BANDEL CHURCH
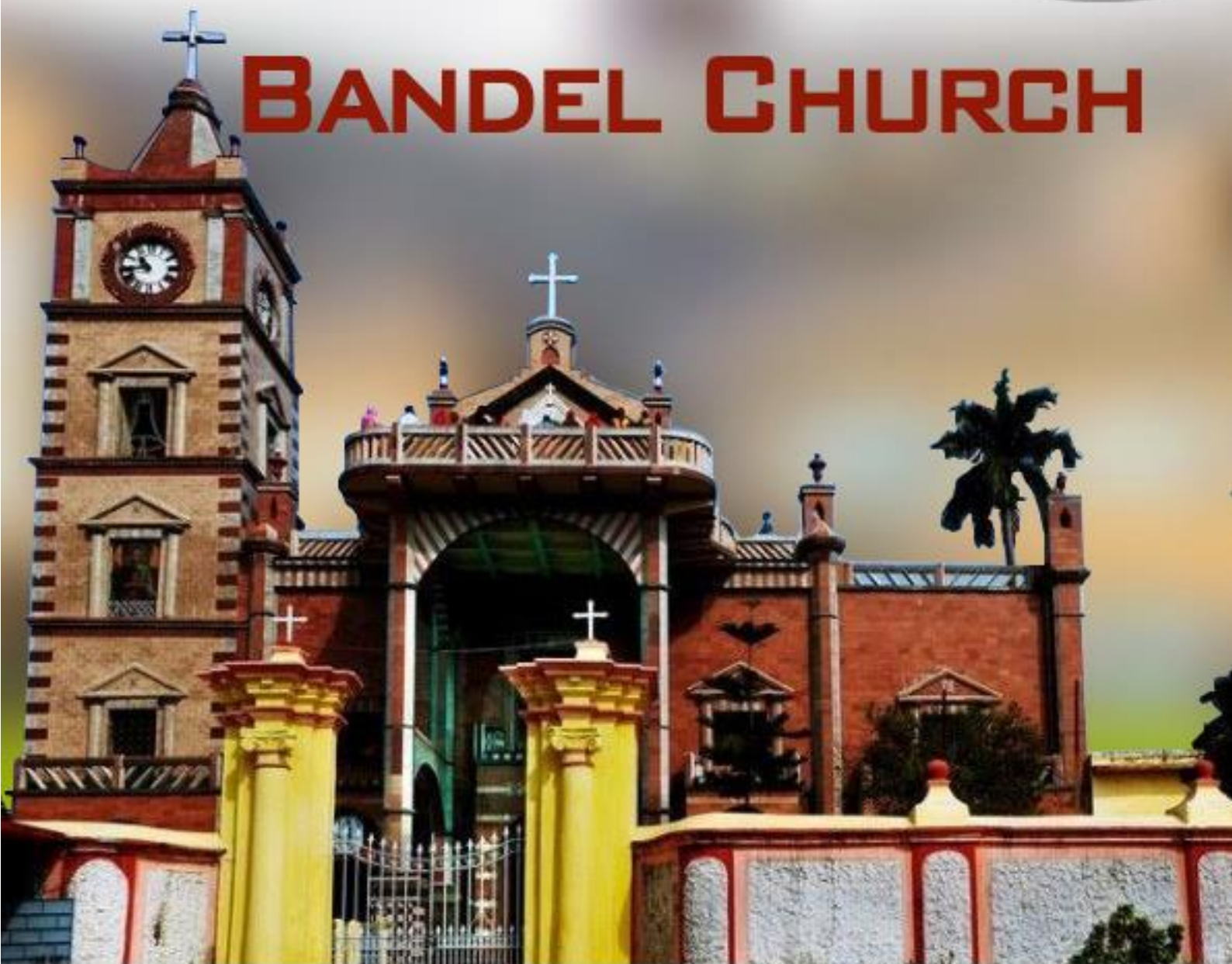
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SIMPLY EASY LEARNING

Bandel Church, Bandel

Bandel Church, also known as Basilica of the Holy Rosary Church, is one of the oldest churches in India. The church was built to commemorate the settlement of Portuguese in West Bengal. The church was constructed in 1599 and was dedicated to Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. The church also acts as a territorial administration for all churches in the territory.

