should also savour the tandoori vegetables, the various dhal (lentil) dishes and the locally famous Amritsari fried fish.

DON'T MISS

Join the pilgrimage to Sikhism's serene **Golden Temple** in Amritsar. Spend some time circumambulating the sacred lake, Amrit Sarovar, partaking *prasad* and generally joining in. Sikhism prides itself on its open and inclusive outlook to all religions and all peoples. Witness the gilded temple during an ethereal sunrise, moody sunset, and when it is sparkling and illuminated at night.

Cheer with pumped-up patriots as they watch Indian and Pakistani soldiers try to out-stomp, out-scowl and out-salute each other at Attari–Wagah's fantastical **border-closing ceremony**.

When in Chandigarh, explore the whimsical world of **Nek Chand Fantasy Rock Garden**. Reputed to be one of India's top tourist attractions, this recycled wonder world will enthrall the kids and may even provide a few ideas for home projects!

Top State Festivals

- » Kila Raipur Sports Festival (Rural Olympics; www.ruralolympics.net; Feb, Kila Raipur, near Ludhiana, p212) Three days of rural 'sports': bullock-cart races, kabaddi, strong-man contests, folk dancing and more.
- » Surajkund Crafts Mela (1–15 Feb, Surajkund, p210) Visiting artisans showcase and sell colourful handicrafts among food stalls and cultural performances.
- » Holla Mohalla (Mar, Anandpur Sahib, p211) Celebration of the Khalsa (Sikh brotherhood): kirtan (Sikh hymns), martial-arts demonstrations and re-enactments of past battles.
- » Baba Sheikh Farid Aagman Purb Festival (Sep, Faridkot, p212) Cultural performances to commemorate the Sufi saint.
- » Pinjore Heritage Festival (early Oct, Pinjore Gardens, p209) Three-day festival with music and dance performances, handicraft and food stalls.
- » Harballabh Sangeet Sammelan (www.harballabh.org; late Dec, Jalandhar, p212) Four-day music festival (in existence for over 130 years) showcasing Indian classical instrumentalists and vocalists.
- » Gita Jayanti (Nov/Dec, Kurukshetra, p210) One week of cultural events celebrating the Bhagavad Gita's anniversary.



Haryana & Punjab Highlights

- 1 Immerse yourself in the soul-soothing splendour of Amritsar's divine **Golden Temple** (p213), Sikhism's holiest site
- 2 Watch Indian and Pakistani border guards compete with high kicks, quick marches and foot stomps at Attari–Wagah's entertaining

- border-closing ceremony (p220)
- 3 Tumble into the maze-like alternate reality of Chandigarh's **Nek Chand Fantasy Rock Garden** (p203) where household items are recycled into imaginative art
- 4 Explore Le Corbusier's uber-structured modernist

- metropolis of **Chandigarh** (p202)
- 5 Pause at **Pinjore Gardens** (p209), one of India's finest Mughal-era walled gardens
- 6 Savour the delights of Punjabi and Mughlai cuisine in the excellent restaurants of **Chandigarh** (p206) and **Amritsar** (p218)

Chandigarh

☑ 0172 / POP 1,064,700

The capital of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh is a Union Territory controlled by the central government.

The modernist architect Le Corbusier's radical design for Chandigarh polarises critics, and this anomaly among Indian cities also splits travellers. Some dislike its rather soulless grid and impersonal scale, while others enjoy the city's broad, tree-lined roads, angular sense of order and use of street signs.

Although Chandigarh may lack the colour and chaos so typical of subcontinental cities, it does offer a clean and green respite from urban pandemonium, is home to the wonderfully wacky Nek Chand Fantasy Rock Garden, and has some of the state's yummiest places to eat.

Chandigarh is divided into a series of sectors that are numbered. The main shopping

area is located in Sector 17, while most hotels and restaurants are situated in neighbouring Sectors 22 and 35. The train station is 8km from the city centre.

👁 Sights & Activities

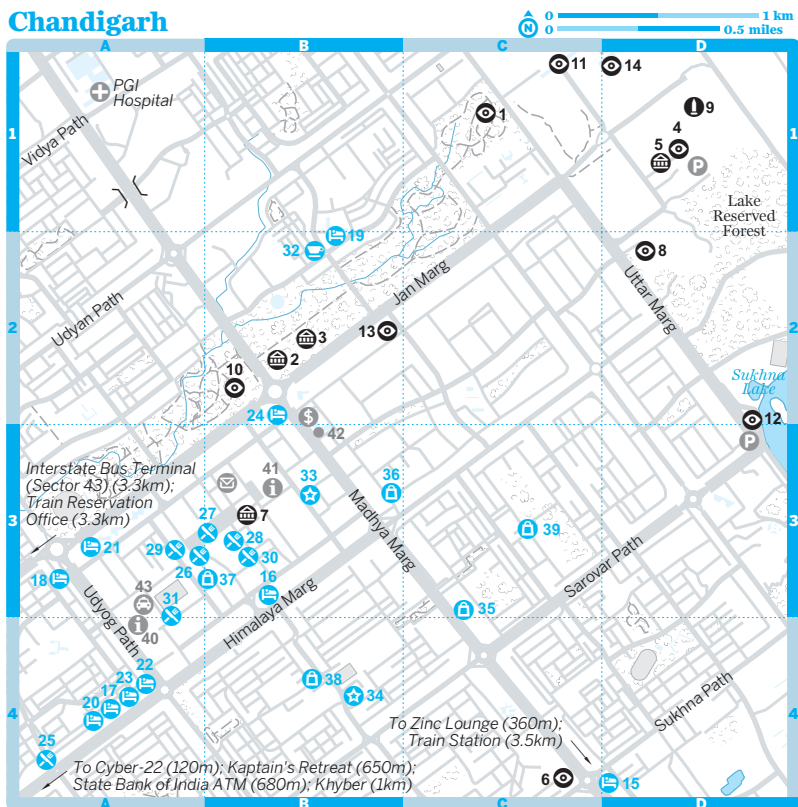
Capital Complex

NOTABLE BUILDINGS

The imposing concrete **High Court**, **Secretariat** and **Vidhan Sabha** (Legislative Assembly), all in Sector 1 and shared by Punjab and Haryana, were designed by Le Corbusier.

The High Court opened in 1955. A visit inside may be possible from Monday to Friday with prior permission from the Chandigarh Tourism office (p209); bring your passport. The internal ramp, the wavy overhanging roof and the colourful supporting slabs are the main features. You can walk around to the symbolic **Open Hand** sculpture, another creation of the workaholic Le Corbusier. It symbolises an 'open to give, open to receive' message of peace.

Chandigarh



You must enter the High Court via the car park. On the way is the small **High Court Museum** (admission free; ☀10am-5pm Mon-Sat) containing assorted memorabilia including original Le Corbusier sketches and the handcuffs worn by Nathuram Godse, Mahatma Gandhi's assassin (see boxed text, p1096). Most exhibits are on the 1st floor. On request, there's a free guided tour.

To visit the huge Secretariat and the Vidhan Sabha obtain a permit from the Archi-

tecture Department in the **UT Secretariat** (☎2741620; Sector 9-D).

Nek Chand Fantasy Rock Garden

ART GALLERY

(www.nekchand.com; adult/child ₹10/5; ☀9am-6pm Oct-Mar, to 7pm Apr-Sep) Entering this Chandigarh icon, a 25-acre garden, is like falling down a rabbit hole into the labyrinthine interior of one man's mind. Created by Nek Chand (see the boxed text, p204), cleverly using recycled junk and organic ma-

Chandigarh

👁 Sights

- 1 Bougainvillea Garden C1
- 2 Chandigarh Architecture Museum B2
- 3 Government Museum & Art Gallery B2
- 4 High Court D1
- 5 High Court Museum D1
- 6 Le Corbusier Centre C4
- 7 National Gallery of Portraits B3
- 8 Nek Chand Fantasy Rock Garden D2
- 9 Open Hand Sculpture D1
- 10 Rose Garden B2
- 11 Secretariat C1
- 12 Sukhna Lake Paddle Boats D2
- 13 UT Secretariat B2
- 14 Vidhan Sabha D1

🛌 Sleeping

- 15 AB's D4
- 16 Hotel City Heart Premium B3
- 17 Hotel Divyadeep A4
- 18 Hotel Kwalitiy Regency A3
- 19 Hotel Mountview B2
- 20 Hotel Satyadeep A4
- 21 Hotel Shivalikview A3
- 22 Hotel Sunbeam A4
- 23 Piccadilly Hotel A4
- 24 Taj Chandigarh B2

🍴 Eating

- AB's (see 15)
- 25 Aroma A4
- 26 Barista Crème A3
- Bhoj (see 17)
- Ghazal (see 28)
- 27 Hot Millions Salad Bar & Restaurant B3
- 28 Mehfil B3
- Moti Mahal (see 28)
- 29 Picadilly Blue Ice Bar & Restaurant A3

- Pomodoro (see 23)
- 30 Punjab Grill B3
- 31 Sagar Ratna A3
- Sai Sweets (see 20)
- Swagath (see 15)
- Yangtse (see 21)

🍷 Drinking

- English Garden Bar (see 28)
- 32 Java Dave's B2
- Lava Bar (see 24)
- Oriental Lounge (see 15)
- Vintage Terrace Lounge Bar (see 19)

🎬 Entertainment

- 33 Kiran Cinema B3
- Neelam Cinema (see 29)
- 34 Tagore Theatre B4

🛍 Shopping

- 35 Anokhi C3
- 36 Fabindia B3
- 37 Khadi Ashram B3
- Music World (see 29)
- 38 Music World B4
- Phulkari (see 37)
- 39 Suvasa C3

Information

- 40 Chandigarh Tourism A4
- 41 Haryana Tourism B3
- Himachal Tourism (see 40)
- Shri Gurudev (see 27)
- Uttar Pradesh Tourism (see 40)
- Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal) Tourism (see 40)

Transport

- Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT) (see 40)
- 42 Jet Airways B3
- 43 Prepaid Autorickshaws A3

terials, the garden is a curious maze of inter-linking courtyards, twisting walkways and staircases suddenly emerging into valleys with crashing waterfalls or amphitheatres overrun by figures made of china shards. No material is wasted, from electrical sockets to colourful wire, glass and even broken bangles, in the legions of men, animals, archways and walls, with broken-art faces around almost every corner.

