

Exploring Patna - Past, Present and Fascinating Trivia

Hey Aspirants! We're back with another blog on the blog series '**Know Your City**'. The city you're going to learn about is '**Patna**'. So, without a further delay, let's start exploring the city.

Patna City, known as the "**Cradle of Empires**", boasts a rich history dating back over two millennia. As the capital of Bihar, it serves as a significant centre for education, culture, and politics. The city is home to Nalanda University, one of the earliest residential universities in the world, which attracted scholars like Chanakya and Aryabhata.

Sitting on the banks of the sacred Ganges River, Patna offers pilgrims a gateway to numerous religious sites, including the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment. This vibrant city, with its historical resonance and modern aspirations, promises an enriching experience for all who explore its diverse tapestry.

Before looking at the different aspects, one must know the city symbols of the particular city. The city symbols of Patna are:

Patna	
State	Bihar
Official Language	Hindi
City Bird	Sparrow
City Animal	Bullock
City Tree	Peepal
City Flower	Marigold
MLA	Jagannath Naik
MP	Ravi Shankar Prasad Ram Kripal Yadav
Mayor	Sita Sahu
Municipal Commissioner	Animesh Kumar Parashar

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[Source: Bihar Tourism]

So now, let's move on to the first aspect of the blog i.e. **History of Patna.**

History of Patna

Patna, historically known as Pataliputra, traces its origins back to 490 BCE when King Ajatashatru established the city on the banks of the Ganges River. It was strategically positioned to challenge its rivals, including the Licchavis of Vaishali. Even during its early days, the city was prophesied for greatness by Gautama Buddha himself, though he foresaw challenges such as floods, fires, and conflicts.

Early History:

Mauryan Magnificence: Pataliputra flourished as the capital of the Magadha Empire, witnessing the reign of multiple dynasties, including the Haryanka, Nanda, Mauryan, Shunga, Gupta, and Pala. It was a hub of learning and culture, with renowned scholars like Aryabhata, Vātsyāyana, and Chanakya. During the Mauryan era, its population reached an impressive 400,000 around 300 BCE, establishing Patna's prominence in the Indian subcontinent.

Mediaeval Turbulence (12th - 16th Century):

(i) **Bakhtiar Khilji's Onslaught:** In the 12th century, Bakhtiar Khilji's invasion brought a period of decline, causing significant destruction. The city lost its position as a political and cultural epicentre.

(ii) **Sher Shah's Resurgence:** The 16th century saw a revival under Afghan emperor Sher Shah Suri. He constructed a fort and revitalised Patna, laying the foundation for its later prosperity.

(iii) **Mughal Grandeur:** The Mughal era marked a notable phase. Akbar, the Mughal emperor, recognized the significance of Patna as a centre for paper, stone, and glass industries, further enhancing its status as a bustling trading hub.

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European Involvement (16th - 17th Century):

Portuguese Trade: European involvement grew, with the Portuguese establishing factories and trade routes in Patna. The city thrived as a trading centre for products like saltpetre, attracting merchants from various parts of the world.

British Dominance and Beyond (17th - 20th Century):

(i) East India Company's Presence: In the 17th century, the English East India Company established a trading post in Patna. It grew into a significant trading hub, eventually becoming a part of the British East India Company's territory.

(ii) Indian Independence Movement: The people of Patna played an active role in India's struggle for independence, with notable figures like Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Jayaprakash Narayan emerging from the city.

Modern Era:

Even post-independence, Patna remained the capital of Bihar, witnessing its own share of historical events, including the partition of Bihar and Jharkhand.

As of 2023, Patna's population has grown to an estimated 2.58 million, maintaining its position as the 19th largest city in India. The city's historical significance, cultural diversity, and enduring spirit continue to define its unique character, making it a captivating metropolis with a compelling narrative to share.



