

India

Golden Triangle

The best things to see and do



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1. India's Golden Triangle: The Ultimate Guide for Your Unforgettable Journey

India is a destination of profound contradictions — it is ancient and modern, chaotic, and spiritual, overwhelming and can be utterly serene. It is, as many travelers describe it, an **assault on the senses**, and it can be one of the most rewarding experiences you will ever have.

For the first-time visitor, this sensory journey needs a clear roadmap. That roadmap is the **Golden Triangle** — the iconic circuit of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur — a perfectly crafted itinerary that delivers the essence of North India's history, culture, and architectural genius in one manageable trip.

Why You Should Visit India: The Unparalleled Reward

A trip to India is an investment that pays in history, spiritual insight, and breathtaking beauty. The reasons to visit are as vibrant and numerous as its people:

- **Architectural Majesty:** India is a museum of stone, where every dynasty has left a masterpiece. You will witness the sublime symmetry of the **Taj Mahal**, the formidable power of Mughal forts, and the delicate carvings of Rajput palaces. It is a constant 'wow' moment that demands a camera at every turn.
- **A Feast for the Palate:** Indian cuisine is a global powerhouse and experiencing it at its source is non-negotiable. From the buttery richness of North Indian curries to the delicate, complex flavors of authentic street food (*chaat*, *parathas*), the food alone is a journey of discovery.

- **Profound Cultural Layers:** Four of the world's major religions were born here. This is a place where spirituality is interwoven with everyday life. Witnessing the devotion, the colorful festivals, and the sheer antiquity of its sites offers a perspective on human civilization unmatched anywhere else.
- **Human Warmth:** Despite the crowds and the chaos, the warmth and curiosity of the Indian people—often ready to share a smile, offer help, or engage in conversation—is frequently cited as the most memorable part of the journey.

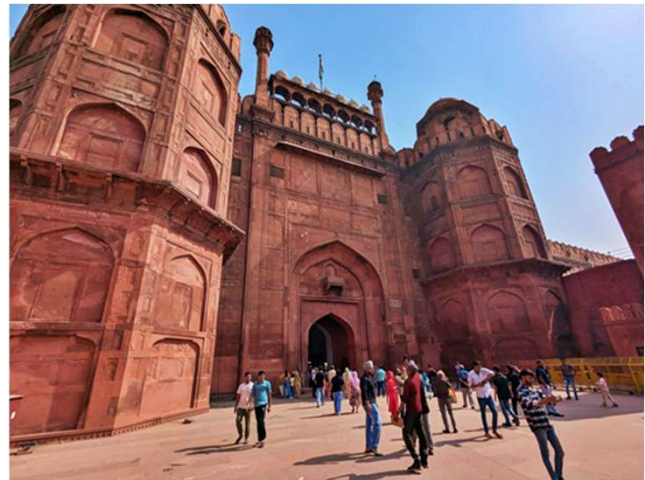
The Golden Triangle: India's Perfect Masterclass

This circuit is ideal for first-time visitors because it is geographically compact and connects three cities that represent a beautiful cross-section of Indian history and culture. You gain a comprehensive cultural introduction without the stress of navigating the subcontinent's massive scale.

- **Delhi: The Imperial Gateway**

Delhi is where your Indian story begins. The city is a dazzling fusion of ancient Mughal history and modern metropolitan life. Start with the grandeur of **Old Delhi** by exploring the magnificent Red Fort and the towering Jama Masjid. For the ultimate immersion, hire a cycle-rickshaw to navigate the hyper-local markets of **Chandni Chowk**—a sensory overload that offers endless photographic opportunities and a true taste of local life.

In contrast, explore the sophisticated architecture of **New Delhi**, including Humayun's Tomb (a precursor to the Taj) and the towering Qutub Minar. Here, you can easily use the excellent metro to discover parts of the city independently, giving you valuable practice in self-guided navigation.



- **Agra: The Monument to Eternal Love**

Agra exists for one reason: the incomparable **Taj Mahal**. No amount of photos can prepare you for the scale, the blinding whiteness, or the exquisite marble inlay work known as *Pietra Dura*. Arrive at sunrise to witness the marble shift from pale grey to soft gold, offering a unique and reflective photo perspective.