Wear comfortable shoes and arrive early on weekends to beat the crowds.

Sukhna Lake

LAKE

Another aspect of Le Corbusier's master-plan is this landmark **artificial lake** (☀8am-10pm) replete with **paddle boats** (2-seaters per 30min ₹50; ☀8.30am-5.30pm). Ornamental gardens, a children's playground and the **Mermaid Pub & Restaurant** (meals ₹70-150; ☀11am-11pm) complete the fun. Sunday afternoons can get crowded.

GALLERIES

Government Museum & Art Gallery

ART GALLERY

(☎2740261; Sector 10-C; admission ₹10; ☀10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun, free guided tours 11am & 3pm Tue-Sun, films 11am & 3pm Sun) This gallery has a sizeable collection, including *phulkari* (embroidery work) wraps made by Punjabi village women, metal work, Indian miniature paintings, contemporary art and Gandhara

Buddhist sculptures. Your ticket includes admission to the Chandigarh Architecture Museum and Natural History Museum.

FREE National Gallery of Portraits

ART GALLERY

(☎2720261; Sector 17-B; ☀10am-5pm Tue-Sun, free guided tour 11am-3pm) Located behind the State Library, it displays photos and paintings illustrating the country's independence movements.

MUSEUMS

Chandigarh Architecture Museum MUSEUM (City Museum; ☎2743626; Sector 10-C; admission ₹10; ☀9.45am-5pm Tue-Sun) This museum uses photos, letters, models, newspaper reports and architectural drawings to provide revealing insights into the city's planning and development.

Natural History Museum

MUSEUM

(☎2740261; Sector 10-C; admission ₹10; ☀10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) Next door is the National History Museum, less interesting for its fossilised dinosaur skulls than its Cro Magnon man using an electric torch to illuminate his cave art!

FREE Le Corbusier Centre

MUSEUM

(☎2777077; www.lecorbusiercentrechd.org; Sector 19-B; ☀10am-1pm & 2.15-5pm Tue-Sun) This

JUNK ART GENIUS

Following Independence, as refugees flooded across the Pakistan border and a newly liberated India made the bold statement that was Chandigarh, one of the new city's road inspectors, a diminutive arrival from Pakistan called Nek Chand, was struck by the amount of waste generated as villages were cleared in the construction of Chandigarh. Chand hauled this matter back to his jungle home and gave it a second life as sculptural material.

Eventually he had tens of thousands of forms made of urban and industrial waste, as well as local stone, created by his own hands and the slow forces of nature. His battalions of water women, pipers, chai drinkers, monkeys, cheeky stick men wearing tea-cup hats, dancing women and other characters steadily multiplied in secretly sculpted spaces.

Chand's efforts weren't officially discovered until 15 years after they began, when a government survey crew stumbled upon them in 1973. The unauthorised garden was illegally occupying government land and should technically have been demolished, but fortunately the local council recognised the garden as a cultural asset. Chand was given 50 labourers and paid a salary so he could devote himself to the project.

Today, the garden is said to receive over 2000 visitors a day. There's a **Nek Chand Foundation** (www.nekchand.com), raising funds and recruiting volunteers.

Chand had no formal education beyond high school. 'In my childhood I used to build mud houses and other toys.' He is said to be influenced by modernist masters such as Le Corbusier and Gaudi, but he is clear on the main source of his ideas: 'they are a gift from God.'

will especially appeal to those interested in urban planning. Through old documents, sketches and photos, this place chronicles the work of Chandigarh's chief architect. There's a black-and-white photo of a suit-and-bow-tie-attired Le Corbusier on a paddle boat, as well as some fascinating letters, including one from Jawaharlal Nehru to the Chief Minister of Punjab dated 4 November 1960, part of which states, 'I do hope that you will not overrule Corbusier. His opinion is of value.'

PARKS & GARDENS

In line with Le Corbusier's vision of a garden city, Chandigarh is dotted with verdant parks. These include the **Rose Garden** (Sector 16), which has over 1500 rose varieties, and **Bougainvillea Garden** (Sector 3). Less central are the **Terraced Garden** (Sector 33) and the **Garden of Fragrance** (Sector 36), the latter with sweet-scented varieties such as jasmine and damask rose.

Tours

A double-decker **tourist bus** (☎2703839, 4644484; ticket ₹50; ☀10am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm) runs two daily half-day trips from outside the Hotel Shivalikview (buy ticket from conductor) to the Rose Garden, Government Museum & Art Gallery, Nek Chand Fantasy Rock Garden and Sukhna Lake.

Sleeping

Chandigarh fails to excite on the accommodation front, especially when it comes to value for money. To stay with a family, contact the Chandigarh Tourism office (p209) for details about its Bed & Breakfast scheme (rooms from ₹1000).

Aura Vaseela

HOTEL \$\$

(☎01762-287575; www.auravaseela.com; Nadiala Village; s/d from ₹2899/3199, cottages from ₹3599/3899; 🍷@🍷) Run by a dynamic duo, Gags and Jeeva, this stress-banishing 'ethnic countryside resort' may be tricky to find (pick-ups possible with advance notice) given its secluded location (around 4.5km from the centre), but the effort is well rewarded. Tastefully appointed accommodation is in traditional-style (modern) cottages or rooms in the classy main complex, and tariffs include bed, tea and breakfast. Amenities and activities include a paintball field, gym, craft gallery, museum, restaurant and bar.

Hotel Satyadeep

HOTEL \$

(☎2703103; hddeepsdeep@yahoo.com; Sector 22-B; s ₹700-900, d ₹800-1000; 🍷@) Upstairs from the affiliated Sai Sweets shop, this is the most traveller-friendly budget option in town. Run by the courteous Vikramjit, the rooms aren't fancy but are well maintained and adequately comfortable – it's a sound choice for solo women.

Hotel Divyadeep

HOTEL \$

(☎2705191; Sector 22-B; s ₹700-900, d ₹800-1000; 🍷) This is Satyadeep's sister hotel, and another reliable choice that is convenient to the bus station and Sector 17 (CBD). The cheaper rooms have smaller dimensions but are just as well kept as the more expensive rooms.

Hotel Sunbeam

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2708100; www.hotelsunbeam.com; Sector 22-B; s/d from ₹2295/2695; 🍷@) Sunbeam's rooms and service adequately shine, despite being a little dowdily decorated. They're reasonably furnished and have satellite TV, including the news channels BBC and CNN. The 24-hour coffee shop, the Pillars, has a restaurant atmosphere, while the restaurant-bar, the Ambassador (mains ₹175 to ₹495), is dimly lit for surreptitious quaffing of cocktails.

Piccadilly Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2707571; www.thepiccadilly.com; Sector 22-B; s/d from ₹3850/4850; 🍷@🍷) This ageing but appealing three-star property offers complimentary breakfast, contemporary rooms with LCD TV, minibar, sofa, writing desk, tea-and-coffee-making facilities, safe, and satiny bed-covers. It's worth asking for a discount and, with two restaurants, you don't have to travel far for a decent meal. Graze on Italian faves at Pomodoro (p206) or a curry at Currys.

Kaptain's Retreat

HOTEL \$\$

(☎5005599; www.kaptainsretreat.com; Sector 35-B; s/d ₹2190/2490, ste ₹3190; 🍷) Owned by cricketing icon Kapil Dev, this 10-room hotel is filled with cricket paraphernalia, including signed cricket bats and coloured-glass objets d'art. For unenthusiastic pace bowlers, there's a relaxing bar-restaurant downstairs. The rooms aren't superluxe but are comfy, cosy with heavy wooden furnishings and shuttered windows.

AB's

HOTEL \$\$

(☎6577888; Sector 26; r from ₹2800; 🍷) Above its namesake restaurant (p207), rooms are clean and modern, although the cheaper ones are a bit space-frugal. Rooms also boast flatscreen

TV and tea-and-coffee-making facilities, and guests are just a dash away from the stylish subterranean Oriental Lounge (p208).

Hotel Kwalita Regency

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎/fax 2720204; Sector 22-A; s/d ₹1795/1995, deluxe ₹2395/2695; 🍷) The 14 agreeable rooms have individual character, although the cheapest are small and sun starved (consider upgrading if you need a window). Nevertheless, the marble-adorned deluxe rooms are good value (for Chandigarh), with TV, scatter rugs, writing desk and electronic safe. There's a cosy bar and multicuisine restaurant behind the lobby.

Hotel Mountview

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎4671111; www.citcochandigarh.com/mountview; Sector 10-B; s/d incl breakfast from ₹7000/8000; 🍷@☎) This hotel has well-presented rooms with flatscreen TV, tea-and-coffee-making facilities, minibars, safes and easy-on-the-eye interiors. There's a health club, good restaurants (including 24-hour cafe) and the slick Vintage Terrace Lounge Bar (p208).

Hotel Shivalikview

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎4672222; www.citcochandigarh.com/shivalikview; Sector 17-E; s/d incl breakfast & dinner ₹4250/5050; 🍷@) CITCO's midrange hotel has functional and comfortable, if somewhat humdrum rooms, each with TV, writing desk and cool tiled floors. As well as the good-value 'meal deal', there's a business centre, beauty salon and the popular Chinese restaurant, Yangtse (p207).

Taj Chandigarh

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎6613000; www.tajhotels.com; Sector 17-A; r from ₹9000; 🍷@☎) Although not as uber-luxurious as we've come to expect of the Taj, this place is still suitably svelte and 25% weekend discounts add to the appeal. Plush, big-windowed rooms boast ergonomic furniture, minibars, flatscreen TV, electronic safes and round-the-clock concierge services. There are several restaurants, the Lava Bar (p208), spa (dare to try the 'warrior massage') and a 24-hour business centre.

