



EXPERIENCE
Bengal

THE SWEETEST PART OF INDIA

Department of Tourism, Govt. of West Bengal

BISHNUPUR

Where every brick tells a story



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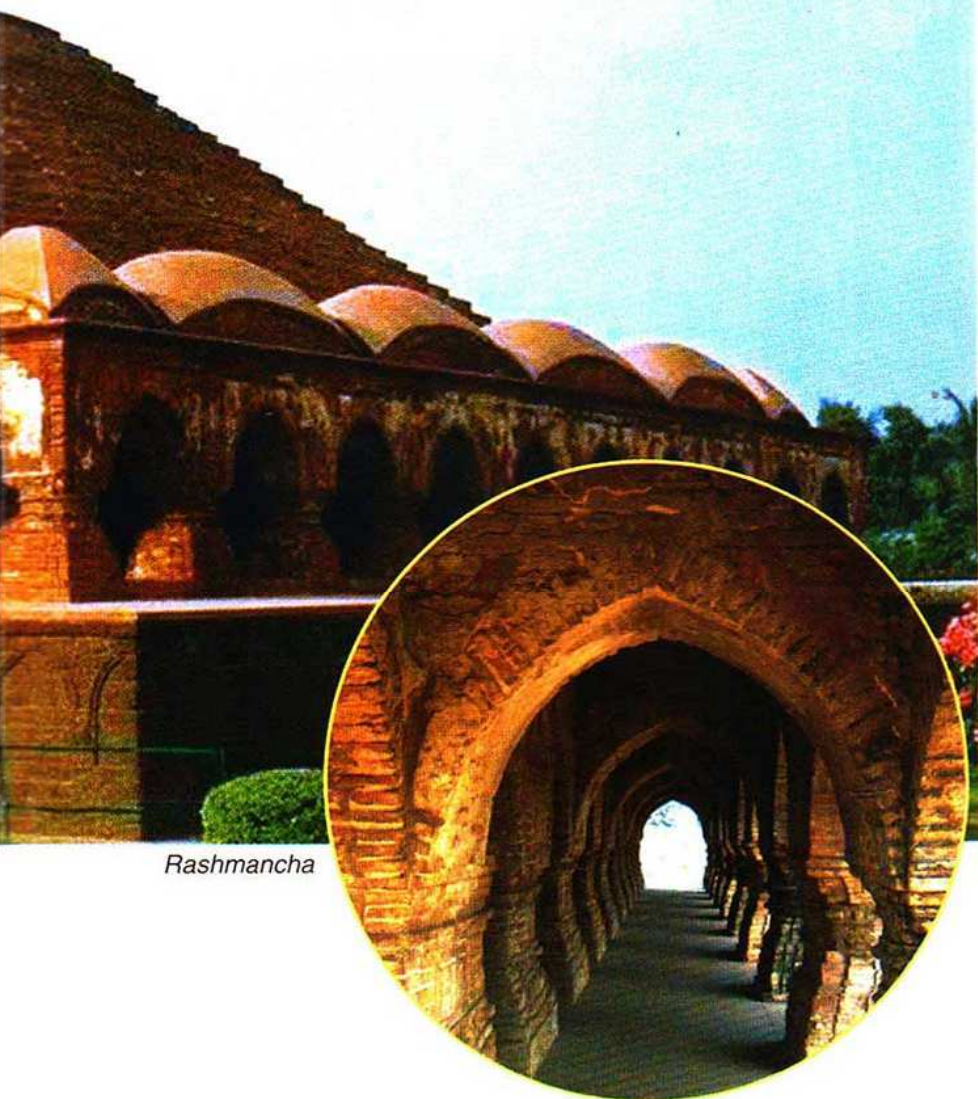


Bishnupur, famous for its unique terracotta temple architecture and Baluchuri silk saris, is an old town in the Bankura District of West Bengal, Located about 152 km from Kolkata. The town has a glorious past that is reflected in its rich architecture, music and handicrafts such as pottery and weaving. It prospered in the 17th and 18th centuries. Ruled by the generations of Hindu Rajas from Malla Dynasty, Bishnupur developed a unique form of architecture and has perhaps the most brilliant and detailed terracotta work in Eastern India that has withstood the ravages of time.