This tutorial will let you know about the history of Bandel Church along with the structures present inside. You will also get the information about the best time to visit the church along with how to reach there.

Audience

This tutorial is designed for the people who would like to know about the history of Bandel Church along with the interiors and design of the monument. The monument is visited by many people from India and abroad.

Prerequisites

This is a brief tutorial designed only for informational purpose. There are no prerequisites as such. All that you should have is a keen interest to explore new places and experience their charm.

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Table of Contents

Bandel Church is one of the oldest churches in India and is also known as **Basilica of the Holy Rosary**. The church was built in 1599 to commemorate the settlement of Portuguese in West Bengal. The church is dedicated to **Mary**, mother of **Jesus Christ**. She is also known as **Our Lady of the Rosary** and that's why the church got the name.

Bandel

Bandel town was established by **Portuguese** and it is situated in the Indian state of **West Bengal**. The name Bandel means **port**. The town comes under **Hooghly** district. Portuguese built a church and a monastery in 1660. There is a Dunlop factory nearby Bandel which is situated at a place called **Sahaganj**. The town is 40 km away from **Howrah** railway station and is connected to many places through road and rail transport.

Visiting Hours

Bandel Church can be visited from 6:00am to 6:00pm. It takes around two to three hours to visit the church as there are many things to visit in and around the church. The church is opened on all days including the public holidays.

Tickets

There is no entry fee to visit the church and tourists can come any time during the visiting hours and visit the church.

Best time to visit

Bandel is situated nearby Hooghly river and the best time to visit the place is during winter months. In the rest of the period, the climate is either hot or is hot and humid. The period between 25th December and 10th January are very busy and people may face parking issue. On 25th December the church is closed for the tourists as Christians have to perform many rituals.

Where to Stay?

There are very few hotels in and nearby Bandel but there are more than 800 hotels in Kolkata which is around 40km from Bandel. Some of the hotels nearby Bandel are as follows:

- **Five-Star Hotels**

    o Renu Hotel located near Bust Stand in Hooghly

- **Four-Star Hotels**

- o Loknath Hotel located at Rajbari

- o Ashoke Nibas located at Mandir Road Hooghly

- **Hotels within No-Star Category**

  - o Sri Ram Chandra Hotel & Lodge located Near Rail Gate in Hooghly

  - o Sri Ram Chandra Hotel & Lodge located Near Railway Station in Hooghly

  - o Mahua Hindu Hotel located at Bus Stand Hooghly

  - o Pakhi Hindu Hotel located at Bus Stand Hooghly

Some of the hotels in Kolkata are as follows

- **Five–Star Hotels**

  - o The Park located at Park Street

  - o Swissotel located at City Centre 2

  - o Pride Plaza Hotel located at New Town

  - o Novotel Hotel and Residences located at New Town

  - o Hyatt Regency located at Salt Lake City

- **Four–Star Hotels**

  - o Park Prime located at Park Street

  - o Vedic Village Spa Resort located at Rajarhat

  - o The Floatel Hotel located at Strand Road

  - o Celesta located at Airport

  - o Monotel located at Salt Lake City

- **Three-Star Hotels**

  - o Treebo Casa Broadway located at Golpark

  - o Hotel Dee Empresa located at Park Street

  - o The Corporate located at Park Street

  - o Kempton Hotel located at Park Street

  - o Ethnotel located at Jessore Road

- **Budget or Two-Star Hotels**

  - o Hotel Esteem located at Bhawanipur

  - o Hotel Royal Garden located at Park Street

- o The Stay located at Lake View Road

- o Hotel Pan Asia International located at Kalighat

- **Cheap Hotels or One–Star Hotels**

    - o Kings Crown located at Salt Lake City

    - o Hotel Himalay located at M.G. Road

    - o Continental Guest House located in Park Street

    - o Rituraj Hotel located at Bada Bazar

    - o Transit Inn located at Airport

2.   Bandel Church – History

Bandel Church was constructed in Bandel by the Portuguese after their settlement on the banks of Hooghly river. The first man to arrive from Portugal was **Vasco da Gama** in 1498. The Portuguese were of the barbaric nature and did business through might and force.

