



- ### QUESTS

Dares for the brave and the curious. The map marks each with a star; tick them off as you go.
- 33** Clap at Golconda's gate, hear it up top.

Stand under the dome of the Fateh Darwaza and clap; the sound carries to the Bala Hisar at the top, almost a kilometre away. Send a friend up first to listen.
- 33** Climb to the Bala Hisar before the heat. Up through four forts and 87 bastions to the summit pavilion, with the whole city laid out below. Go at opening; there's little shade.
- 1** Find all four of Charnimar's clocks. One faces each way. They came in 1889, nearly three centuries after the arches. Stand back in the square and turn slowly round the monument.
- 3** Walk under all four Char Kamans. North of Charnimar four tall arches stand round the Gulzar Houz fountain, built with the new city. Most people never look up at them.
- 7** Dunk an Osmania biscuit beside Charnimar. Irani chai, strong and milky, and the biscuit that is sweet and salty at once. Nimrah's tables look straight at the minarets. Dunk fast: it breaks.
- 5** Count the chandeliers in the Khilwat. The Nizams' durbar hall, with the marble platform where the royal seat stood. Count before you check: there are nineteen.
- 12** Find the marble that looks like a veil. The Velled Rebecca, bought in Rome by Salur Jung I, a face seen through a veil, and all of it stone. Then find the clock room.
- 8** Watch a lac bangle get its stones. Lac means lac: the resin is heated, coloured and set with glittering stones by hand, often right at the counter. Ask nicely and watch one made.
- 6** Find the arches cut from one granite piece. The Mecca Masjid's arched front is carved from single pieces of granite, begun in 1617 and finished in 1694. Come outside prayer times, dressed for it.
- 13** Walk the length of the Nizam's wardrobe. Two floors of it, with a hand-cranked wooden lift, for a Nizam said never to have worn the same thing twice. Not on a Friday.
- 9** Find tiles still bright after four centuries. Built in 1594, its enamel tile mosaic finished in 1611, the colours still shine. It is a place of mourning in Muharram: shoes off, voice low.
- 34** Fit the sultans' domes in one frame. Seven of the eight Qutb Shahi sultans lie here in Ibrahim Bagh, under granite domes, about 7 km from us. Closed on Fridays.
- 28** Walk the Tank Bund as the sun goes. The road on Hussain Sagar's old dam, the Buddha on his rock in the middle. Secunderabad on the far side. The lamps and statues came in the 1980s.
- 42** Watch Hussain Sagar from Naubat Pahad. While marble on an 85 m hillock once called Band Rock, where proclamations were read out to music. The temple has no bells. Shoes off at the gate.
- 36** Paddle the Secret Lake. Hidden among the rocks about 700 m from us, it once watered Golconda. Take a boat out, then walk the cable bridge across it.
- 35** Join a rock walk on the Deccan's granite. The Society to Save Rocks has walked the city's boulders since 1996, once a month. Wear proper shoes and leave the rocks as you found them.
- 39** Hear a peacock in the middle of the city. About 350 acres of scrub forest between Jubilee and Banjara Hills, a national park since 1998. Peafowl call at dawn; spot a pangolin and you're lucky.
- 16** Red and white stone on a sultan's palace

The High Court. The Musli's south-bank landmark: red and white stone, planned by Shankar Lal of Jaipur, built from 1915 on the ruins of two Qutb Shahi palaces and opened by the seventh Nizam in 1920. A working court: look from the bridge.
- 18** Domes, wards, and a tree that saved 150

