

INSIDE THE DOME (THE SMALL DARBAR)

CEILING

The mirror work was done by a Muslim master craftsman, Mohammad Jabbar, who hand cut 130,000 mirror pieces to create a complicated, symmetrical pattern. It took him seven months.



Here too, trained volunteers recite from Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The verses of the sacred scripture are organised according to musical styles known as **raags**. When these sacred verses are sung to music it is called **Kirtan**. **Ragis** are the musicians who perform Kirtan.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

A **Harmonium** has 12 notes and works like an accordion. Air is pumped in and keys are pressed to create the sound. **Chimtay** is a set of two cymbals. **Tabla** is a set of two drums. Tabla is the main instrument for keeping rhythmic beat patterns in traditional Sikh music. It establishes rhythm for Kirtan. There are 17 different complex patterns called **taals**.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

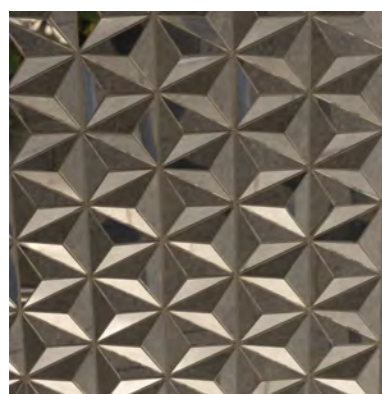


CORRIDOR

Some visitors might notice an 8 pointed star within a circle. This is not a Sikh religious symbol. Interestingly, however, it is often used across faiths and cultures to symbolise the unity of God.



The **Khanda in the steel bowl** represents how **amrit** (holy water) is prepared. Special puffs or sugar are dissolved with the motion of the Khanda (the double-edged sword) while prayers are recited. The amrit is used to initiate Sikhs into the Khalsa order.




PORCH

The beautiful ceiling was made by the Muslim craftsman who decorated the dome from hand-cut mirror glass.

NISHAN SAHIB (flag) is always flown outside every gurudwara. It is a sign of welcome and hospitality and features the **khanda** emblem. There are two of these just outside the small dome Darbar.



We hope that you will take time to reflect on what you have experienced in this Sikh place of worship. 

A VISIT TO THE GURUDWARA SERVED BY GURU NANAK NISHKAM SEWAK JATHA

18-20 SOHO ROAD, HANDSWORTH, BIRMINGHAM B21 9BH

YOUR NAME:

Welcome to the Gurudwara!



The **Gurudwara** (also often spelt **Gurdwara**) is a Sikh place of worship. It is open to visitors of any faith, culture, gender or background. **'Sikh'** means life-long learner or disciple. At the Gurudwara, Sikhs learn about life's purpose. They learn how to put important values into practice, like praying, serving God's creation and singing God's praises.

The guiding motto for the Sikh way of life is: **Pray, Work and Share.**

AT THE FRONT ENTRANCE

THE DOORS



Find this emblem:



'Guru' means teacher or enlightener. **'Dwar'** means gateway. **'Gurudwara'** means gateway to the Guru's home. Inside the Gurudwara you will find the sacred scripture, which Sikhs regard and treat as 'Guru'.

This Sikh emblem, pronounced Ik Oankar, is in the Gurmukhi script. It tells us that **God is One - the source and support of all creation.** **'Ik'** in Punjabi means 'one'.

THE KHANDA



Did you notice this **Khanda** emblem on an outside wall by the front steps? It has three parts reminding Sikhs that:

- God has no beginning or end and embraces all creation (the circle)
- we must try hard to be kind (the double-edged sword in the middle)
- our actions must be guided by greatness of character and balanced by selfless service (the two outer swords called kirpans).

IN THE LOBBY

You may hear Guru Granth Sahib Ji (the sacred scripture) being recited. Look out for Sikhs exchanging greetings with folded hands. One short greeting - 'Sat Siri Akal' - reminds Sikhs that God is Truth and that God's spark is in each person you greet. Did you also notice people touching the outside steps as they enter, or dusting shoes on the shelves? This shows respect and honour to those who have come to pay respects to the Guru.



A FEW HOUSE RULES

Inside the Gurudwara is the **Darbar** (the prayer hall). It is a very sacred place, so before entering:

- we cover our heads - to show respect to the Guru
- we remove our shoes - to get rid of negativity
- we wash our hands - to receive Guru's blessings



These actions help us to show respect and keep the Darbar clean. Before we enter the Darbar, we prepare ourselves to receive the Guru's teachings and blessings so that the positive values inside us can grow.