Arrival of Portuguese in Bengal

In 1535, Portuguese arrived in Bengal and started their trade from **Saptagram** which was situated on the banks of **Saraswati** river. In 1575, Mughal emperor **Akbar** allowed them to settle near Hooghly river. Meanwhile, river Saraswati dried up due to silting so the Portuguese started trading from there new settlement at Hooghly.

Priests of Portuguese

Priests of Portuguese also arrived in India and began to preach Christianity after getting permission from Akbar. This led to increase in the followers of **Christianity** which further led to the construction of a church in Bandel in 1599. The church was named as **Church of the Holy Rosary**. Bandel church was declared as **Basilica** by **Pope II** in 1988.

History of the Church

Portuguese became barbaric by the end of 16th century. They started robbing others and also sold women and children as slaves. When Mughal Emperor **Shah Jahan** came to know about this, he attacked the Hooghly port by sending an army under the command of **Qasim Khan Juvayni Nawab**. There were five priests out of which four were killed.

Tiago tried to carry the statue of Mother Mary but could not succeed and the statue sank in the river. The church was also destroyed in the attack. The fifth priest **Joan da Cruz** was captured and was taken as prisoner along with his followers.

Death sentence was given to them as punishment in which they have to be trampled below the feet of the elephants but one elephant raised the priest and put him on his back which amazed the emperor. So he freed the priest and the prisoners and sent them back to Hooghly. He also gave 311 acres of land to rebuild the church which was built in 1660.

Statue of Mother Mary

Statue of Mother Mary sank in the river. One day Father Joan da Cruz heard the voice of Tiago saying that Mother Mary is coming but he neglected it. Next day he found the statue on the bank of the river. The fishermen brought it back and put it on the bank. They celebrated the return of the statue of Mother Mary.

Meanwhile, a Portuguese ship landed at the Bandel port and the captain said that they have faced a storm. The captain also said that he prayed to God that if they survive they will give the ship mast to the first church that they will see. As they have seen the Bandel church first, so they donated the ship mast to the church.

3. Bandel Church – Architecture

The church size is very small when compared to the other churches of Bengal but still it's visited by many people from India and abroad. There are many things that can be visited in the church.

Ship Mast

There was a ship mast which was installed by a captain after his ship was saved from a storm. The ship mast was damaged when a tree feel down on it in 2010 due to a storm. After the storm, renovation has been done and the mast was kept in a glass enclosure.

Main Church

People of all communities are allowed to visit the church during the visiting hours. They can spend the time inside the church without making any noise. Photography is not allowed in the church. There are many paintings inside the main church which tell about the life history of Jesus Christ. The statue of Mother Mary is also there inside the church.