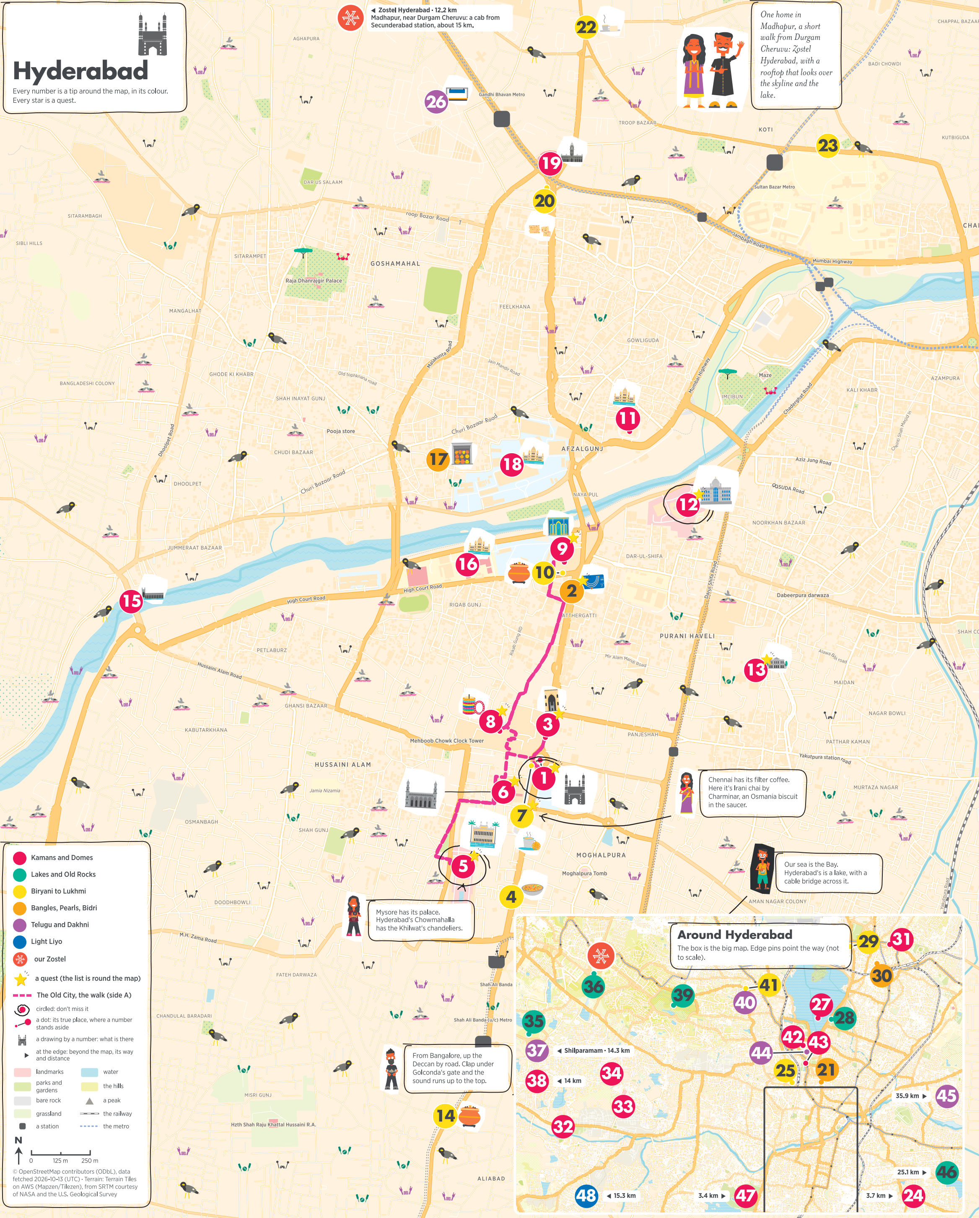
Osmania General Hospital. The seventh Nizam's hospital on the Musli, domes and arches by Vincent Esch, finished in 1919. In its grounds, an old tamarind tree saved about 150 people who climbed it in the 1908 flood. A working hospital: look from the road.
- 19** A granite triangle with a clock on top

Moazzam Jahi Market. A triangular granite market of 1933 to 1935, named for the seventh Nizam's son Prince Moazzam Jahi: arched corridors, a central dome, a clock tower. Restored and reopened in 2020; still fruit and groceries, with ice-cream shops at its corners.
- 24** Marble lace hidden down a side lane

Paigah Tombs. The Paigah nobles' family graveyard since 1786, about 4 km south-east of Charnimar: open-to-sky tombs inside walls of pierced marble screens, geometric and floral. Under restoration, almost empty of visitors. By auto, to Pisal Banda.