(Another important rule is not to bring into the Gurudwara any alcohol, tobacco, meat or cigarettes)

In the Darbar, we walk up the centre aisle to pay our respects to Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

- Sikhs will kneel and let their forehead touch the floor; other visitors may pay respects in their own way (e.g. with a slight bow).
- Usually women will sit on one side of the aisle and men on the other.
- We sit on the floor cross-legged, so that our feet don't point towards Guru Granth Sahib Ji.
- All sit quietly, listen, reflect, or pray with folded hands.

IN THE VISITORS' ROOM



The Sikh faith is based on the teachings of the 10 Sikh Gurus. They founded the Sikh faith between 1469 and 1708 in the Punjab region (divided today between India and Pakistan).



The photograph shows the world famous Gurudwara, Sri Harmandir Sahib, also known as the 'Golden Temple', in Amritsar, Punjab. Which features in the photograph are similar to the Gurudwara you are visiting today?

The Panj Kakaars (the Five Ks) are worn by initiated Sikhs as a reminder of the high standards of thinking and behaviour they have promised to uphold.

KES: Uncut hair is one way Sikhs show they accept what God has given them. Men (and sometimes women) tie the Kes in a top-knot under a **turban**.



KANGA: A wooden comb to groom the hair twice daily - a reminder to clear and untangle the mind of negative thoughts.



KARA: A steel wristlet - a reminder that one's every action should be guided by noble values.



KIRPAN: A small sword to inspire courage, responsibility, service to others, based on the values of kindness ('kirpa') and dignity ('aan'). It is secured in a sash called a **gatra**.



KACHHARA: Special undershorts with a drawstring to help Sikhs to be modest and disciplined.



IN THE DARBAR (PRAYER HALL)

Darbar means Court. Here you will see the sacred scripture on a throne (**Takhat**) under a canopy, wrapped in beautiful fabrics, like royal robes.



What else do you notice to suggest the scripture is being treated with special reverence?

In the Darbar, you will hear the scripture being recited as part of a 48 hour continuous reading.

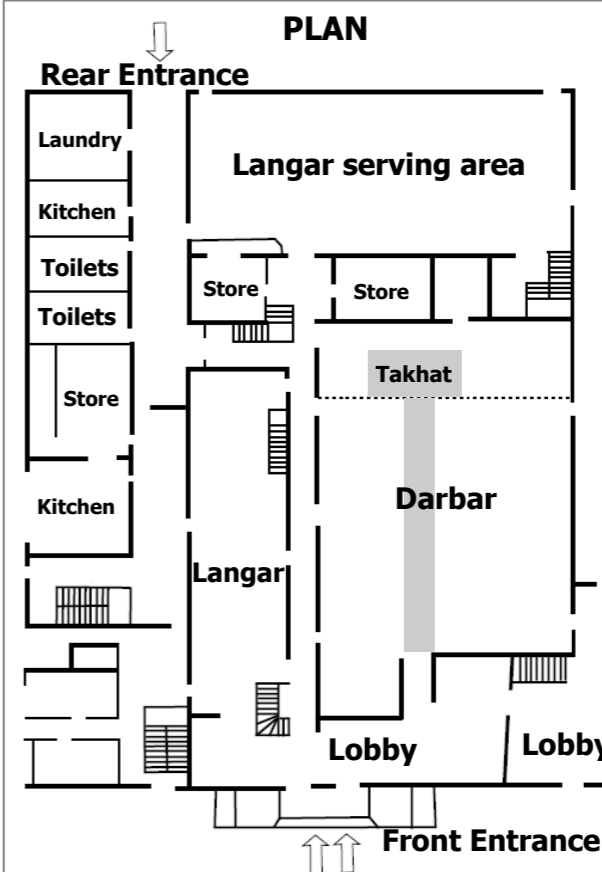


PRASHAD

As they come to pay respects to Guru Granth Sahib Ji, visitors offer donations (such as money, food or flowers).



Once sitting on the floor, everyone is offered the sweet **prashad** to mark the Guru's grace and hospitality to all. It is made of butter, flour, sugar and water and is received with cupped hands.



IK OANKAR

Did you notice again this **Ik Oankar** emblem, set inside the rays of a sun?



This emblem appears throughout the scripture, which is written in the Gurmukhi script. Do you remember what it stands for?

LANGAR (Communal meal served to all)



Langar is a vegetarian meal, provided free of charge for all visitors. It is one way Sikhs practise serving others, being generous and seeing God in all.

The cooking, serving and cleaning are done by volunteers doing **sewa** (selfless service). As they work, they sing and chant prayers. Sikhs believe that this makes the food nourish the mind, body and soul.



Everyone sits at the same level to show that everyone is equal. The word **langar** is also used for the area in which the langar is prepared and served.