Courtyard

There is a courtyard in front of a structure that resembles a cave. There is a fountain at centre of the cave. Some people light candles here and pray while some drop coins inside the fountain and ask for a wish to be fulfilled. There are stairs in the courtyard that lead to the main church.
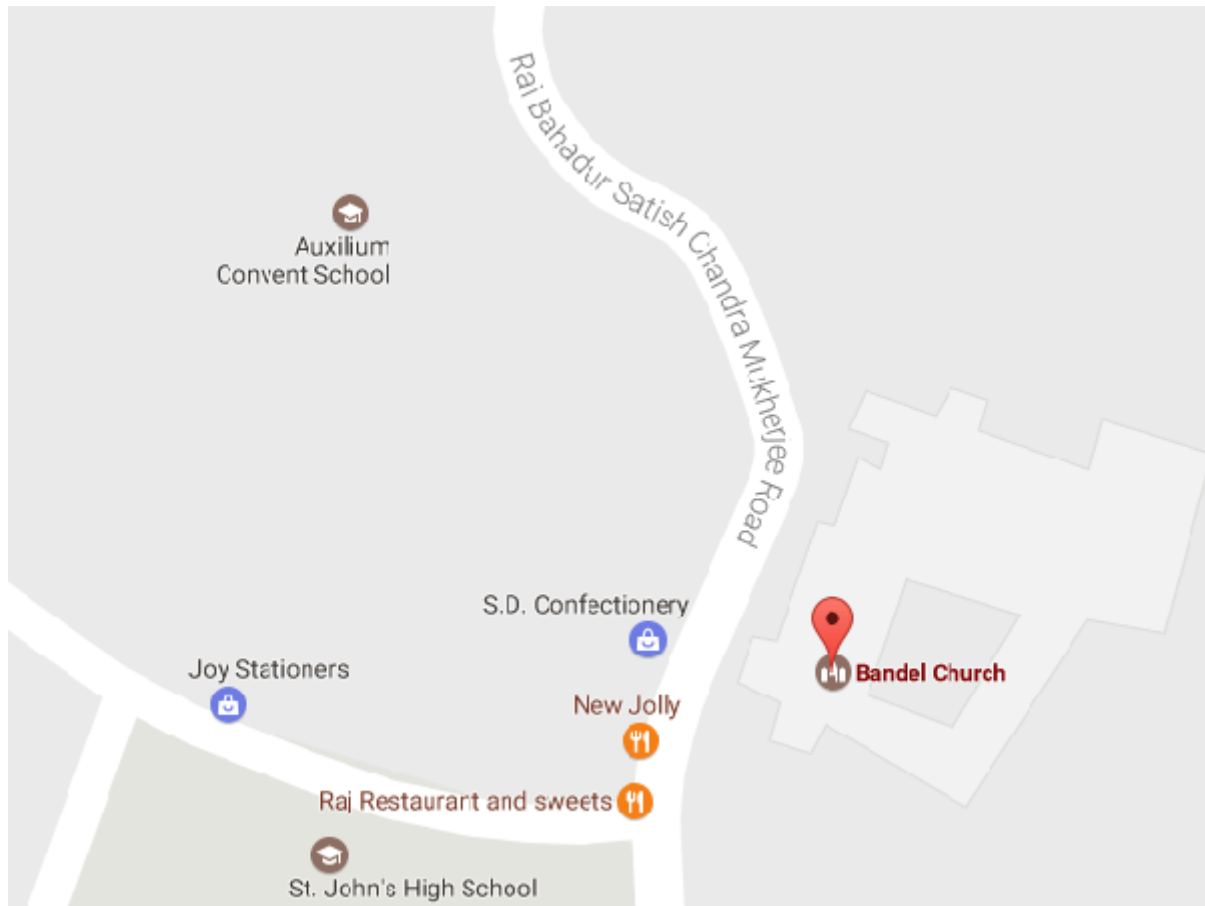
Interior of the Church

The church has beautiful chandeliers inside along with coloured glass windows. The grand tower clock is another thing in the church to be seen. The devotees and the tourists can also find statue of Mother Mary, also known as **Lady of Happy Voyage**. People worship the statue with devotion.