Hyderabad

Every number is a tip around the map, in its colour. Every star is a quest.



- 39** Peacocks between Jubilee and Banjara Hills

KBR National Park. About 390 acres of scrub forest between Jubilee and Banjara Hills, a national park since 1998: about 140 kinds of birds, peafowl calling at dawn, pangolins and porcupines. Come early; the metro stop is Jubilee Hills. Check Post.
- 7** Chai with Charnimar for a ceiling

Nimrah Cafe & Bakery, Charnimar. An Irani cafe right under Charnimar. The chai came with Iranian migrants more than a century ago: strong, milky, sweet. Dunk an Osmania biscuit, sweet and salty at once, or a Nimrah's, then take your cup to the pavement and watch.
- 22** The old guard of the Irani cafes

Grand Hotel, Abids. On Abids Road since 1935, and called the oldest Irani cafe still pouring as others close. Ask for a pauna, the cup three-quarters full, with bun masaka or an Osmania biscuit; biryani and breakfast too. On Sundays the book market lines the pavements outside.
- 41** A tiffin plate with six chutneys

Chutneys, Banjara Hills. A local chain for a sit-down tiffin: six chutneys and sambar with every plate. Order the steamed dosa or the Guntur idli. A 2025 list names the Banjara Hills branch for sarva pidi, Telangana's spiced rice-flour pancake. Weekends mean waits.
- 30** The cantonment's market, still trading

Monda Market, Secunderabad. Set up in the late 1800s to feed the Secunderabad cantonment's British army units, by the old Jail Khana. The wholesale trade left in 1998; the retail market stayed: vegetables, fruit and flower stalls. A working market, not a showpiece.
- 40** Plays, poems and chai, often free

Lamakaan. An open, non-profit cultural space in Banjara Hills since 2010: plays, films, concerts, readings and flea markets, many free. Its cafe does Irani chai and samosas. Look up the week's events before you go.
- 11** Half a million poems by the river

State Central Library. A 1930s domed building by Vincent Esch on the Musli's north bank. The city's oldest museum, opened by the seventh Nizam in 1931 as Public Gardens, Nampally: Buddhist and Kakatiya sculpture, bronzes, copies of the Ajanta paintings and an Egyptian mummy believed to be a princess, Naishu. Nampally metro is close.
- 47** A palace like the sky, now a hotel

Falaknupa Palace. On a hill 5 km south of Charnimar, built 1884 to 1893 by Vira-ul-Jumra, shaped like a scorpion; its name means like the sky. A luxury hotel since 2010, for guests and diners only: see it from the road below.
- 46** A Guinness-record studio, sets and all

Ramoji Film City. A studio complex founded in 1996 at Abdulapurmet, about 30 km out: the world's largest, says Guinness, on about 2,000 acres. Tours through sets and copies of famous monuments, Baahubali's Mahishmat too. A full day; go early.
- 10** Biryani at the Madina crossroads

Hotel Shadab, High Court Road. On High Court Road by Madina Circle, a short walk from Charnimar. Food writers keep listing its biryani: long-grain rice, saffron, tender mutton, fragrant rather than fiery. Add a kabab and the mirchi ka salan. In Ramadan, its haleem draws its own crowd.
- 23** Kofi's chaat stop since the 1970s

Gokul Chai, Koti. A family counter in Koti since the 1970s: small, crowded, hardly a seat, and known across the city. Order the samosa ragda, then the cold dahi puri or dahi panna; finish with a kulfi. Eat between shops in Koti and Sultan Bazaar.
- 25** Osmania biscuits by the tonne

Subhan Bakery, Nampally. Hyderabad's tea biscuit, sweet and salty at once, baked here by the tonne. One family has run the Nampally bakery since the late 1940s; by its own telling: by its story, its bread reached Nehru's breakfast table. Buy a box for the road.
- 29** A cinema canteen that out-grew the cinema

