

# west bengal

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A view of the  
Gongoni ravines



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**GONGONI** Whenever someone refers to the word 'canyon' in describing a destination in India, the names that pop up are Mahabaleshwar, Ranhe Falls or Gandikota. However, in the most unusual place in India lies a full-fledged gorge.

Welcome to the 'Grand Canyon' of West Bengal—Gongoni. Tucked away near the small settlement of Garbeta, this fascinating wide gorge of red soil stands on the banks of river Silabati. Locally known as Gongoni Danga or Gongoni Khola, this handiwork of nature has been created through years of soil erosion, coupled with some assistance from the river, which flows through the canyon during the monsoon. You will often find many fishermen spreading their wide nets in the river,

which makes for a pretty picture. Early in the morning, the 180°-view can take quite literally your breath away.

One of the attractions of the canyon is that such landscapes are quite uncommon in the Bengal plains. The surface comprises of red soil, which turns yellowish as you go down the slopes. In mellow sunlight this often turns golden. The initial impression one gets when one stumbles upon the canyon are of old Westerners such as *McKenna's Gold*. The setting could well be the Wild West—the only element missing is a cowboy saying "Howdy!"

There is a small cave at the bottom of the canyon that locals say was once inhabited by the demon Bakasura. A local folklore has it that the Pandava prince Bheem

killed the demon at this very spot. It certainly adds to the atmosphere.

## THE INFORMATION

**For a day trip** Rupasi Bangla Express reaches Garhbeta Railway Station at 9.20 am. Cycle vans are available at the station and these are the common mode of transport to Gongoni. One can return by the same train at 5.47 pm. There are no accommodation facilities here. The only decent eatery is Suruchi restaurant opposite Garbeta College.

**For a weekend trip** The heritage town of Bishnupur is only 27km from Gongoni. There are plenty of accommodation facilities here. You can hire a car and visit both locations in a day.

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