4. Bandel Church – How to Reach?

Bandel is well-connected to major cities of India through railway network but there is no airport. Bus for short distance are available but for long routes there are no buses. Kolkata is the nearest bus stand and airport from Bandel.
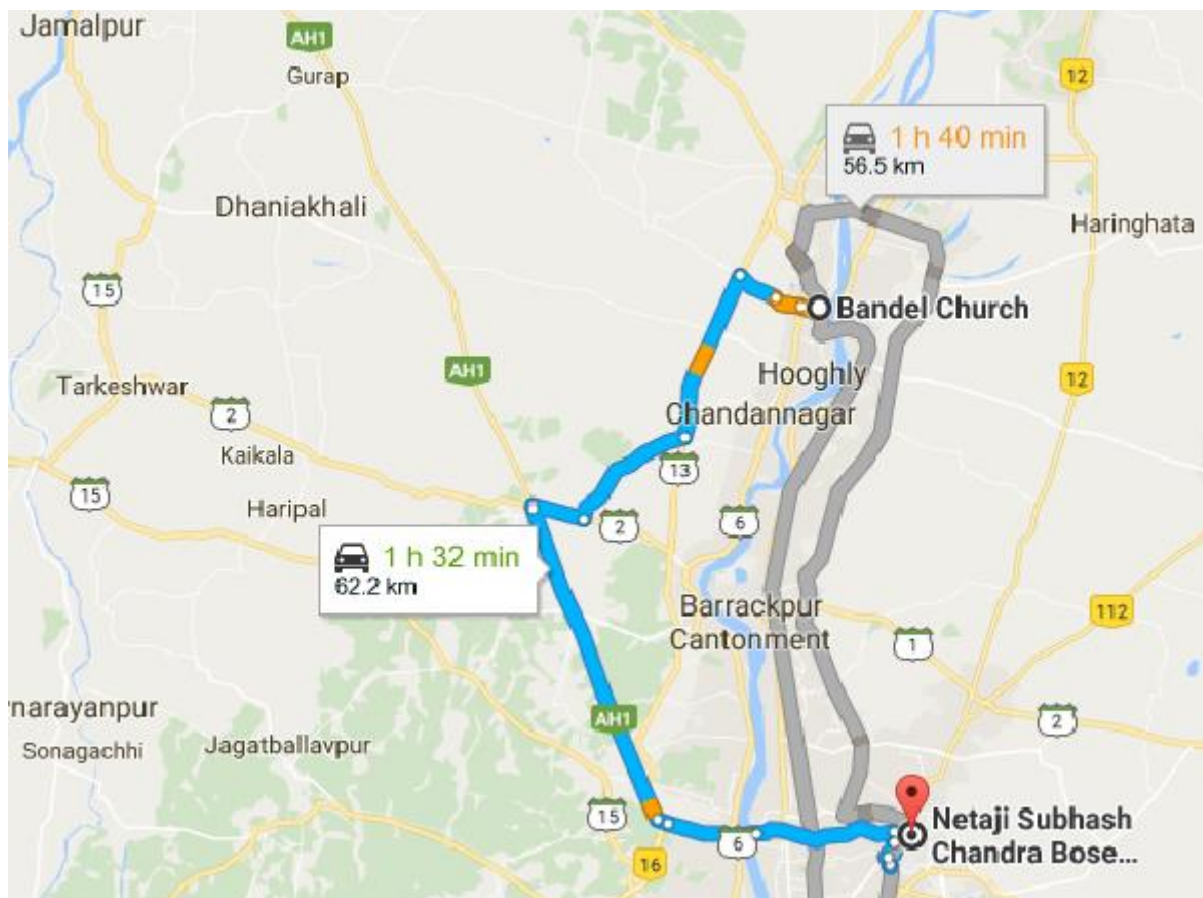

The approximate distance of some of the major cities from Bandel is as follows:

- **Bandel to Kolkata**

    o By rail – 39km

    o By road – 54km

- **Bandel to Barddhaman**

    o By rail – 67km

    o By road – 74km

- **Bandel to Dhanbad**

    o By rail – 259km

    o By road – 250km

- **Bandel to Asansol**

    o By rail – 173km

    o By road – 185km

- **Bandel to Patna**

    o By rail – 505km

    o By road – 565km

- **Bandel to Mokama**

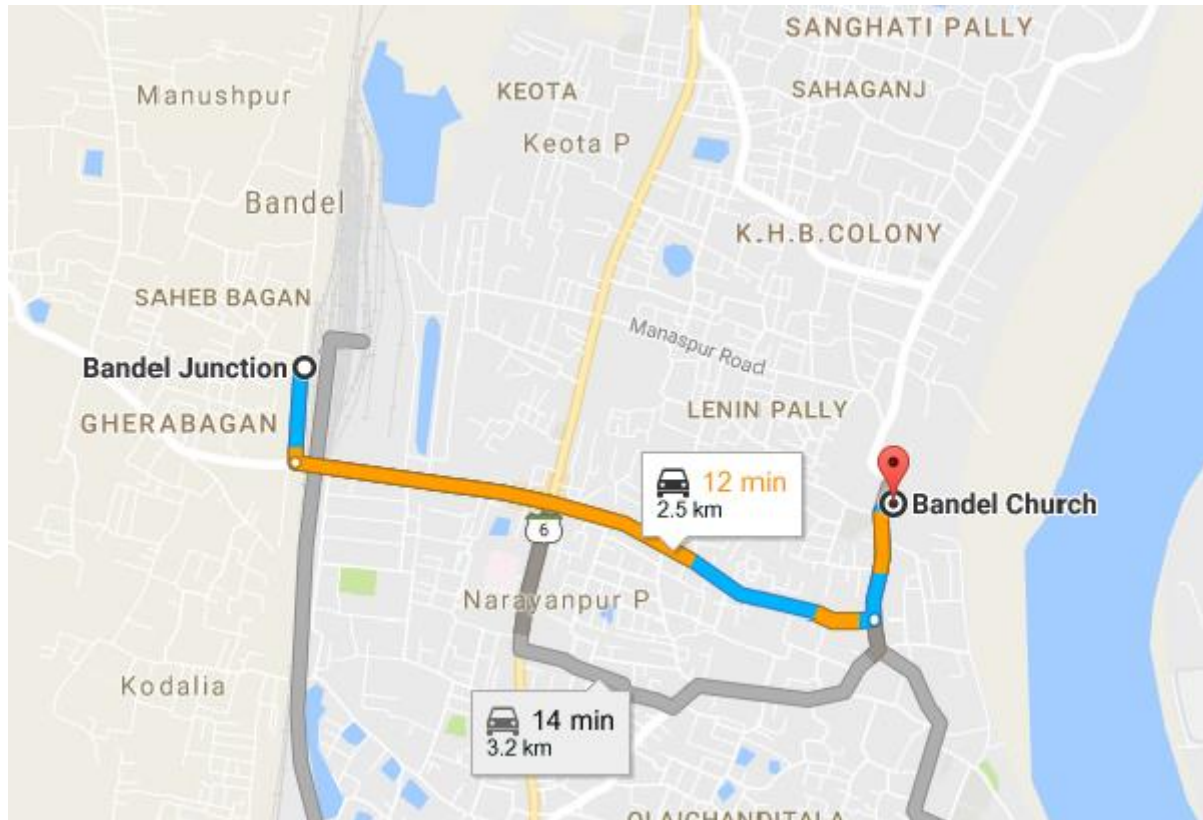   o By rail – 416km

    o By road – 456km

By Air

Bandel does not have airport but the nearest airport is **Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Airport** at Kolkata which is around 40km from Bandel. The airport was previously known as **Dum Dum Airport**. It is an international airport and people can travel within India and to abroad from this airport.

By Train

Bandel is connected to many major cities of India through rail network. Many long and short-distance trains have stoppage here. Rajdhani, Shatabdi, Gharib Rath and other premium trains do not stop here.