The history of Bishnupur can be traced back to 694 AD, when King Raghunath I founded the Malla dynasty. However, it was much later in 994 AD that the place was named Bishnupur. The name is derived from the name of the Hindu God 'Vishnu'. Majority of the people here belong to the 'Vaishnava' sect.

The most powerful king of the dynasty was King Raghunath Singh Dev II, who ruled from 1626 AD. At that time the administration of Bengal was in the hands of Shahjahan's son Suja. He developed a close friendship with the king and there followed a period of peace when art and music, already flourishing, reached great heights. It was during this period that the Jorebangla Temple was erected.





Rashmancha

Temples and other places of interest

The ancient capital of Mallabhum, Bishnupur, is a repository of some excellent terracotta temples. The oldest brick temple is a curiously shaped Rasmancha with an elongated pyramidal tower surrounded by hut-shaped turrets. It was built in the late 16th century. Terracotta gained further momentum under King Raghunath Singh, who built the Pancha Ratna Temple of Shyam Rai and the Jorebangla Temple of Keshta Rai. The temple of Shyam Rai with its superior figurines and floral patterns was the first of its kind in Bengal.

The temple of Madanmohan, the best known in Bishnupur, in the Sankharipara area was built outside the fort compound by King Durjana Singh Dev, in 1694 AD. Its rich decorations and designs surpass the Shyam Rai and Keshta Rai temples. There are impressive scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas carved on the temple walls.

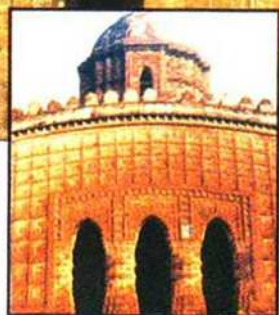


Apart from temples, Bishupur has some very attractive large tanks that offer good sight seeing. The Lalbandh, Krishnabandh and Pikabandh were built by the Malla Kings around 17th and 18th centuries. These were made to provide water to the villagers and to protect the town from enemy attack by draining out the water in their direction.

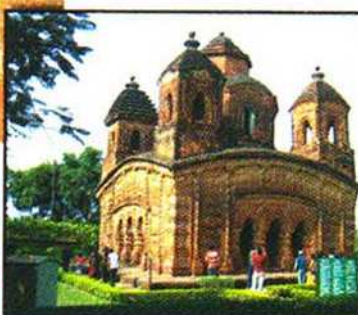
Neighbouring places of tourist interest: Mukutmanipur, Simlapal & Joypur.



Jor Bangla Temple



Radha-Shyam Temple



Madan Mohan Temple

Art & Craft

The art form that has earned world wide fame for Bishnupur is terracotta. Besides the temple, terracotta potteries, artifacts and jewellery are immensely popular.

The legends of Baluchuri Sari traditionally created by the local weavers down the ages make yet another landmark feature of the place. The silk strands are dyed separately and then put into a loom. One sari may have an entire episode from the Mahabharata woven into its border and pallu. Bishnupur is also famous for the metal craft, popularly known as 'Dokra'.

Bishnupuri Baluchori Saree





Bishnupur Mela



Fairs & Festival

The Bishnupur Mela is held every year around the last week of December, near the Madanmohan Temple. This fair stretches over four days and people from all the nearby villages come together to celebrate the end of the agricultural season. A recent addition is the Bishnupur Utsav, held immediately after the Mela. It is a classical music and dance festival in recognition of the 'Bishnupur Gharana' in music.