Paradise, Secunderabad. Opened in 1953 as a canteen beside Secunderabad's Paradise cinema, selling more tea than biryani at first. The cinema closed; the canteen grew to several floors. The biryani most visitors try first: start here, then go hunting in the Old City.
- 21** Sunday's pavement library

Sunday book market, Abids. Every Sunday, Abids Road and its side lanes fill with second-hand books on tarpaulins, folding tables and parked motorbikes: novels, textbooks, magazines, comics. Called the city's largest second-hand
- 37** India's crafts, a short ride from the hostel

Shilpagram. A 65-acre crafts village a short ride from Zostel, open since 1998: artisans from across India, a rural museum of clay and thatched huts, a rock garden among the boulders, folk festivals through the year. Come late afternoon.
- 37** India's crafts, a short ride from the hostel

Shilpagram. A 65-acre crafts village a short ride from Zostel, open since 1998: artisans from across India, a rural museum of clay and thatched huts, a rock garden among the boulders, folk festivals through the year. Come late afternoon.
- 44** A Telangana dinosaur, 160 million years old

Birla Science Museum and planetarium. On Birla Mandir's hill, a science museum of 1990 with a planetarium and a dinosaurium. Its star is Kotasaurus, a 10 m long-necked dinosaur about 160 million years old, dug up in northern Telangana. Check the planetarium's show times.
- 45** Tie, dye, weave: the double ikat village

Pochampally's Ikat weavers. About 50 km east, Bhodan Pochampally weaves double ikat: warp and weft tied and dyed in their pattern before the loom. A Geographical Indication since 2005; in 2021 the UN's tourism body named it one of its Best Tourism Villages.
- 12** One family's shopping, forty galleries deep

Salar Jung Museum. The Salar Jung family's collection, opened in 1951: 48,000 art objects and 8,000 manuscripts in about 40 galleries. See the Velled Rebecca, marble that looks like cloth, and the musical clock whose little figure strikes a gong on the hour. Closed Fridays.
- 13** One wardrobe, two floors, no repeats

Purani Haveli and the Nizam's Museum. A Nizam's palace east of Charnimar. Its museum holds the last Nizam's jubilee gifts of 1936 and the sixth Nizam's walk-in wardrobe: about 176 feet of Burma teak on two floors, with a hand-cranked lift. Closed Fridays.
- 15** Hyderabad's first bridge, now selling vegetables

Purana Pul. Built in 1578 to join Golconda to the far bank: the city's first bridge, 22 arches over the Musli. The oldest stones on the Musli. It survived the 1908 flood; now it is a market.
- 48** Far out south, with an air-port bus

Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. At Shamshabad, about 37 km and an hour from the hostel, Pushpak air-conditioned buses run from Shilpagram, Kothaguda and Gachibowli on our side. At arrivals, ignore the touts; take an app cab or the bus.
- 36** The Secret Lake, 700 m from our door

Durgam Cheruvu and its bridge. The Secret Lake, about 700 m from Zostel: hidden among granite rocks, once Golconda's drinking water. Paddle a boat, then walk the cable bridge of 2020 toHITEC City on its footpath. Sunset is the time.
- 28** Thirty-four statues and a lakeside stroll

Tank Bund. The old dam on Hussain Sagar's east shore, lined with 34 bronze statues of Telugu and Hyderabad figures. Walk it at sunset, then on to Necklace Road. Bathuamma's last night and Ganesh Chaturthi's immersions both end here.
- 35** Balanced boulders older than the city

Khajaguda's rocks (Fakhrud-din Gutta). Boulders of the Deccan's ancient granite, balanced as if by hand. The Society to Save Rocks, formed in 1996, leads monthly walks; in 2026 about 123 acres of Khajaguda's Fakhrud-din Gutta were fenced in to keep them. Go at sunrise.
- 36** The Secret Lake, 700 m from our door

Durgam Cheruvu and its bridge. The Secret Lake, about 700 m from Zostel: hidden among granite rocks, once Golconda's drinking water. Paddle a boat, then walk the cable bridge of 2020 toHITEC City on its footpath. Sunset is the time.