Hotel City Heart Premium

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2724203; cityhearthotels.com; Sector 17-C; s/d ₹2395/2795; 🍷@☎) A reasonable and, as the name suggests, central choice. Its modernish rooms don't really meet the expectations of the midrange price tag, but they are adequately spacious and comfortable with flatscreen TV, and there's a helpful travel desk.

Eating

Thanks to the locals' love of food, the hungry traveller is well catered for in Chandigarh, with new eateries ever sprouting. You'll find a particularly impressive knot of restaurants in Sectors 17, 26 and 35. Telephone numbers are given for places where reservations are advisable.

TOP CHOICE Punjab Grill

NORTH INDIAN \$\$\$

(☎4029444; Sector 17-C; mains ₹425-600; ☺11am-3.30pm & 6pm-midnight; 🍷) Step inside this chic black, gold and glass restaurant where smoking tandoors deliver succulent veg and nonveg delights such as spicy *boti kebab* (charcoal-grilled marinated mutton) and tandoori *gobi* (cauliflower). Curries include the meat Punjab grill, where lamb tikka is first roasted then curried with fresh herbs to create a mouth-watering dish. Finish off with deliciously cool *kheer* (creamy rice pudding).

Khyber

INDIAN \$\$\$

(☎2607728; Sector 35-B; mains ₹90-285; 🍷) Drop downstairs, past a scowling Clint Eastwood, to the nonsmoking Wild West Bar in the basement, before diving into flavour-some Northwest Frontier-style cuisine at the restaurant. It does startlingly good *dhal Bukhara* (slow-simmered curried lentils) and Pathan kebab (lava stone-roasted lamb).

Pomodoro

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(☎2707571; Piccadilly Hotel, Sector 22-B; mains ₹245-345; ☺11.30am-3.30pm & 7pm-midnight; 🍷) This cosy basement restaurant serves traditional Italian food in a sleek setting. Authentic minestrone, pastas, thin-crust pizzas, risottos, grilled meats and to-die-for desserts like tiramisu and panacotta make Pomodoro a *numero uno* choice. There's also an impressive wine list.

Sagar Ratna

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Sector 17-E; mains ₹75-150; ☺8am-11pm; 🍷) This all-veg chain restaurant does South Indian specialities with aplomb, from first-rate dosas (thin lentil-flour pancakes) to satiating, good-value thalis. The cool *dahi idli* (spongy rice cake) is a tummy-soothing yoghurt elixir.

Bhoj

NORTH INDIAN \$

(Sector 22-B; standard/choti thali ₹140/110; ☺7.30am-10.30pm; 🍷) A travellers' favourite, this is an unpretentious spot to fuel up on a hearty North Indian veg thali. The thali ingredients change throughout the day and you can augment the chapattis with rice for a nominal ₹10, or light eaters can order the smaller *choti* thali.

Hot Millions Salad Bar & Restaurant

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(☎2723222; 1st fl, Sector 17-D; mains ₹175-380; ☎10am-midnight; ☎) This is the best of its city-wide branches and is popular for its salad buffet (soups, veg/nonveg salads and desserts, ₹284 per person). The higgledy-piggledy à la carte menu has everything from Tex-Mex and Chinese to Indian and Italian. It's advisable to book at this busy upstairs restaurant with attentive staff.

Yangtze

CHINESE \$\$

(☎4672222; Hotel Shivalikview, Sector 17-E; mains ₹150-390; ☎12.30-3pm & 7.30-11.30pm; ☎) Sporting panoramic city views from its lofty heights, this is one of Chandigarh's best Chinese restaurants. Chicken Sichuan, eggplant in garlic sauce, spicy honey chicken, chilli garlic noodles...decisions, decisions! All desserts come with ice cream; try the fried apple Cantonese style or date pancakes.

Piccadilly Blue Ice Bar & Restaurant

MULTICUISINE \$\$\$

(☎2703338; Sector 17-E; mains ₹175-750; ☎11am-11pm; ☎) A contemporary, split-level restaurant with a cool-blue decor and slick service that is suitable for an unhurried predinner drink followed by well-executed multicuisine dishes. Menu items range from Thai fish curry to burgers and chicken stroganoff; barbecued prawns top the menu at ₹750.

Barista Crème

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Sector 17; mains ₹130-250; ☎8am-11pm; ☎) In addition to the usual cakes and superb coffee, this franchise has table service, Continental breakfasts, including croissants and eggs, and a good range of pastas and pizzas for later in the day.

Mehfil

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Sector 17-C; mains ₹140-300; ☎11am-midnight; ☎) Indian, Chinese and Continental food served in comfortable surrounds, with the *murg tawa* (Punjabi-style chicken) and *me-thi murg* (chicken with fenugreek) among the standouts. Spice aficionados may find some dishes too tame.

Ghazal

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(☎2704448; Sector 17-C; meals ₹195-395; ☎8am-11.30pm; ☎) A Chandigarh stalwart, grand Ghazal has an admirable Indian, Continental and Chinese menu. *Ghazal special murg* (cream-based chicken) or *bhuna gohst* (mutton) is nicely washed down with draught beer. Vegetarians are well catered for.

Moti Mahal

INDIAN \$\$

(☎5073333; Sector 17-C; mains ₹145-250; ☎10.30am-11.30pm; ☎) Scrummy North Indian favourites; the butter chicken, *aloo jeera* (spiced potatoes), chicken masala and *palak paneer* (unfermented cheese chunks in spiced pureed spinach) get the thumbs up. Good variety of piping-hot Indian breads.

AB's

INDIAN \$\$

(☎2795666; Sector 26; mains ₹195-525; ☎11am-midnight; ☎) Settle back at suave AB's (specialising in Punjabi, Kashmiri and Mughlai cuisine) and savour the likes of *tabakh maaz* (spicy, marinated mutton ribs), *paneer achari* (slow flame-cooked, spice-and-pickle-marinated unfermented cheese) and *jungli gosht* (spicy tomato-based mutton).

Swagath

INDIAN \$\$

(☎5000444; Sector 26; mains ₹195-575; ☎11am-midnight; ☎) Stellar Indian food with a focus on Mangalorean and Chettinad recipes. Seafood - prawns, squid, crab and a tasty fish *gassi* (coconut-based curry) - is artfully prepared, and the *murg malai tikka* (clay oven-cooked marinated chicken) isn't bad either.

Sai Sweets

SWEETS \$

(Sector 22-B; sweets ₹10-35) Apart from an awesome array of *mithai* (Indian sweets), humble Sai Sweets has *namkin* (savoury nibbles) and more substantial snacks like plump samosas and *channa bhatura* (fried Indian-style bread with spiced chickpeas).

Aroma

MULTICUISINE \$

(Sector 22; mains ₹50-150; ☎) Open 24 hours, this bustling concoction of fast-food joints includes a Café Coffee Day, Nik's Bakery (croissants, burgers, cakes, hot dogs, pizzas), Coccoberry (ice cream), Sundaram's (South Indian) and Yo!China (Chinese). Seating is shared; how they keep track of your order and bill is a mystery.



Drinking

Watering holes range from the seedy to the swish, the better ones flaunting a great selection of domestic and foreign booze. Women are less likely to get hassled if they're with a male companion.

Zinc Lounge

BAR

(Sector 26; ☎11am-4.30pm & 7.30-11pm; ☎) Steely suave Zinc attracts Chandigarh's pretty people. There's a show-off wine list that includes Indian, Australian, Spanish and French labels. Cocktailers can sup mint

juleps, cosmopolitans, margaritas and 'Indian sangria' (ginger-infused).

Vintage Terrace Lounge Bar BAR
(Hotel Mountview, Sector 10-B; ☺11am-11pm; ☎) One of the best in the hotel-bar category, with comfy chairs, a big-screen TV and plenty of choice: wine, beer, cocktails, mocktails, spirits and liqueurs. The peckish can nibble fish fingers (₹400).

Lava Bar BAR
(Taj Chandigarh Hotel, Sector 17-A; ☺11am-11.30pm; ☎) With lava lamps and a retro vibe, this small bar celebrates an 'amoebic ambience in a hot modern way'. Rejoice this fact with expensive bubbles, ie Dom Perignon...or maybe not. Thank heavens there's plenty of (affordable) beer such as Corona. There's a DJ from 7pm on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Oriental Lounge BAR
(Sector 26; ☺11am-midnight; ☎) Below AB's restaurant (p207), this chi-chi lounge-bar is a most civilised spot to slow the pace. There's imported beer and mint tequilas, among other things, while the pan-Asian food menu has an impressive range, from glass noodle soup to crab cakes. Happy hour noon to 6pm.

English Garden Bar BAR
(Sector 17-C; ☺11am-midnight; ☎) A basement bar below Mehfil restaurant, it doesn't exactly bring an English garden to mind, but is OK for a draught beer. A tad gloomy it may be, but snooty it is not.

Opposite the entrance to the Hotel Mountview, **Café Coffee Day** (Sector 10-D; snacks from ₹45; ☎) and **Java Dave's** (Sector 10-D; cakes from ₹55; ☎) continue trying to out-froth and out-bake each other on the cappuccino and cake fronts.

★ Entertainment

Tagore Theatre (☎2724278; Sector 18-B) hosts music, dance and theatrical performances.

Movies (mainly Hindi) are screened at the **Kiran Cinema** (☎2705082; Sector 22-D) and **Neelam Cinema** (☎2703600; Sector 17-D), while a mix of Bollywood and Hollywood is shown at the multiplex **Fun Cinemas** (☎9888997806; Fun Republic shopping centre, Mani Majra).

🛍 Shopping

The central section of Sector 17 is the main shopping and entertainment area.

Anokhi CLOTHING
(www.anokhi.com; Sector 7-C, Inner Market; ☺10.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Beautiful block-printed textiles.

Fabindia CLOTHING
(www.fabindia.com; Sector 9-C; ☺10am-8pm) Gorgeous garments (Indian-meets-Western style) and homewares.

Khadi Ashram CLOTHING
(Sector 17-C; ☺10.30am-2pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Sat) Homespun textiles and herbal beauty products (soaps include water lily, aloe vera and mint).

