

Topic Page: [Amritsar \(India\)](#)

Definition: **Amritsar** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

City in Punjab state, NW India. Founded in 1577, Amritsar is the religious centre of Sikhism, and site of its holiest shrine, the Golden Temple. It was the scene of the Amritsar Massacre (1919), when hundreds of Indian nationalists were killed by British troops. Amritsar is noted for its handicrafts. Industries: textiles, silk weaving. Pop. (2005) 1,162,000.

Summary Article: **Amritsar**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Holy city of Sikhism and industrial centre in the Punjab, India; population (2001 est) 1,011,300. The centre of the Sikh faith, it contains the Golden Temple, surrounded by the sacred pool Amrit Saras; and the Guru Nanak Dev University (1969; named after the first Sikh guru), which was established as the main Sikh educational centre. There are also medical, dental, arts, and technical colleges. Industries include textiles, chemicals, flour milling, silk weaving, tanning, food processing, and machinery manufacture.

The Jallianwalah Bagh area of the city was the scene of the Amritsar Massacre in 1919, when the British Gen Dyer ordered troops to fire on a crowd agitating for self-government; 379 were killed and 1,200 wounded. In 1984, armed Sikh demonstrators were evicted from the Golden Temple by the Indian army, in Operation Bluestar, led by Gen Dayal. Over 300 were killed. Later in 1984, Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated in reprisal by Sikh extremists wanting an independent Sikh state in Punjab. The whole of Punjab was put under presidential control in 1987 following riots. Rajiv Gandhi ordered further attacks on the Golden Temple in 1988.

Sikh worship The first temple on the sacred pool of Amrit Saras ('pool of nectar') was a brick construction built by the Sikh guru Ram Das in 1577. The town was named after the pool when the temple was improved. First known as the Harimandir (temple of God), the temple was destroyed in 1761 and rebuilt three years later, when it was roofed with sheets of gilded copper and became known as the Golden Temple. Much of the inside is decorated with gold. Before entering the temple, Sikh pilgrims will wash in the water of the pool.

The temple houses the original of the holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The temple has doors on all four sides, symbolizing equality for all who enter, and is approached down steps to show humility. Many Sikhs visit the Golden Temple to celebrate the gurburbs (festivals held in honour of the gurus). Amritsar is also the site of other shrines and holy pools.

Not all Sikhs would call Amritsar a place of pilgrimage, because they do not believe that merit is to be gained by visiting a place, but only by one's actions. However, the concept of a pilgrimage as an opportunity to reflect on spiritual values is acceptable.

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