[Source: Travel Triangle]

Timeline for the major events that occurred in the History of Patna:

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- **490 BCE:** Patna, then known as Pataliputra, was founded by King Ajatashatru.
- **3rd Century BCE:** Pataliputra became the capital of the Mauryan Empire, hosting renowned scholars like Chanakya.
- **12th Century CE:** Bakhtiar Khilji's invasion brings a period of decline.
- **16th Century:** Afghan emperor Sher Shah Suri revives Patna, laying the foundation for its resurgence.
- **Mughal Era:** Patna gains significance as a centre for trade and industries.
- **17th Century:** European involvement, with the establishment of trading posts by the Portuguese and later the English East India Company.
- **1793:** Patna comes under British East India Company control.
- **Indian Independence Movement:** Patna plays an active role in India's fight for freedom.



[Source: The Indian Express]

This timeline showcases Patna's rich and diverse history in a simple way. Let's move on to the next aspect of this blog i.e **Geographical Aspects.**

Geographical Aspects of Patna

Patna, located on the southern bank of the Ganges River, covers a total area of 250 square kilometers (97 square miles). Patna's geographical richness, fertile plains, and abundant vegetation, alongside its growing population and unique position as a riverine city, define its place on India's map.

- **River:** The city's topography is characterized by its unique confluence of major rivers, including the Ganges, Sone, Gandak, and Punpun, making it the largest riverine city globally.
- **Area:** The city covers a total area of 250 square kilometers, with the municipal area spanning 109.218 square kilometers and the suburban area extending over 140.782 square kilometers.
- **Elevation:** The city stands at an average elevation of 53 meters (174 feet) above sea level.

Physiographic Aspects:

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During the British Raj, Patna was part of the Bengal Presidency. The city underwent significant geographical changes in 1976 when hilly regions were separated to form Nalanda district.

- **Land:** The region is exceptionally fertile and primarily cultivated, with rice, sugarcane, and other food grains dominating the landscape.
- **Climate:** Patna experiences a humid subtropical climate with distinctive seasons. The highest recorded temperature in the city was a scorching 46.6°C in 1966, while the lowest temperature was 1.1°C in January 2013.
- **Rainfall:** The monsoon season extends from late June to late September, bringing annual rainfall that reached 204.5 mm in 1997.
- **Air Quality Index:** The city faces significant challenges regarding air quality. The respirable suspended particulate matter (PM-10) levels in Patna have been recorded at 355, three-and-a-half times higher than the recommended limit, mainly due to high vehicular and industrial emissions and construction activities. In 2014, Patna ranked as the second most air-polluted city in India, with airborne particulate matter (PM-2.5) levels six times higher than safe limits, resulting in health issues and disruptions to daily life.



[Source: Britannica]

Demographic Snapshots:

Demographic Aspects showcase Patna's growing population, while also grappling with environmental and urbanization challenges.

- **Population:** As of the 2011 census, Patna city had a population of 1,684,222 within the corporation limits. It ranks as the 19th most populous city in India.
- **Sex Ratio:** The city has a sex ratio of 885 females per 1,000 males with a child sex ratio of 877 girls per 1,000 boys.
- **Literacy Rate:** Patna boasts a literacy rate of 83.37%, with the male literacy rate at 87.35% and female literacy rate at 79.89%.
- **Unemployment Rate:** Patna faces urbanization challenges, including unemployment, with the highest rate among females at 34.6% and the second-highest rate among males at 8% in 2011-12, according to the National Sample Survey Organisation.

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Soil and Vegetation:

- The region's alluvial soil is ideal for agriculture, fostering the growth of crops and vegetation, with mango orchards, bamboo groves, and other plants dotting the landscape.
- The city's proximity to major rivers provides fertile land for cultivation.
- Trees like bel, siris, jackfruit, and the red cotton tree are commonly found, along with dry shrubbery in distant villages.

Patna boasts a rich tapestry of historical landmarks, each a testament to its glorious past. The iconic Golghar, an imposing granary built in 1786, stands at 29.3 meters tall and offers panoramic views of the city. Just nearby, the Patna Museum houses a treasure trove of artifacts, over 50,000 of them.

The Har Mandir Sahib, or Patna Sahib, is a revered Sikh pilgrimage site where Guru Gobind Singh was born. Additionally, the Nalanda University Archaeological Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, bears witness to ancient wisdom, while the Mahavir Mandir draws devotees from near and far, welcoming millions annually. These landmarks epitomize Patna's cultural and historical significance.