Music World MUSIC STORE
(Sectors 17-E & 18-D; ☺10am-9.30pm) CDs (from ₹40) and DVDs (from ₹60).

Phulkari HANDICRAFTS
(Sector 17-C; ☺10.30am-2pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Sat) Government of Punjab emporium with everything from handicrafts to jootis (traditional slip-in shoes).

Suvasa CLOTHING
(Inner Market, Sector 8-B; ☺10.30am-7.45pm) Quality block-printed fabrics that include toiletry bags and *salwar kameez* (traditional dresslike tunic and trouser combination for women).

📍 Information

Internet Access

Each of the central sectors has an internet cafe.

Cyber-22 (Sector 22-C; per hr ₹20; ☺9.30am-10pm)

Left Luggage

Bus station (Sector 17; per day ₹25; ☺24hr)

Medical Services

PGI Hospital (☎2746018; Post Graduate Institute, Sector 12-A)

Silver Oaks Hospital (☎5094125; Phase 9, Sector 63, Mohali) Reputable private hospital.

Money

ATMs are plentiful and easy to find.

Thomas Cook (☎6610907; Sector 9-D; ☺9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Changes foreign currency and travellers cheques. International transfers.

Photography

Shri Gurudev (☎2704534; Sector 17-D; ☺9.30am-6pm)

Post

Main post office (☎2702170; Sector 17; ☺9.30am-4pm Mon-Sat)

Tourist Information

Chandigarh Tourism (☎2703839; 1st fl, Sector 17-B bus station; ☎9.30am-6pm)

Haryana Tourism (☎2702957; Sector 17-B; ☎9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Himachal Tourism (☎2708569; 1st fl, Sector 17-B bus station; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Sat of month)

Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal) Tourism (☎2707649; 2nd fl, Sector 17-B bus station; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat, closed 2nd Sat of month)

i Getting There & Away

Air

The first stage of an international airport was scheduled for completion around 2013 at the time of research, although the first international flights may start before this date. The following have daily flights to Delhi (one way ₹3000) and Mumbai (Bombay; ₹7700).

Air India (Indian Airlines) (☎1800227722; www.airindia.in; Sector 34-A)

Jet Airways (☎2741465; www.jetairways.com; Sector 9-D)

Kingfisher Airlines (☎9302795005; www.flyingfisher.com; airport)

Bus

Half a dozen companies operate buses leaving from the Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT) in Sector 17. Buses to Anandpur Sahib and Amritsar leave from the ISBT in Sector 43.

Regular buses run to Patiala (₹45, three hours), Sirhind (₹30, two hours), Anandpur Sahib (₹45, 2½ hours), Amritsar (₹150, seven hours), Dharamsala (ordinary/deluxe ₹200/350, eight hours), Manali (ordinary/deluxe ₹300/400, 11 hours), Haridwar (₹145, six hours), Delhi (₹180, 5½ hours) and Shimla (₹130, four hours).

Train

A **reservation office** (☎2720242; ☎8am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) is on the 1st floor of the bus terminal at Sector 17. Prepaid autorickshaws from there to the train station cost around ₹100.

Three fast trains connect Delhi and Chandigarh daily: the 12005/6 and 12011/12 *Kalka Shatabdi Express* (AC chair/1AC ₹420/800, 3½ hours) and the 12057/8 *Una Jan Shatabdi Express* (2nd class/AC chair ₹107/345, four hours).

Half a dozen trains (including the above) go to Kalka (AC chair/1AC ₹210/430, 35 minutes), from where four daily trains (2nd class/1st class ₹48/228, five hours) rattle up the mountain to Shimla.

i Getting Around

Chandigarh is spread out but, with its cycle paths and parks, was built for cycling. The Chandigarh Tourism office hires out bicycles (₹100 per eight hours); bicycles are also available for hire at Sukhna Lake (p204) for the same cost but with a (refundable) ₹500 deposit.

Cycle-rickshaw rates within town vary from around ₹30 to ₹50, depending on the distance travelled.

Taxis charge around ₹200 to the airport. Two reputable taxi companies are **Indus Cab** (☎4646464) and **Mega Cab** (☎4141414), with both charging around ₹15 per kilometre. For local sightseeing, including Pinjore (Yadavindra) Gardens, the Chandigarh Tourism office can arrange taxis (₹900 per eight hours, 80km limit).

For car (with driver) hire, expect to pay around ₹800/950 for non-AC/AC per eight hours with an 80km limit (after 80km non-AC/AC ₹5/6 per km).

Around Chandigarh

PINJORE (YADAVINDRA) GARDENS

These reconstructed 17th-century Mughal-era walled **gardens** (☎01733-230759; admission ₹20; ☎7am-10pm) are built on seven levels with water features (that sometimes operate) and enjoy panoramic views of the Shivalik Hills.

Founded and designed by Nawab Fiday Khan, who also designed Badshahi Mosque in Lahore (Pakistan), the gardens served as a retreat for the Mughal kings and their harems. Nowadays there's an annual **heritage festival** (see p200) here.

At the gardens is the pleasant Mughal-style **Bajrigar Motel** (☎01733-231877; r 1900-2250, ste 5000; ☎, which has excellent and spotless comfy rooms and free garden entry for its guests. All are welcome at the motel's restaurant, **Golden Oriel** (veg/nonveg thali ₹120/140; ☎7am-11pm).

In the centre of the gardens, near the small **Jal Mahal**, which was under restoration when we visited, is a cluster of small cafes (snacks ₹30 to ₹150).

To get here from Chandigarh, catch a bus (₹20, one hour, frequent).

MORNI HILLS

Haryana's only hill station gazes across the hazy plains to the Shivalik and Kasauli Hills in nearby Himachal Pradesh. Morni's leafy heights are a great escape from the rat race, but weekends can get busy.

Located 10km from Morni village, **Hosh & Josh Hills 'n' Thrills** (☎01733-201150; Tikka

Tal; adult/child ₹50/30; ☺9am-7pm) amusement park promises to keep the kids entertained.

Mountain Quail Tourist Resort (☎01733-250166; r ₹900-1800) is run by Haryana Tourism and boasts neat, wood-panelled rooms with hilltop views and a multicuisine restaurant and bar.

Lake View Camping Complex (☎01733-250166; Tikka Tal; dm ₹150, r ₹1500, camping per person per night ₹600) has a picturesque lakeside location and very good rooms with water-facing balconies. Tents include sleeping bags and use of shared bathrooms. Overlooking the lake is a terrace **restaurant** (mains ₹60-290).

There are daily buses from Chandigarh to Morni (₹45, two hours). Mountain Quail is 2km before the village, from where there is transport to Tikka Tal.

HARYANA

Haryana's name means either 'Abode of God' or 'green home' depending on whether you believe its first syllable refers to Hari, one of Lord Vishnu's aliases, or *hara*, Hindi for green.

The Haryana state government has motel-restaurants along the main roads; **Haryana Tourism** (www.haryanatourism.gov.in) Chandigarh (☎0172-2702957; Sector 17-B; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Fri); Delhi (☎011-23324910; Chandertok Bldg, 36 Janpath; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) can supply further details.

Kurukshetra (Thanesar)

☎01744 / POP 163,000

Kurukshetra, or more correctly, the town of Thanesar in the district of Kurukshetra, will appeal to tourists with an interest in history and religion. According to Hindu teachings, Brahma created the universe here, and Krishna delivered his epic Bhagavad Gita sermon, offered as advice to Arjuna (p1108) before he fought the 18-day Mahabharata battle in which good triumphed over evil. The district takes its name from its founder Kuru, the Aryan king who offered his limbs to Vishnu in order to establish a land of ethics and values.

The **Sri Krishna Museum** (Pehowa Rd; admission ₹15; ☺10am-5pm) has ancient and modern representations of this heroic incarnation of Vishnu.

Next door is the **Kurukshetra Panorama & Science Centre** (Pehowa Rd; admission ₹15, camera ₹20; ☺10am-5.30pm). Upstairs, an air-

brushed sky flares behind vultures picking at severed heads in the diorama relaying the Mahabharata battle. The ground floor has interactive science exhibits.

Just 500m away, India's largest water tank, the ghat-flanked **Bhramasarovar**, was, according to Hindu holy texts, created by Lord Brahma. It attracts throngs during solar eclipses and **Gita Jayanti**, anniversary of the Bhagavad Gita (see p200).

Another 6km away is Jyotisar, where the **banyan tree** is said to be an offshoot of the one under which Krishna delivered the Bhagavad Gita. There's a one-hour Hindi (English on request) **sound-and-light show** (adult/child ₹20/15; ☺sunset Tue-Sun).

Sheikh Chaheli's tomb (Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; ☺9am-5pm Tue-Sun), 2.3km from the Sri Krishna Museum, is where this Sufi saint is buried with his family in sandstone-and-marble mausoleums.

Neelkanthi Krishna Dham Yatri Niwas (☎291615; Pehowa Rd; r ₹900-1950; ☼) offers the best accommodation option, with charmless but otherwise fine rooms; the attached **tourist office** (☎293570; ☺9.30am-5pm Tue-Sat) is of limited help.

There are daily buses to Delhi (₹125, three hours) and Patiala (₹60, 1½ hours).

South & West of Delhi

SURAJKUND

Some 30km south of downtown Delhi, this sleepy village bursts into life during the two-week **Surajkund Crafts Mela** (see p200).

Surajkund is named after the 10th-century **sun pool** built by Raja Surajpal, leader of the sun-worshipping Tomars.

Most visitors are Delhi day-trippers, but if you wish to stay here Haryana Tourism has three hotels, the best being **Hotel Rajhans** (☎0129-2512318; r ₹3500; ☼☼). The midrange options are **Hermitage** (☎0129-25112313; r ₹1500; ☼) and the better **Sunbird Motel** (☎0129-2512312; non AC/AC r ₹1000/1500; ☼).

During the mela there are several daily buses from Delhi (₹50, two hours). A taxi charges around ₹900 (return).