By Road

Bandel has only mini bus stand from where people can catch buses for places at short distance. The major bus stand is at Kolkata from where people can catch buses for long distances.
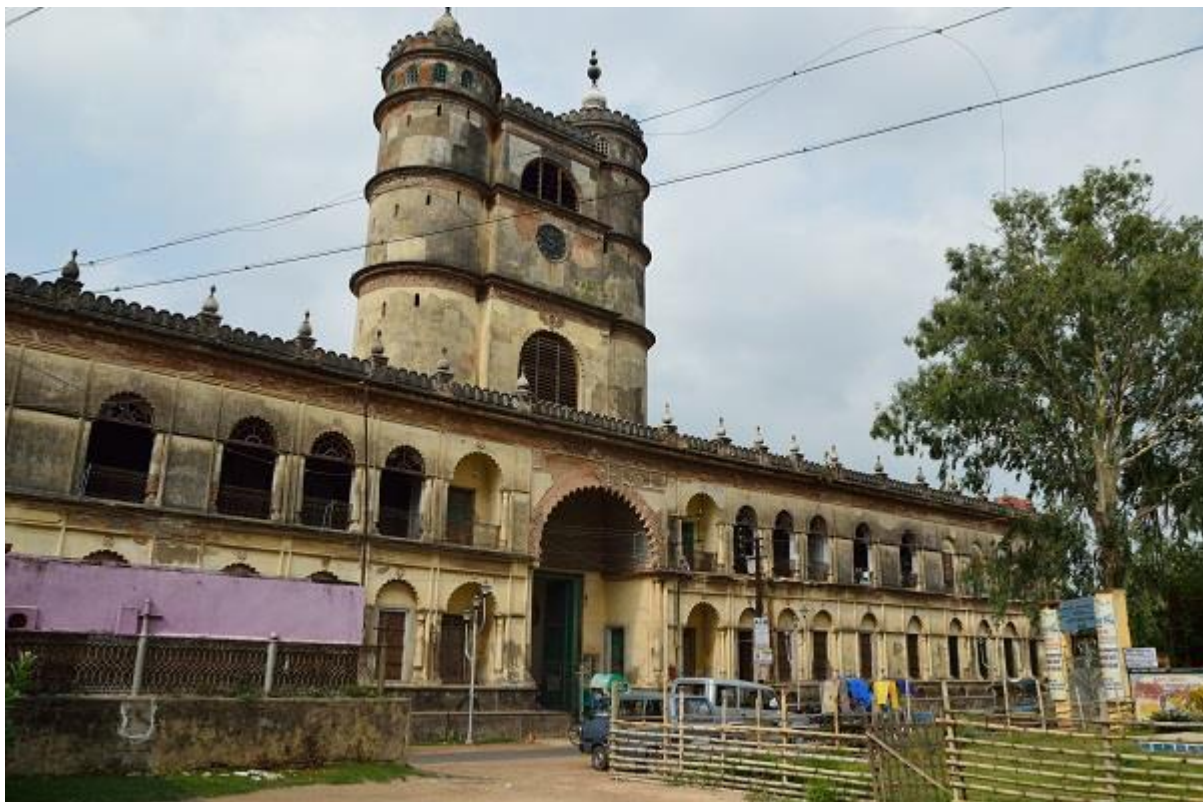
Local Transport

Bandel does not have facility of local transport but people can come here from Kolkata by local trains, local buses, taxis, and metro. Besides this, some long distance trains and buses also stop here. People can hire a taxi from an agency in Kolkata and move in and around Bandel.

Bandel church is very popular tourist place which the people like to visit. The place is visited by the tourists from India and abroad. Besides the church, there are many other places nearby which the tourists can visit. Some of these places are discussed here.

Hooghly Imambara

Hooghly Imambara was built by **Haji Mohammad Mohsin**. The monument is situated on the banks of river Ganga in **Chinsurah**. It took around 20 years to build the monument as the construction was started in 1841 and completed in 1861. There are many rooms in the two-storeyed building along with a wide entrance.

There are two towers at the main gate and a clock tower in their middle. On one side of the monument, there is a mosque and on the other side there are graves of Mohammad Mohsin and his relatives.

Tarakeshwar Temple

Tarakeshwar temple was built in 1729 at Hooghly. It is dedicated to **Lord Shiva** who is worshipped as **Taraknath**. The architecture of the temple is based on **Bengal temple architecture**. The temple is visited all the year round and especially on Mondays. Other occasions on which the temple is most visited is **Shivratri** and **Gajan**.

Hangseswari Temple

Hangseswari temple was constructed in 19th century and is located in **Bansberia** in Hooghly. The temple has the height of 21m and there are 13 towers inside the temple having a lotus-shaped top. The temple is dedicated **Goddess Hangseswari**. **Ananta Basudeba Temple** is within the precincts of the Hangseswari Temple while **Swanbhaba Kali Temple** is nearby the temple.

Pandua Bari Mosque

Pandua Bari mosque was constructed in 1300AD having the dimensions of 7041m x 12.8m. The mosque has three aisles with 24 doors for entrance. There are 21 doors in front and three on side. Along with it, there are 63 domes on the roof which are situated over brick arches. The arches rest on stone pillars which depicts the influence of **Hindu architecture**.

Shanderswartala Temple

Shanderswartala Temple is located at the distance of 5km from Chinsura railway station and is considered as the oldest temple. **Sideshwar Roy Choudhury** constructed the temple on the banks of river Ganga. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva whose ilnga was placed by **Digambar Haldar** in 16th century.