[Source: Bihar Tourism]

Now let's move on to the **political aspects of Patna**.

Political Aspects of Patna

As the capital of Bihar, Patna holds political prominence, hosting federal facilities such as the Bihar Legislative Assembly, state secretariat, and Patna High Court. The Patna district elects two representatives to the Lok Sabha and 14 to the state legislative assembly. The city itself has eight State Legislative Assembly constituencies, which form two constituencies in the Lok Sabha.



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- **Administrative Structure:** Patna, as the capital of Bihar, is the political epicenter of the state. The city is part of the Patna division and the Patna district, which falls under the jurisdiction of the District Magistrate. The Bihar Urban Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (BUIDCO) and the Patna Metropolitan Area Authority are responsible for the planning and development of the Patna Metropolitan Region.
- **Municipal Corporation:** The Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC) governs the civic infrastructure of the city's 75 wards. It is democratically elected, with each ward electing a Councillor. The PMC is responsible for water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, and more.
- **District Representation:** The Patna district elects two representatives to India's lower house, the Lok Sabha, and 14 representatives to the state legislative assembly. The city has 8 State Legislative Assembly constituencies.
- **Smart City Initiative:** Patna has been selected as a Smart City, which will bring modern facilities like uninterrupted electricity, efficient traffic and transportation systems, and advanced healthcare to enhance the quality of life.
- **Historic Importance:** As the seat of the Government of Bihar, Patna houses key federal facilities, including the Bihar Legislative Assembly and the Patna High Court, one of the oldest in India.

With its multifaceted administrative and political roles, Patna plays a crucial role in the governance of Bihar, both at the state and central levels, making it a hub of political activities and decision-making. Its politics and administration reflect its dynamic role as both the capital city of Bihar and a key player in India's contemporary urban development initiatives.



[Source: The Hindu]

Now let's discuss the **culture of Patna**.

Culture of Patna

Patna boasts a rich cultural tapestry, deeply rooted in its language and heritage.

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- **Language:** The native language is Magahi, tracing its origins back to the ancient kingdom of Magadha and believed to be spoken by Gautama Buddha.
- **Literature:** The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library and Sinha Library contribute to the preservation of this linguistic and literary heritage.
- **People:** The warm and diverse populace of Patna is known for its hospitality and cultural richness.
- **Temples:** The city houses numerous temples, including historic ones, like Patna Sahib, which hold immense religious significance.
- **Religion:** Patna is a city of diverse religious traditions. The historic city is home to Indo-Islamic and Indo-Saracenic architectural marvels.
- **Art and Architecture:** The city is adorned with Indo-Islamic and Indo-Saracenic architectural motifs, and many well-maintained colonial-era buildings are declared heritage structures. Patna Museum showcases Indian natural history and art. The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library and Sinha Library are historic treasures.
- **Traditional Arts:** The Patna School of Painting, an offshoot of the Mughal Miniature school, flourished here. It featured diverse subjects like bazaar scenes, daily life, and nature. Today, the College of Arts and Crafts continues this artistic legacy.
- **Cuisine:** Bihari cuisine delights the taste buds with dishes like sattu paratha, chokha, Bihari kebabs, and thekua.
- **Attire:** While Bihari women traditionally wear cotton sarees, younger generations are embracing shalwar kameez and western attire. Men don traditional dhotis and kurtas, especially during festivals.
- **Festivals:** Chhath, celebrated twice a year, holds great cultural importance. Durga Puja, Eid, Holi, Christmas, and many more festivals add vibrancy to Patna's cultural calendar. The city hosts events like the Patna Book Fair, Patna Film Festival, and Bihar Diwas.

The culture of Patna reflects the confluence of various influences, making it a unique and diverse cultural hub.



[Source: View Patna]

Now let's talk about the next aspect i.e. **Environment in Patna.**

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Environment in Patna

Patna's environment is a dynamic blend of urban development and natural biodiversity. With an area of approximately 250 square kilometers, the city is a bustling metropolis. Despite urbanization, it retains pockets of greenery. The green cover includes parks, gardens, and the flora of the riverbanks.