SULTANPUR BIRD SANCTUARY

This 145-hectare **sanctuary** (Indian/foreigner ₹5/40, camera/video ₹25/500; ☺6.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 4.30pm Oct-Mar) plays host to over 250 bird species, including painted storks, Demoiselle cranes, cormorants, spotted sandpipers, mallards and plovers. Its fluc-

tuating population of woodland, shallow-water and deep-water birds includes an estimated 150 resident species and roughly 100 visiting species from Europe, Afghanistan, Siberia and elsewhere. The best time to visit is October to March.

Unfortunately accommodation is limited to the **Rosy Pelican Guest House** (☎0124-2375242; r from ₹3500; ☹), which has passable but overpriced rooms. Note that the tariff includes three meals. The Guest House's restaurant is open to everyone.

Sultanpur is 46km southwest of Delhi and getting there is tougher than spotting a red-crested pochard! There are irregular, bone-shaking buses (₹40, one hour). It's better to hire a taxi (return ₹1400).

PUNJAB

Anandpur Sahib

☎01887 / POP 17,000

The Sikhs' holiest site after the Golden Temple has several historical gurdwaras. An important pilgrimage site for more than 300 years, it was founded by ninth Sikh guru Tegh Bahadur in 1664, before the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb beheaded him for refusing to convert to Islam. His son, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa (Sikh brotherhood) here in 1699, and **Holla Mohalla** (see p200) celebrates its anniversary.

The **Kesgarh Sahib** is the largest gurdwara and has a number of holy weapons on display, some of them in the hands of the guards. The smaller gurdwara **Sis Ganj** marks the spot where Guru Tegh Bahadur's head was cremated after it was brought back from Delhi. Some 500m from town is **Anandgarh Sahib**, where a flight of steps leads to a fort on the roof. From here you can see the five-petal form (inspired by the five warrior-saints in the Khalsa) of the **Khalsa Heritage Complex**. This impressive museum complex, with informative exhibits showcasing Sikhism's vibrant history and culture, has been under construction for over a decade but was nearing completion when we visited. For further details click www.khalsaheritagecomplex.org.

Kishan Haveli (☎01887-232650; Academy Rd; r ₹600-1000; ☹) is set in spacious grounds and has an uncommercial, ramshackle charm. This mellow countryside retreat, around 1.5km from town, has comfortable rooms and a simple restaurant (meals ₹80).

Gurdwaras also provide accommodation and meals (donations appreciated), though they are often full.

The bus and train stations are 300m apart on the main road outside town. Buses leave frequently for Chandigarh (₹45, two hours) and every hour to Amritsar (₹100, five hours).

The overnight 14553/4 *Delhi–Una Himachal Express* train connects Delhi with Anandpur Sahib (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹165/430/590, eight hours, daily). It departs Delhi at 10.15pm and on the return leg it departs Anandpur Sahib at 10pm.

Sirhind

☎01763 / POP 73,800

If you happen to be passing through this small town, sites of interest include the **Aam Khas Bagh**, a Mughal-era walled garden, and the **Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib**, which commemorates the 1704 martyrdom of the two youngest sons of the 10th Sikh guru, Gobind Singh. Entombed alive by the Mughals for refusing to convert to Islam, they are honoured at the three-day **Shaheedi Jor Mela** held here every December. There's also **Rauza Sharif**, the marble mausoleum of Muslim saint Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi, which draws pilgrims during the **Urs** festival (August).

If you have to stay overnight, the **Sahil Motel** (☎01763-228392; r from ₹1250; ☹) is your best bet.

Buses connect Sirhind with Patiala (₹20, one hour) and Chandigarh (₹30, two hours).

Patiala

☎0175 / POP 364,000

Once the capital of an independent Sikh state that was established by Baba Ala Singh as the Mughals weakened, Patiala is today a modest town that sees just a trickle of travellers. It's well known for its kite flying during the **Basant** festival and, of course, the Patiala peg (see the boxed text, p212).

The crumbling **Qila Mubarak fort** looks like it could have been transported from the desert to its position in the bazaar. There's an **arms gallery** (admission ₹10; ☉10.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) in its 1859 Durbar Hall which displays antique weapons.

Moti Bagh Palace (Sheesh Mahal; admission ₹10; ☉10.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a gallery containing ivory figurines, stuffed animals,

musical instruments and more. Nearby, the Old Moti Bagh Palace houses a **sports museum** (admission free, ID required; ☎10.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri) with exhibits that include memorabilia relating to Punjabi sprinting hero Milkha Singh, 'the Flying Sikh'.

It is said that those who pray at the **Dukh Niwaran Gurdwara** (☎dawn-dusk), located near the bus stand, are relieved of suffering.

The **Baradari Palace** (Rajinder Kothi; ☎2304433; www.neemranahotels.com; Baradari Garden area; r ₹3500-5500; ☎) is a grand heritage-hotel, Punjab's most graceful place to stay and a perfect stopover for anyone belting out the Delhi-Amritsar road trip. Dripping with old-world charm, this restored property boasts high ceilings, period furnishings and wide, relaxing terraces that overlook lovely gardens. Note that most rooms are in the upper bracket of the quoted range.

Patiala's other hotel options are grungy, and solo women may feel uncomfortable. The best of the bunch are the midrange **Hotel Narain Continental** (☎2212846; www.hotelnarain.com; Mall; r from ₹1575; ☎), locally known as Hotel NC, and cheaper **Green's Hotel** (☎2213071; Mall; r ₹600; ☎), both of which have unexciting furniture-scarred rooms and matter-of-fact service.

Daily buses connect Patiala and Sirhind (₹20, one hour).

Northern Punjab

A major textile centre, **Ludhiana** is also the headquarters of Hero Cycles, which manufactures upward of four million bicycles annually. This big city is a convenient base from which to attend the **Kila Raipur Sports Festival** (see p200).

Jalandhar survived sacking by Mahmud of Ghazni nearly 1000 years ago and later

became an important Mughal city. Nowadays it's a commercial hub and the venue for the **Harballabh Sangeet Sammelan** (see p200). It's also a good base from which to visit **Kapurthala**, which was the home of the young Spanish flamenco dancer Anita Delgado, who married (wealthy) Maharaja Jagatjit Singh Bahadurmaharaja (a story that inspired the Javier Moro novel, *Passion India*).

Faridkot was once capital of a Sikh state of the same name and has a 700-year-old **fortress**. The 13th-century poet and Sufi Baba Sheikh Farid lived here, and he is honoured by a festival (see p200). His belief in equality influenced Guru Nanak (see the boxed text, p1110) and some of his poems are in the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib.

Amritsar

☎0183 / POP 1.25 MILLION

Founded in 1577 by the fourth Sikh guru, Ram Das, Amritsar is home to Sikhism's holiest shrine, the spectacular Golden Temple. The gold-plated gurdwara glitters in the middle of its sacred pool of placid water and draws millions of pilgrims from all over the world. A welcome escape from the frenetic bazaars, this gilded temple is rated by many tourists as a glowing highlight of their visit to India. Regrettably, the same can't be said for the hyperactive streets! Indeed, Amritsar's crush of fuming mechanical traffic, especially in the people-packed old city, can be downright frazzling.

The Mughal emperor Akbar granted the original site for the city, but an Afghan, Ahmad Shah Durani, sacked Amritsar in 1761 and destroyed the temple. It was rebuilt in 1764, and in 1802 was roofed with gilded

A PATIALA PEG

In the early 1900s a tent-pegging contest took place in Patiala between the teams of the viceroy and the sports-mad maharaja of Patiala. Tent-pegging is the curious sport of spearing tent pegs out of the ground with a lance from the back of a galloping horse.

Desperate to win and fearful of the wrath of their maharaja, the Patialan team invited their opponents to drinks the night before the match. The British were plied with larger-than-usual measures (or pegs) of whisky, while the tent pegs were changed – smaller ones for the viceroy's team and larger ones for the Patialans. The maharaja's team won but the viceroy's team complained to the maharaja about the size of the pegs. The maharaja (not realising that the complaint referred to the tent pegs) replied that in Patiala, well known for its hospitality, the pegs (of whisky) were always larger than elsewhere. Even today an extra-large measure of whisky is known all over India as a Patiala peg.

copper plates by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and became known as the Golden Temple.

During unrest in Punjab in the early 1980s, separatists seeking to create an independent Sikh homeland occupied the Golden Temple. The army flushed them out in 1984 in a controversial military action that damaged the temple and fuelled violent Sikh-Hindu clashes in Punjab and beyond that left thousands (predominantly Sikhs) dead.

The old city, which includes the Golden Temple and bazaars, is located to the south-east of the train station and is surrounded by a circular road, once the site of the city's massive walls. Modern Amritsar, north of the train station, contains the majority of the upmarket hotels and Lawrence Rd, which is a popular eating and shopping street. The bus station is located 2km east of the train station.

Sights & Activities

Golden Temple

SIKH TEMPLE

(☀️dawn-around 10pm) True to Sikhism's inclusive nature, everyone is welcome at the Sikhs' holiest shrine. As when at any sacred site, dress and behave respectfully. Everyone must remove their shoes and socks, wash their feet (walk through the shallow foot-baths) and cover their head; scarves can be borrowed (no charge) and there are also plenty of people selling them for ₹10 – an inexpensive souvenir of your visit. Tobacco and alcohol are strictly prohibited. Temple officials request tourists not to casually dangle their feet in the (holy) water tank but, rather, to sit cross-legged. Photography is only permitted from the **Parkarna**, the marble walkway surrounding the pool.

Volunteers are constantly washing the floor – watch your step, as surfaces can get slippery.

There's an **information office** (☎️2553954; ☀️7am-8pm) near the main entrance.

Donations should be placed in one of the donation boxes in the temple precincts.

The temple's architecture is a blend of Hindu and Islamic styles but with unique distinctions. The golden dome (said to be gilded with 750kg of gold) represents an inverted lotus flower, a symbol of Sikh devotees' aim to live a pure life.

A causeway (Gurus' Bridge) leads to the two-storey marble temple, **Hari Mandir Sahib** (or Darbar Sahib). This stands in the middle of the sacred pool, **Amrit Sarovar**

(Pool of Nectar), which gave the town its name. The lower parts of the marble walls are decorated with inlaid flower and animal motifs in the pietra dura (marble inlay) style of the Taj Mahal.