Getting there

Bishnupur can be reached both by train and by bus. It is only a 3 hour drive (about 150 kms) from Kolkata and regular buses, taxis and trains from Howrah are available.

Accommodation

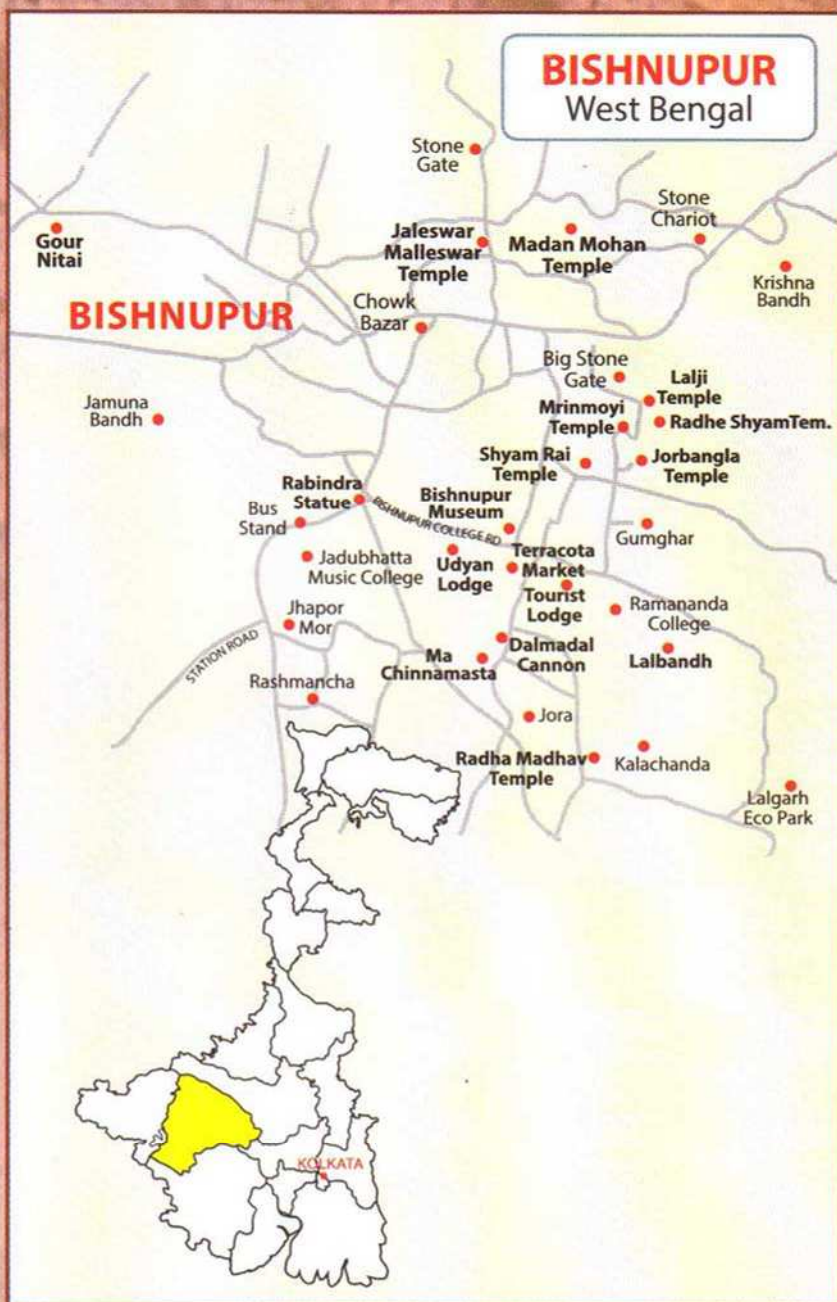
Bishnupur Tourist Centre run by West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation. (03244 252013 / M- 9732100950). There are several private hotels also.



Bishnupur Tourist Centre



BISHNUPUR West Bengal



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