

FAQs

1. What is a minbar?

A minbar is a short flight of steps used as a platform by a preacher in a mosque.

2. What is a caravanserai?

A caravanserai was a roadside inn where travellers could rest and recover from the day's journey. In the Middle-East, it is often called by its Turko-Mongolian name khan, In Bengal, it is known by the term katra.

3. Explain the features of a mosque

Islam is based on a personal connection with God, and Muhammad himself taught from a simple mud-brick building next to his home in Medina and advised his followers against construction of elaborate architectural monuments.

Parts of a mosque:

- prayer mats along the axis (**qibla**) towards mecca
- central recession in the west wall – **mihrab**
- **minarets**/towers at corners – for prayer calls
- a **lecturn** to place the Koran
- To the right of the mihrab **minbar** - a short flight of steps used as a platform by a preacher in a mosque.
- **Dikka** - tribune raised upon columns from which the Koran is recited and prayers are intoned by the Imam of a mosque.
- **Ablution fountain**
- Complete avoidance of divine, human, and certain animal likenesses can be seen in the architectural decoration.
- More open and well – lit

4. Briefly explain the salient features of an Islamic city

- The Muslims followed Islamic Law and Islamic teachings on social and cultural aspects of community life in managing the cities they had conquered and the new cities they founded (Basra, Kufa, Fustat, Qairawan).
- While city planning and building necessarily responded to local conditions, there are typical architectural features by which the Islamic city is distinguished. The most important of these is the congregational mosques, the commercial and administrative activities and associated buildings grew around this central symbol of the Islamic city.
- The link between religion and commerce can be seen in the plan of many traditional Islamic cities.
- The markets are located around the main Friday mosque, with markets selling more valuable goods (e.g, gold) located closer to the mosque and stalls selling less pure or more polluting goods (e.g., pottery) located further away.
- In many cases, the markets were incorporated into the fabric of the mosque and were used to subsidize the functioning of the mosque.
- The elevations on the Islamic city streets are distinguished by their plainness and simplicity, very few openings and the low height commensurate with the width of the streets.
- In contrast to the simplicity of architectural expression of the exterior facades, the interior of the houses was rich in architectural details and ornamentation, varying according to the tastes and means of the occupants.
- Thus, while simplicity and likeness on the outside confirmed the solidarity and egalitarianism of the community, the variety and wealth of the interiors allowed for individual freedom.