Priests inside the temple keep up a continuous chant in Gurmukhi from the Sikh holy book and this is broadcast around the temple complex by loudspeakers. The original copy of the Sikh holy book, the **Guru Granth Sahib**, is kept under a shroud in the Hari Mandir Sahib during the day and returns ceremoniously to the Akal Takhat at night. Ceremony times are 5am and 9.40pm in winter; and 4am and 10.30pm in summer.

Upstairs, in the main entrance clock tower, the **Sikh Museum** (admission free; ☀️7am-7pm summer, 8am-6pm winter) vividly shows the grisly history of those Sikhs martyred by the Mughals, the British and Mrs Indira Gandhi.

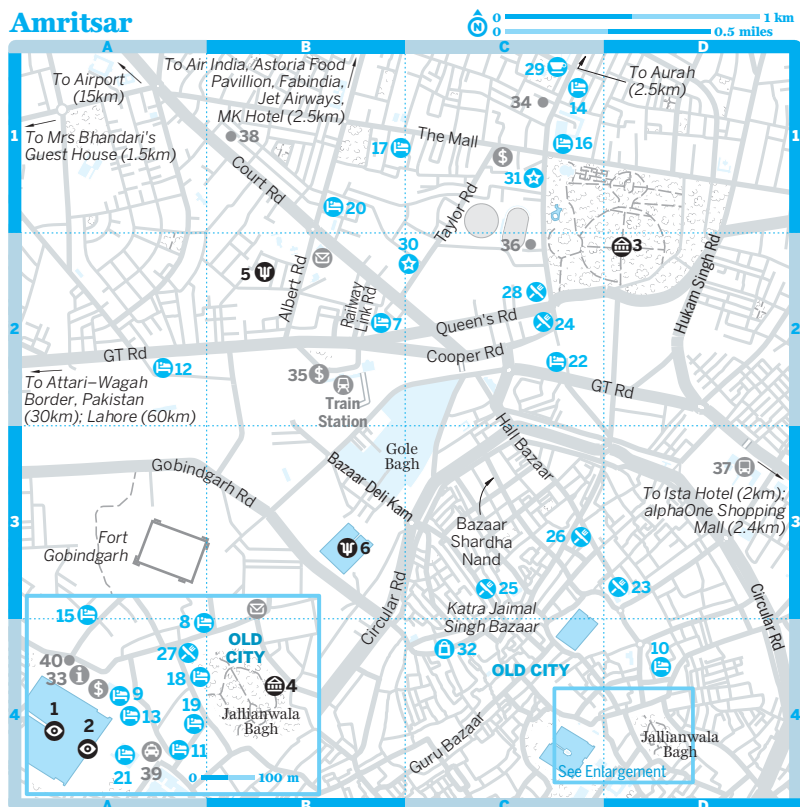
The **Akal Takhat**, where the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), or Sikh Parliament, traditionally meets, was heavily damaged when it was stormed by the Indian army in 1984. The Indian government later repaired it; however, the Sikhs, appalled by the army's actions in the first place, pulled it down and rebuilt it themselves.

Completed in 1784, the octagonal **Baba Atal Tower** commemorates Atal Rai, the son of sixth Sikh guru Har Gobind. After Atal performed a miracle, bringing back to life a playmate who had died of a snake bite, his father scolded him for interfering with the ways of god. The repentant youngster committed suicide on this spot in return for the life he had saved. The nine storeys each represent one year of Atal's short life.

Guru-Ka-Langar is the free (donations appreciated) community dining room, a feature of all Sikh temples as a mark of unity among people of all religions, creeds and nationalities. The massive kitchens (one has a chapati machine) prepare vegetarian meals for an estimated 60,000 to 80,000 pilgrims a day (more during holy festivals). A truly incredible feat! All are welcome to join the masses eating on the floor and we highly recommend the experience (feel free to help volunteers with the washing up).

Try to visit the Golden Temple several times, particularly around dawn and dusk, to fully appreciate the varying light cast upon it at different times of the day.

To learn more about Sikhism, read p1110.



Jallianwala Bagh

HISTORIC SITE

(☀6am-9pm summer, 7am-8pm winter) Near the Golden Temple, this poignant park commemorates those Indians killed or wounded here by the British authorities in 1919 – see the boxed text, p216. Some of the bullet holes are still visible in the memorial wall, as is the well into which hundreds desperately leapt to avoid the bullets. There's an eternal (24-hour) flame of remembrance. The park also contains the **Martyrs' Gallery** (☀6am-9pm summer, 7am-8pm winter) exhibiting first-hand reports and pictures.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh Panorama (Ram Bagh)

MUSEUM

(admission ₹10; ☀9am-9pm Tue-Sun) Within the grounds of the Ram Bagh park is the extraordinary Maharaja Ranjit Singh Panorama, dedicated to the 'Lion of Punjab' (1780–1839). Upstairs is the larger-than-life panorama, replete with booming sound effects (think screaming men and horses in pitch battle),

depicting various battle scenes including the maharaja's 1818 conquest of the fort at Multan. Kids, especially those with a penchant for war, will love it. Exhibits downstairs include colour paintings and dioramas.

Shoes must be removed and cameras aren't permitted inside.

Mata Temple

HINDU TEMPLE

(Model Town, Rani-ka-Bagh; ☀dawn-dusk) This labyrinthine Hindu cave temple commemorates the bespectacled 20th-century female saint Lal Devi. Women wishing to become pregnant come here to pray. The circuitous route to the main shrine passes through ankle-deep waterways, low tunnels, staircases, walkways and caves, the last of which turns out to be the inside of a cave-like divine mouth.

Sri Durgiana Temple

HINDU TEMPLE

(Gobindgarh Rd; ☀dawn-dusk) Dedicated to the goddess Durga, this 16th-century temple, surrounded by a holy water tank, is a Hindu ver-

Amritsar

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- 2 Guru-Ka-Langar A4
- 3 Maharaja Ranjit Singh Panorama D2
- 4 Martyrs' Gallery B4
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- Sikh Museum (see 33)
- 6 Sri Durgiana Temple B3

🛏 Sleeping

- 7 Grand Hotel B2
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- 23 Brothers' Dhaba D3
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- Bottoms Up Pub (see 7)
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sion of the Golden Temple, sometimes known as the Silver Temple for its carved silver doors. Try to visit when there are soothing bhajans (devotional songs); held daily from around 7.30am to 9.30am and 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

👉 Tours

Sanjay from the Grand Hotel runs reputable and good-value tours that include the Attari-Wagah border closing ceremony, Mata Temple and a night visit to the Golden Temple from ₹500 per person. Day tours can also include the Golden Temple, Jallianwala Bagh and Sri Durgiana Temple. Customised tours to Dharamsala, Dalhousie and Manali can also be arranged.

🛏 Sleeping

Most of Amritsar's budget digs are in the old city's boisterous bazaar, not far from the Golden Temple. Bring earplugs!

TOP CHOICE Grand Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2562424; www.hotelgrand.in; Queen's Rd; s/d from ₹1000/1200; 🍷🍷🍷) This three-star hotel, close to the train station, is deservedly popular. The rooms aren't exactly grand but are certainly comfortably appointed and well kept. They, along with a restaurant (mains ₹50 to ₹250), the Bottoms Up Pub (see p218), and a breezy veranda with tables and chairs (perfect at beer o'clock), fringe a leafy garden. The amiable owner, Sanjay, is a reliable source of information and can arrange sightseeing trips (including to the Attari-Wagah border closing ceremony).

Mrs Bhandari's Guest House GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(☎2228509; http://bhandari_guesthouse.tripod.com; 10 Cantonment; camping ₹ 200, s/d from ₹1500/1800; 🍷🍷🍷) Legacy of the much-loved Mrs Bhandari (1906-2007), this earthy, ecoconscious guesthouse is set on

THE JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE

Unrest in Amritsar was sparked by the controversial Rowlatt Act (1919), which gave British authorities 'emergency' powers to imprison without trial Indians suspected of sedition. Hartals (general strikes) were organised in protest, and escalated into rioting and looting. Three British bank managers were murdered in reprisal attacks following the killing of Indian protestors by the British.

Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer was called upon to return order to the city. On 13 April 1919 (Baisakhi Day), over 5000 Indians were holding a peaceful demonstration in Jallianwala Bagh, an open space surrounded by high walls. Dyer arrived with 150 troops and without warning ordered his soldiers to open fire. Some six minutes later, more than 400 people were dead and a further 1500 were wounded.

The exact number of final fatalities is unknown, but estimated to be upwards of 1500, including women and children.

Dyer's action was supported by some of his British colleagues but described as 'a savage and inappropriate folly' by Sir Edwin Montague, the Secretary of State for India. It galvanised Indian nationalism – Gandhi responded with his program of civil disobedience, announcing that 'cooperation in any shape or form with this satanic government is sinful'.

Richard Attenborough's acclaimed film *Gandhi* dramatically re-enacts the massacre and subsequent enquiry.

spacious green grounds northwest of Fort Gobindgarh. The comfy rooms bring back memories of grandma's place and will appeal to those seeking a calm, uncommercial atmosphere. Overlanders with their own tents can camp and park, while train travellers can organise pick-up from the train station. The main house is filled with charming old treasures like the century-old wood stove in the gorgeous kitchen. Set meals and an à la carte menu are available (mains ₹120 to ₹440).

Ista Hotel HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎2708888; www.istahotels.com; GT Rd; s/d from ₹9000/9500; 🍷🍷🍷) Amritsar's only five-star hotel, sits beside a bright shopping mall, alphaOne, 3km east of the interstate bus terminus. Fans of five-star hotels may be a little underwhelmed by the smallish standard rooms, but will adore the pool and the pampering Ista Spa, which has quite a reputation. Room, meal and spa packages are available. Thai and Chinese cuisine is available in Thai Chi Restaurant and teppanyaki is available in Collage, the hotel's multicuisine restaurant (mains ₹160 to ₹400).

