

India's eerie ghost towns

by Ami Bhat (Lonely Planet Author) June 2 2016



Mandu enthalls visitors not just with ruins and heritage sites, but stories that can bring them to life
Image courtesy: Flickr/Varun Shiv Kapur/CC BY 2.0

Towns with eerie silence, crumbling walls, desolate streets and abandoned homes – some with inexplicable occurrences and some with mystical histories. Ghost towns may be scary to some, but easily hold a mystery for most.

A ghost town is any town that has been abandoned for any number of reasons – natural calamity, drought or... rumors of a ghost. Across the world, there are several such towns and India, too, has its share. Here, we list eight such places.

MANDU

Perched on a hillock and abandoned for another capital, the ghost town of Mandu enthalls visitors with not just ruins and heritage sites, but stories that can bring them to life. One such story involving Rani Roopmati and Sultan Baz Bahadur makes Mandu one of the most romantic ghost towns of India. Visit Mandu for a fantastic sunset over scattered ruins.

Getting here: Mandu can be reached by road from Indore (100km).

(Also read: Haunted places in Mussoorie)

(Also read: 10 haunted places you didn't know existed)

(Also read: 10 Haunted Places in India)

DHANUSHKODI

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A victim of nature's fury, Dhanushkodi (meaning the 'end of the bow') is a small ghost town close to Rameswaram. The town is so called owing to the legend that states that Lord Ram used his bow to break the stone bridge to Lanka after his return.

This bustling town, just 18km from Sri Lanka, was reportedly destroyed by a violent cyclone in 1964. What remains today are skeletal structures of various buildings, a bright and clear blue confluence of the Indian ocean and Bay of Bengal and a historic temple. Apparently, the temple was one of the few buildings that survived the cyclone.

Getting here: Rameswaram is the nearest town. Once in Rameswaram, you need to take the authorized jeeps or tempo travellers to Dhanushkodi.

BHANGARH

Image courtesy: Flickr/Shahnawaz Sid/CC BY 2.0

This is one ghost town that is growing in popularity and doesn't warrant a lengthy introduction. Nonetheless, with an alleged history of black magic and sightings of supernatural forces, Bhangarh is reported to be one of the 'most haunted places in India'. Reports of 'unnatural' sightings of lights at night and sounds of dance and music garnished with chilling tales of the people who chose to brave the night do the rounds here.

The Archaeological Survey of India has reportedly forbidden entry to this place after 6pm. Bhangarh is said to be cursed by a tantric crushed to death by a stone, following his infatuation with a princess. A 17th century fort, one that was apparently cursed, is the center of all these tales and can be explored during the day.

Getting here: Bhangarh can be reached by road from Jaipur (85km).

KULDHARA

Image courtesy: Ami Bhat

Following an alleged threat by a minister the entire village was said to have been emptied overnight. As per reports, rather than bow down to any threats, the Paliwal Brahmins collectively chose to leave their homes in the name of honour.

Some reports mention a minister who had his eye on a girl from this village, who eventually gave the village an ultimatum to hand her over or face the consequences. And so, the residents of Kuldhara packed their belongings and vanished overnight, never to be seen again but not before allegedly leaving behind a curse that makes this place inhabitable. What is left today are the crumbling remains of homes that once inhabited the now abandoned village.

Getting here: Jaisalmer is the closest town (18km) to Kuldhara.

HAMPI

Image courtesy: Ami Bhat

An erstwhile capital of the Vijaynagar Kingdom, Hampi was one of the most populated and rich cities of its time. The city fell to Muslim invaders and was lost until it was rediscovered in 1800s. Now a famous UNESCO site, Hampi beckons visitors with its glorious temples, unusual architecture and plentiful stories. With its musical pillars, chariot temple and underground passages, Hampi is a ghost town that you would love to explore.

Getting here: Hampi is around 340km from Bangalore, by road. The nearest railway station to this ghost town is Hospet (12km)

FATEHPUR SIKRI

Talao at Fatehpur Sikri, India

Image courtesy: @Palak Dutta/500px

Fatehpur Sikri, once the magnificent capital of Mughal Emperor Akbar stands desolate today. This capital city was reportedly abandoned by people owing to a shortage of drinking water.

The abandoned town still attracts visitors to experience the Mughal grandeur of its palaces and courtrooms of kings. Head here for a day trip to relive the glory of the famed Mughal era.

Getting here: 39km from Agra, Fatehpur Sikri makes for an easy day trip.

ROSS ISLAND

Image courtesy: Flickr/Ankur P/CC BY-SA 2.0

Once used by the British, Ross Island is now devoid of human inhabitants. The island was reportedly emptied in 1940s because of an earthquake. It hasn't been occupied since. The only residents that it has now has are stray deer, peacocks and other animals.

You can visit this island during the day and check out the abandoned British quarters, an old church, a few other buildings and the gorgeous blue sea that lines it.

Getting there: Ross Island can only be reached through a short boat ride from Port Blair, Andamans.

LAKHPAT

Image courtesy: Flickr/Chandra/CC BY-SA 2.0

A town along the border in the Rann of Kutch, Lakhpat was once a thriving port along the Indus River. An earthquake caused the river to change direction and as the fortunes of this town fell, it became obscure. The town is known to have monuments from three different religions – Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism – all of which reportedly narrate the tale of this popular town buried under the sands of time.

Getting here: Lakhpat can be reached only from Bhuj (125km) by road.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Ami Bhat is senior marketing professional, currently on a break to pursue full-time travel blogging. A travel enthusiast, who loves sports, photography and dancing with equal passion, Ami believes in planning a short escape for every long weekend that can come up through the year. And when she cannot travel physically, she travels virtually through words on her travel blog. More on: <http://www.thrillingtravel.in/>



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Great list, Dhanushkodi and Mandu seems worth exploring. On my bucket list!
- <http://www.zdesignagency.com/blog/> *Alexa Williams Meisler*
Never thought of ghost towns in India. How interesting! That is fun way to explore! Searching out ghost towns! Love it.
- <http://www.amatu-arte.com> *Stephanie Langlet*
Hampi and Andamans are on my wishlist for long. And honesty I never thought of Hampi or Fatehpur Sikri as ghost towns. It gives a new perspective!
- *Vijay Rao*
Nice compilation of abandoned cities which are not inhabited now and have over the years acquired an eerie aura, Ross Town is something I have not heard of, would like to check that out.
▪ *Lonely Planet India*
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