- **Urban Biodiversity:** It is increasingly vital for sustainability, but Patna grapples with issues like air pollution, inadequate green cover, and wildlife depletion. Patna hosts a variety of bird species and smaller animals. The city's water bodies, especially the Ganges, offer a habitat for aquatic life, including several fish species.
- **Green Cover:** As of 2021, the green cover in Patna remained under 10%. This low green cover contributes to urban heat islands and poor air quality. The city needs more parks, urban forests, and green spaces to improve the quality of life for its residents.
- **Flora and Fauna:** The native flora and fauna in Patna have dwindled over the years due to urban expansion. Wetlands like the Didarganj Yakshi and Kamal Mangrove Park serve as essential wildlife habitats, albeit under threat.
- **Air Pollution:** Patna faces severe air pollution issues, primarily due to vehicular emissions and construction activities. The city often records high levels of particulate matter, leading to respiratory ailments among residents.
- **Environmental Initiatives:** Various initiatives are in progress to combat environmental challenges. Plans to increase the green cover are part of Patna's Smart City project. Restoring wetlands and expanding green spaces are also on the agenda to restore the city's environmental balance.

Patna grapples with urban environmental challenges but is actively working to enhance its green cover and protect its unique biodiversity for a healthier, sustainable future.

Let's talk about the **economy of the city Patna**.

Economy of Patna

Patna boasts a rich economic heritage, serving as a significant agricultural and trade center. The city's exports primarily include grain, sugarcane, sesame, and the renowned Patna rice. The local economy has evolved with time, now encompassing various sectors.

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- **Sustained Growth:** Patna's economy has experienced sustained growth since 2005. Key contributors include the fast-moving consumer goods industry, the service sector, and green revolution businesses. In fact, in 2009, the World Bank recognized Patna as India's second-best city for launching a business.
- **Economic Vitality:** As of 2011-12, Patna's GDP per capita is ₹1,08,657, with a healthy GDP growth rate of 7.29 percent. It stands as the 21st fastest-growing city globally and the fifth in India, with an expected annual growth rate of 3.72 percent.
- **Business Districts:** Patna's major business districts include Bander Bagicha, Exhibition Road, Gandhi Maidan Marg, Frazer Road, Indrapuri, and Maurya Lok.
- **Industrial Hub:** Patna has diversified its industrial landscape, with manufacturing companies such as Hero Cycles, Britannia Industries, PepsiCo, Sonalika Tractors, and UltraTech Cement establishing their plants in the metropolitan area. Notably, Patna is emerging as an IT hub, with Tata Consultancy Services opening a facility in 2019.



[Source: patnaonline.in]

Patna's economy showcases resilience and adaptability, making it a notable player in India's economic landscape.

Now let's delve into a few **Interesting Facts about Patna**.

Some Interesting Facts about Patna

Patna, the historic city, holds fascinating facts that may surprise many:

- **Land of Firsts:** It was the first place in the world where paper was produced, thanks to the renowned Magadh University.
- **World's Longest River Bridge:** The world's longest river bridge, the Mahatma Gandhi Setu, stretches over the Ganges is located here.
- **Riverine Majesty:** With four major rivers flowing through it, Patna holds the title of the world's largest riverine city.
- **Green Enclave:** The city's historic Golghar, a massive granary, boasts a unique design. It's shaped like a beehive and has walls that are 3.6 meters thick.



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[Source: Wikiwand]

In conclusion, Patna, often referred to as the "Cradle of Empires," is a city that beautifully blends its rich history with modern aspirations. Established in 490 BCE, it has witnessed the rise and fall of dynasties, the arrival of European traders, and played a pivotal role in India's struggle for independence.

With a population of 2.35 million as of 2018, it's the 19th largest city in India. Patna's economy thrives with a per capita GDP of ₹1,08,657, and it's emerging as an IT hub. This riverine city is known for its diverse culture, historic landmarks, and its commitment to improving its environment. With a unique mix of tradition and progress, Patna is a city worth exploring.