Tourist Guesthouse GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎2553830; bubblesgoolry@yahoo.com; 1355 GT Rd; dm/s/d ₹100/150/300; @) This stalwart is a backpacker institution (especially with overlanders). The rooms may be scuffed and bare but have high ceilings and fans, and you're paying peanuts! There is a go-with-

the-flow vibe, helpful staff, secure parking, a small garden and simple restaurant. All rooms are equipped with TVs, hot water and air coolers.

Hotel Grand Legacy HOTEL \$\$
(☎5069991; www.grandlegacy.net; 8 GT Rd, Model Town; s/d incl breakfast ₹3600/4600 🍷🍷) Fifty-two attractive rooms boast leather chairs, writing desk, LCD TV, minibar, tea-and-coffee-making facilities and electronic safe. There's also a gym, round-the-clock coffee shop, travel desk, business centre, the Moti Mahal Deluxe restaurant (p218) and, for a cocktail escapade, Behind Bars, with its zebra-print chairs and icy cold beer. Room discounts are readily offered depending on occupancy.

Hotel City Heart HOTEL \$\$
(☎2545186; www.hotelcityheartamritsar.com; opposite Jallianwala Bagh; r from ₹1400; 🍷🍷🍷) City Heart is a sophisticated choice in the old city with tidy rooms, flatscreen TVs and soft mattresses. Even the bottom-of-the-range rooms are a soothing respite from the frenetic streets. The attached Café Heart restaurant (mains ₹80 to ₹300) has cool desserts, curries and a great outlook onto vibrant Golden Temple Rd.

Hotel Indus HOTEL \$\$
(☎2535900; www.hotelindus.com; Sri Hamandir Sahib Marg; r from ₹1550; 🍷🍷) The dramatic million-dollar view of the Golden Temple

from the rooftop is reason alone to stay at this modern-style hotel. Apart from being smallish, rooms are otherwise fine with two (303 and 304; ₹2116) boasting spectacular temple vistas – book ahead!

MK Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2504610; www.mkhotel.com; Ranjit Ave; s/d incl breakfast ₹3000/4600, ste ₹7000; 🏠@🏠) One of Amritsar's best four-star hotels, elegant MK has all the in-room comforts to make your stay relaxing and pampered. There is a business centre, multicuisine restaurant (mains ₹115 to ₹400), 24-hour coffee shop, health club and bar.

Hotel Ritz Plaza

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2562836; www.ritzhotel.in; 45 The Mall; s/d incl breakfast ₹3500/4700, ste ₹5700; 🏠@🏠) Particularly popular with business travellers and tour groups, the well-furnished rooms (either marble or timber flooring) come with TV, tea-and-coffee-making facilities, sofas and minibars. Standard rooms vary so check a few. On-site is a relaxing bar, round-the-clock cafe and multicuisine restaurant.

MK Sood Guesthouse

HOTEL \$

(☎5093376; r ₹650; 🏠) MK's rooms all have AC, are good sized and well maintained with decent bathrooms and comfy beds. All this, along with the helpful staff, make it a reasonably good choice near the Golden Temple.

Hotel Grace

HOTEL \$

(☎2559355; www.hotelgrace.net; 35 Brahma Buta Market; r with AC ₹800-1450, without AC ₹600; 🏠) Rooms are mostly repainted, refurbished and are fair at this price, all come with TV and straightforward furnishings. Partial Golden Temple views are to be had from the rooftop.

Hotel Le Golden

HOTEL \$\$

(☎5028000; www.hotellegolden.com; r from ₹1350; 🏠) A reasonable choice near the Golden Temple, rooms are tidy (if somewhat squishy) and the rooftop cafe has squinty temple views. Newly refurbished rooms on the 3rd floor will be the pick of the bunch.

Sri Guru Ram Das Niwas

PILGRIMS' REST HOUSE \$

(dm free but donations appreciated, r with/without AC ₹300/100; 🏠) To stay in the huge accommodation blocks for pilgrims and visitors to the Golden Temple, check in at Guru Arjan Dev Niwas. Foreigners are generally accommodated in the dorm at Sri Guru Ram Das Niwas next door. Rooms and dorms are ba-

sic, with shared bathrooms. Please respect the requested three-day stay limit.

Hotel Lawrence

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2400105; www.lawrenceamritsar.com; 6 Lawrence Rd; s/d incl breakfast ₹2700/3500; 🏠) Don't let the facade put you off. This mid-ranger is a welcome retreat from the bustle of Lawrence Rd, with contemporary rooms that have either marble or carpeted floors. It will pay to check rooms for road noise and thin mattresses. Multicuisine restaurant.

Hotel MC International

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2222901; www.hotelmcinternational.com; The Mall; s/d incl breakfast ₹2800/3200; 🏠@) This midranger has unadorned contemporary rooms, somewhat lifted by the incredibly bright bed covers and sparkling bathrooms. There is a 24-hour coffee shop and business centre but the advertised gym, beauty parlour and bar are all still on the planning board.

Mohan International Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎3010100; www.mohaninternationalhotel.com; Albert Rd; s/d incl breakfast ₹3000/4000; 🏠🏠) The ageing Mohan has seen better days, but is an option if you can't get a bed elsewhere. Rooms are a mixed bag (some in better shape than others), all adequately comfortable with flatscreen TV. Ensure the AC works in summer!

Other options near the Golden Temple include:

Hotel Holy City

HOTEL \$

(☎5068111; www.hotelholycity.co.in; Parag Das Chowk; r ₹600-1850; 🏠) Not far from the Golden Temple, featuring mostly modest boxy rooms with scuffed walls. However, several refurbished deluxe rooms are attractively decorated in coordinated colours and have a fresh feel.

Hotel Sita Niwas

HOTEL \$

(☎2543092; www.hotelniwas.com; d from ₹350, without bathroom ₹250) The basic rooms are oversized shoeboxes but with hard-to-beat prices. More money buys bigger rooms.

Lucky Guest House

HOTEL \$

(☎2542175; Mahna Singh Rd; r with/without AC from ₹700/500; 🏠) The basic rooms are a bit poky and it is worth paying ₹100 more for the deluxe versions. More of a fall-back option than a first choice.

Hotel Golden Tower

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2534446; www.hotelgoldentower.com; Phawara Chowk; r from ₹1250; 🏠) Another hotel with location at the top of its list of charms,

this no-frills midrange option has sparsely decorated but reasonable rooms with TV and fridge.

Hotel CJ International HOTEL \$\$
(☎2543478; www.cjhotel.net; r from ₹1550; ☎@)
The rooms are blandly comfortable and the staff can be brusque, but the draw is its proximity to the Golden Temple (pre-book one of the five temple-facing rooms on level three).

Eating

Amritsar is famous for its *dhabas* (snack bars) such as **Punjab Dhaba** (Goal Hatti Chowk), **Kesar Da Dhaba** (Passian Chowk) and **Brothers' Dhaba** (Town Hall Chowk), all with (mainly Indian) thali meals averaging ₹65 to ₹110, and open early to late. Brothers' is the current favourite. Hotels and restaurants in the (holy) Golden Temple locale don't serve alcohol; elsewhere your beer may be disguised in a napkin.

The city is also famous for its 'Amritsari' (deep-fried fish with lemon, chilli, garlic and ginger); sniff out the stalls frying it up (especially prevalent in the old city).

Moti Mahal Deluxe NORTH INDIAN \$\$
(☎5069991; Hotel Grand Legacy, GT Rd, Model Town; mains ₹130-350; ☎9am-11.30pm; ☎) Moti Mahal enjoys a well-deserved reputation for expertly prepared North Indian cuisine (especially tandoori). Consider the tasty *murgh makhani* (butter chicken) and *diwani handi* (mixed vegies in a roulette of fenu-greek and mint). Icy cold Kingfisher beer is available.

Crystal Restaurant MULTICUISINE \$\$
(☎2225555; Cooper Rd; mains ₹140-250; ☎11am-11.30pm; ☎) Rated by many as one of Amritsar's best restaurants, Crystal boasts all sorts of yummy global favourites, from lasagne to fish curry. Book ahead, especially on weekends. There are two 'Crystals' (one upstairs and one downstairs), apparently due to a family split...we're equally divided when it comes to judging which is best. Guess you'll just have to try both!

Astoria Food Pavillion MULTICUISINE \$
(mains ₹140-325; ☎noon-11pm; ☎) It sounds like a food court, but it is in fact a pleasant multicuisine restaurant near the MK Hotel, cooking up a mishmash of dishes, from chicken Patiala and veg biryani to poached fish and spinach cannelloni. Head upstairs to the sister restaurant, Oka (mains ₹120 to

₹300) where pizza, pasta, stir-fry and burgers are cooked fresh right in front of you.

Sagar Ratna SOUTH INDIAN \$
(Queen's Rd; mains ₹50-110; ☎9am-11pm; ☎) An easygoing South Indian veg restaurant with fresh lime sodas that will quench the most savage summer thirst. Excellent southern specialities (*idlis*, *dosas*, *uttapams* etc) with a sprinkling of North Indian and Chinese dishes.

Neelam's MULTICUISINE \$
(mains ₹35-90; ☎9am-10.30pm) Not far from the Golden Temple, this unassuming eatery is a convenient spot to cool your heels over a banana lassi. The have-a-go-at-anything menu includes pizzas, burgers, soups, *dosas*, *aloo paratha* and, for breakfast, honey muesli.

Aurah CAFE \$
(B-Block, Ranjit Ave; mains ₹150-250; ☎11.30am-11.30pm; ☎) Alongside a Subway franchise is this chilled-out cafe, delighting diners with global goodies: glass-noodle salad, lemon-grass chicken skewers, risotto, crispy lotus stems, lettuce wraps with sweet chilli dressing, pasta, Caesar salad and, for the mother of all sugar fixes, the 'chocolate trip'.

