

Kolkata City Guide

What to see across colonial and cultural Kolkata, how to get around, and what to know before you go — built to pair with Indroam's East India itinerary templates.

INDIA'S CULTURAL CAPITAL

Kolkata was the capital of British India until 1911 and still carries that history in its architecture, alongside a reputation as the country's literary and artistic center. It's a city best explored at a walking pace, with colonial-era buildings, addas (long unhurried conversations over tea or coffee), and some of India's best street food. This guide covers how to see it without overplanning a city that rewards wandering.

GETTING AROUND

- Kolkata has India's oldest metro system, useful for crossing the city quickly
- It's also one of the few Indian cities with a tram network still running, mostly in the central and northern areas
- Yellow Ambassador taxis are a city icon, alongside app-based cabs and autorickshaws (autos mostly run in the suburbs)
- The Hooghly River can be crossed by ferry as well as by bridge, including the Howrah Bridge
- Traffic is heavy in central areas during the day; mornings and evenings are best for sightseeing on foot

TOP SIGHTS & EXPERIENCES

- Howrah Bridge and the riverfront, especially around sunrise when the flower market beneath it is in full swing
- Victoria Memorial, a large white marble monument set in gardens, similar in style to its namesake in London
- Indian Museum, one of the oldest and largest museums in Asia
- College Street, a long stretch of secondhand bookshops near Kolkata's university district
- Dakshineswar Kali Temple and Belur Math on the riverbank north of the city center
- Park Street and New Market for colonial-era shopping arcades and Kolkata's café culture

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Dress modestly for temple visits; Belur Math and Dakshineswar both draw large numbers of devotees, especially on weekends
- Street food is central to Kolkata's identity — choose stalls with a visible crowd and freshly cooked items
- Monsoon season (Jun–Sep) brings heavy rain that can affect street-level travel
- Cards and UPI are widely accepted in central areas; carry cash for markets and trams
- Winter (Nov–Feb) is the most comfortable season, with the Durga Puja festival in autumn drawing huge crowds if your dates align

