

Masjid-e-Tooba

“Though Gol Masjid falls a bit out of my way I still prefer coming here for prayers, especially for Juma prayers, because both my sons like it very much,” says Qayyum Sahib, a resident of PECHS, who drives to Masjid-e-Tooba, or Gol Masjid as it is also known, in DHA Phase II for Friday prayers without fail. “The children really look forward to coming here. The appreciation and fascination with the architecture will eventually turn into a habit of going to a mosque for prayers,” he smiles.

Built in 1969, and designed by architect Dr Babar Hamid Chauhan with Zaheer Haider Naqvi as the engineer, Masjid-e-Tooba is a landmark mosque of Karachi. It is known for its unique design. Though it is the 18th largest mosque in the world with a capacity for 5,000 people, it is arguably the world's largest single-dome pillar-less mosque. Its dome is of 212 feet in diameter and balanced on a low surrounding wall. The mosque also has only one 120 feet high minaret.

The mosque is built on a plot of 5,570 square yards. Its cream and pastel blue boundary walls with mehrab or alcoves and little palm trees in the middle give off a cool feeling and the spacious grounds with lawn and fountains beckon Muslims even before the call for prayer.

From one amazing landmark mosque of the city to another, Masjid-i-Safina in Lyari resembles a boat and is built on a traffic island at Dhobi Ghaat near the Lyari River or channel. The boat is seen as a means of livelihood for the people of the city by the sea. Karachi was initially a fishing village and the mosque with its unique shape is reminiscent of this fact.

It is said to have been built in seven years at a cost of Rs47.5 million which was raised through donations by the locals of the area.

The New Memon Mosque on MA Jinnah Road is not as new as its name suggests. One of the oldest and biggest mosques of Karachi it was built even before the coming about of Pakistan. It is also said that the mosque was built over a graveyard which is still there.

Outside the mosque, lining its boundary walls, is a huge market offering prayer mats, caps, tasbeeh, teeth cleaning twigs or miswak, Quran stands and religious books. The huge variety of prayer mats and caps on sale there can cost as low as something around a hundred rupees or less than Rs500 to over a thousand and much more.

As its name suggests, the beautiful Aram Bagh Mosque is situated at, well, Aram Bagh. The place is said to have served as a refugee camp for a time after the Partition of India. And before that it was the hub for political activity. The ground had a sweet water table beneath it and there were wells here alongside a Hindu temple. That temple is abandoned now. But the mosque, built sometime in the 1950s, and the pigeons feeding at the site, paint a very peaceful atmosphere. And all this, right in the middle of Karachi's busiest area, in the midst of so much traffic.

And speaking of temples there is another place in Karachi known for another abandoned temple, where a mosque has established its ambiance. You should see

the magnificent Jamia Masjid Kanzul Iman at Gurumandir with its big green dome minaret at night during the Islamic month of Rabiul Awwal. It is then the most beautifully decorated mosque in the city, which can be seen from afar.

Kanzul Iman literally means 'Treasure of faith', but looking at all the mosques discussed here they are not just landmark mosques, they are treasures of faith. Karachi is proud to have so many magnificent mosques.

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