Punjabi Rasoi MULTICUISINE \$
(mains ₹45-85; ☎9am-11.30pm) A stone's throw away from the Golden Temple, this unpretentious, fan-cooled, all-veg restaurant rustles up reasonable Indian, Continental and Chinese fare.

alphaOne Foodcourt FAST FOOD \$
(GT Rd; mains ₹45-85; ☎10am-10pm) On the 2nd floor of the alphaOne shopping mall, adjacent to the Ista Hotel and about 3km east of the interstate bus terminus, is this clean and cool food court. Purchase a cash card at the counter to then purchase the food from the various stalls, including North Indian, South Indian, Chinese, ice creams etc. Take the cash card back to the counter to get any change remaining on the card.



Drinking

Bottoms Up Pub BAR
(Grand Hotel, Queen's Rd) A mixed crowd of travellers and locals are attracted to this congenial bar by the icy cold, glycerine-free, draught Kingfisher beer and the seriously delicious snacks and meals from the Grand Hotel's excellent kitchen.

Café Coffee Day

CAFE

(Phawara Chowk; snacks from ₹45; ☼) One of the ubiquitous espresso coffee franchises with savoury and sweet munchies, decent coffee and brain-freezing cold concoctions. Other branches are on Lawrence Rd and inside the alphaOne shopping mall.

★ Entertainment

The **Aaanaam** (☎2210949; Taylor Rd) and **Adarsh** (☎2565249; MMM Rd) cinemas screen Hindi (and occasionally English) movies. Consult newspapers for session details.

🔒 Shopping

Wandering around the skinny alleys of the old city bazaars is a head-spinning assault on the senses. There are shops selling everything from devotional ornaments to jootis; a good place for jootis is around Gandhi Gate (Hall Gate), where they start at ₹200. Katra Jaimal Singh Bazaar is full of *sakwar kameez* and saris, while the city's more modern shops can be found along Lawrence and Mall Rds.

alphaOne (GT Rd; ☎10am-10pm; ☼) Western-style shopping mall with food court (p218) and international brand shops.

Fabindia (☎2503102; www.fabindia.com; 30 Ranjit Ave; ☎10am-8pm) Contemporary-meets-traditional Indian textiles and homewares store.

📍 Information

Internet Access

Cyber Swing (Old city; per hr ₹40; ☎9.30am-10pm) Upstairs from Punjabi Rasoi restaurant.

Medical Services

Fortis Escort Hospital (☎2573901; Majitha Verka Bypass)

Money

Amritsar has an ever-mushrooming supply of ATMs.

HDFC (Golden Temple branch; ☎9.30am-3.30pm Mon-Sat) Exchanges travellers cheques and currencies; has an ATM.

ICICI ATM (Lawrence Rd) Also has an ATM in the old city beside Hotel City Heart.

Photography

The following studios sell memory cards and camera batteries.

SS Colour Lab (☎2401515; 104 Lawrence Rd; ☎10am-9pm Mon-Sat)

Unique Colour Lab (☎2223263; MMM Rd; ☎10am-9.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-8.30pm Sun) Next door to the Indian Academy of Fine Arts.

Post

Main post office (☎2566032; Court Rd; ☎9am-3pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat)

Post office (Phawara Chowk; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Sat)

Tourist Information

Tourist office (☎2402452; Train station exit, Queens Rd; ☎9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Has good free maps covering Punjab and Amritsar.

📍 Getting There & Away

Air

Amritsar's Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport services domestic and international flights. One-way flights to Delhi/Mumbai cost around ₹3200/7800

Air India (☎2508122; www.airindia.in; MK Hotel, Ranjit Ave)

Indian Airlines (☎2213392; www.indianairlines.nic.in; 39A Court Rd)

Jet Airways (☎2508003; www.jetairways.com; Ranjit Ave)

Kingfisher Airlines (☎080-39008888; www.flyingfisher.com; airport)

Bus

The main interstate bus terminus is on GT Rd about 2km north of the Golden Temple. Frequent buses leave for Delhi (non-AC/AC ₹305/665, 10 hours), Chandigarh (non-AC/AC ₹175/150, seven hours), Pathankot (₹65, three hours) and Jammu (₹120, six hours).

To Himachal Pradesh, at least one bus travels daily to Dalhousie (₹165, six hours), Dharamsala (₹165, six hours), Shimla (₹265, 10 hours) and Manali (₹380, 14 hours).

Private buses, with similar fares to the above, depart daily for Delhi from near the train station at 10pm. Other private buses, including to Chandigarh and Jammu, depart from Gandhi Gate.

Train

Apart from the train station, a less busy **train reservation office** (☎8am-8pm, to 2pm Sun) is at the Golden Temple.

The fastest train to Delhi is the twice-daily *Shatabdi Express* (5.10am service chair car/ executive ₹570/1095, 5pm service ₹675/1260, 5¾ hours). A daily Amritsar-Howrah Mail run links Amritsar with Lucknow (sleeper/3AC/2AC ₹310/825/1158, 16½ hours), Varanasi (₹365/998/1373, 22 hours) and Howrah (₹489/1346/1857, 37 hours).

📍 Getting Around

A free bus service runs from the train station and the bus stand to the Golden Temple every 20

minutes from 4.30am to 9.30pm. The buses are bright yellow and almost always full. Otherwise, from the train station to the Golden Temple a cycle-rickshaw costs around ₹30, an autorickshaw ₹50 and a **taxi** (☎01835151515) ₹120. To the airport, an autorickshaw costs ₹200 and a taxi ₹500.

India–Pakistan Border at Attari–Wagah

People come to the border, 30km west of Amritsar, for two reasons: to enjoy the late afternoon border-closing ceremony (see the boxed text, p221) or to use the crossing between India and Pakistan (see the boxed text, p220).

Return taxis (official ones have yellow number plates) from Amritsar to the border cost around ₹800 to ₹950 and take about one hour (price includes waiting time). Shared taxis (return per person ₹85) also run to the border-closing ceremony from the dining-hall entrance to the Golden Temple. They leave about two hours before the ceremony starts and squeeze in eight passengers.

You can travel to the border by autorickshaw but you run the risk of being stopped by the police, as it's illegal for autorickshaws to travel beyond Amritsar's city precincts.

Also, the local train to Attari will leave you 2km from the action with few options other than walking to get to the border.

By far and away the easiest option is to take a trip organised by a hotel. Most hotels can arrange trips to the border; one reliable option is the Grand Hotel (p215), which also takes nonguests with advance notice.

Pathankot

☎0186 / POP 190,000

For travellers, the dusty frontier town of Pathankot is a transport hub for neighbouring Himachal Pradesh and Jammu.

Hotel Venice (☎2225061; www.venicehotelindia.com; Dhangu Rd; r from ₹1780; ☹) has the best accommodation and restaurants. There are also hotels on Railway Rd and for those with ongoing rail tickets, there's the **train station retiring rooms** (d ₹200).

The **bus station** (☎2254435; Gurdaspur Rd) is 500m from the Pathankot Junction train station and 3km from Chakki Bank train station.

Buses go to Amritsar (₹65, 2½ hours), Jammu (₹70, 2½ hours), Chamba (₹80, 3½ hours), Dalhousie (₹65, 2½ hours), Dharamsala (₹65, 2½ hours), Manali (₹300, 10½ hours), Chandigarh (₹150, six hours) and Delhi (₹320, 11 hours).

CROSSING INTO PAKISTAN

Border Hours

The border is open from 10am to 4pm daily, but get there at least half an hour before it closes.

Foreign Exchange

There's a **State Bank of India** (☎10am–5pm Mon–Sat) which exchanges currency, but it's a tiny branch so play it safe and change money in Amritsar.

Onward Transport

From Wagah (Pakistan) there are buses and taxis to Lahore, 30km away.

Sleeping & Eating

If you have to stay overnight, there's the **Aman Umeed Tourist Complex** (☎9780953882; Wagah border; r from ₹1500; ☹), which has just three rooms and a restaurant (mains ₹90 to ₹190).

There are small stalls selling snacks and cold drinks.

Visas

Visas are theoretically available at the Pakistan embassy in Delhi; however, travellers are strongly urged to apply for a visa in their home country, where the process is usually more straightforward (see also p1177).

BORDERLINE ENTERTAINMENT

Every late afternoon, just before sunset, members of the Indian and Pakistani military meet at the border to engage in a 30-minute display of pure theatre. The flag-lowering, closing-of-the-border ceremony is a fusion of orderly colonial-style pomp, comical goose-stepping and, considering the two countries' rocky relationship, stunning demonstration of harmony. So popular is this event, that grandstands have been specially constructed to accommodate the patriotic throngs.

The ceremony starts at around 4.15pm in winter and 5.15pm in summer (but double-check, given that timings vary according to sunset). Cameras are permitted (free) but bags, large and small, are banned (although this is haphazardly enforced).

It's worth getting here early to avoid the stampede when the crowd charges along the chicken run leading to the grandstands. It's about a 10-minute walk from where vehicles drop you to the seating area. Foreigners are allowed to sit at the front stalls (behind the VIP area, which is closest to the border).

Prior to the ceremony, the stony-faced soldiers mill about with the air of self-conscious debutantes and the real action is that of the spectators, some parading the Indian flag. Loud music and a compère pump up the crowd's patriotic fervour. The Pakistanis are equally vociferous, except during Ramadan, when their stands are noticeably quieter.

Then, with a bellow from the guardroom, a squad stomps out, shoulders square, moustaches twirled and eyes bulging. The drill is to parade up and down as dramatically as possible, preceded by a kick so high the soldier looks in danger of concussing himself. The high-octane march to the border, vaguely reminiscent of Monty Python's 'Ministry of Silly Walks' sketch, rouses thunderous applause from the audience and repetitive chants of 'Hindustan zindabad!' (Long live India!).

The gates are flung open and commanding officers of both countries shake hands and salute (blink and you'll miss it). Then, the flags of both countries are simultaneously lowered and folded and the gates slammed shut. The border is now closed for the night.

Several daily express trains leave for Delhi (sleeper/2AC/1AC ₹212/772/1300, 11 hours), Amritsar (chair ₹40, three hours) and Jammu (chair ₹47, three hours). The Kangra Valley narrow-gauge line leaves

from Pathankot Junction train station (see the boxed text, p330).

Taxis to Amritsar/Dharamsala cost around ₹1500/1700.

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