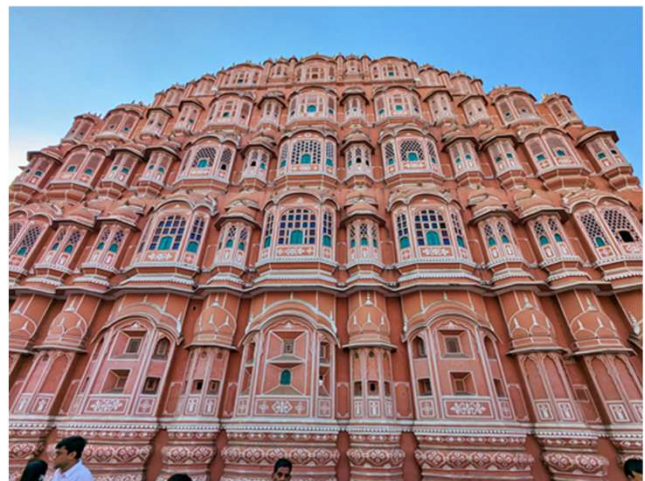
Beyond the Taj, explore the colossal red sandstone walls of the **Agra Fort**, which offers sweeping views of the mausoleum across the Yamuna River, connecting the two Mughal masterpieces.



- **Jaipur: The Pink City's Royal Hues**

The third point of the triangle plunges you into the vibrant royal culture of Rajasthan. Known as the 'Pink City' for its uniform terracotta wash, Jaipur is packed with palaces, forts, and markets.

The massive **Amber Fort** (Amer Fort) is a must-see, featuring breathtaking courtyards and the spectacular Sheesh Mahal (Mirror Palace). In the city center, the honeycomb facade of the **Hawa Mahal** (Palace of Winds) is an essential stop and photo subject.



The **Golden Triangle** is the ideal, detailed blueprint for your first confident step into the magic, chaos, and unforgettable beauty that is India.

Traveling With Your Eyes Wide Open: Navigating the Challenge

An honest guide must acknowledge that India requires a specific mindset. It is a destination that will test your patience and push you beyond your comfort zone. For some, it might be too much; for others, this very chaos is the reward.

The most frequently cited challenge is the **Sensory Overload**. If you are sensitive to noise, know that the **constant traffic cacophony** — the blare of horns, the engine noise, the endless stream of people — is a daily reality. The roads are intense, crowded, and seemingly rule-less. If you cannot tolerate this level of public intensity, your journey will be difficult. Here is a [video](#) that we took which gives you an impression of what you will experience once you leave your hotel, restaurant, or museum.

You must also prepare for the issues of **Health and Hygiene**. ‘Delhi Belly’ is real. The rule is simple: **only bottled water with an unbroken seal, and only freshly cooked, hot food**. Avoid all tap water, ice, and unpeeled raw salads to keep your adventure on track.

Be aware of **Touts and Scams**. In crowded tourist areas, people may offer misleading information, like telling you your hotel or train station is closed, to steer you toward a commission-based service. **Self-discovery requires confidence:** be polite but firm, pre-book your major transport, and negotiate the price of local taxis or rickshaws before the journey begins.

Finally, be advised that traffic in India's cities is not just a constant source of noise, but a significant contributor to air pollution. There is a reason, why all motorized traffic is banned within a 1km (0.6 mile) radius from the Taj Mahal in Agra, any why the sun in India's cities will never blind you and, at best, appear as a hazy whitish disk in the sky, even if there are no clouds.



This is not an in-depth India guide. You can buy India guides from the big travel guide companies. Our goal is to help you Make Memorable Moments on a relaxing India trip and help you build the perfect itinerary for your trip. For that purpose, we have added lots of photos so that you see what you will experience and make an educated decision if these places are for you.

Please also check out the other exciting destinations and travel guides on our **Backpack and Snorkel** [website](#).

2.1 Disclaimer

In this guide we are doing our best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

2.2 Copyright

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3. General Information about India

India is an adventure of a lifetime, but it is not a country you visit unprepared. To experience its vast beauty and spiritual depth, a traveler needs to understand a few critical cultural and logistical realities. This guide covers the essential, practical knowledge required to transform a potentially overwhelming trip into a deeply rewarding experience of self-discovery.

3.1 Visa Requirements for India

e-Visa System: Most tourists are eligible for the electronic visa (e-Visa), which is the most convenient way to apply. You can apply online for tourist stays of various durations (e.g., 30 days to 180 days, depending on your nationality and the visa type). Here are websites where you can apply for an Indian e-Visa:

- [Indian Government e-Visa application website](#)

Be advised that it takes a long time to fill out the e-Visa application. The authorities ask lots of very detailed questions, including about your parents, visa numbers of previous trips to India, and countries you have previously visited. You will also need a photo of your passport data page, and a newer digital passport photo that meets India's guidelines for file size, naming of the photo, and position of your head.

The process is:

1. You fill out the e-Visa application ([website](#))
2. You pay the application fee online
3. You wait a few days until your visa application is hopefully approved. The email will contain a link to your Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)
4. Print the ETA
5. As of October 1, 2025: Within 72h before arriving in India, fill out the e-Arrival Card ([website](#))
6. At immigration at the airport in India, show the ETA printout to the officer.

The Golden Rule: Always apply directly through the official Government of India website. Be wary of third-party websites that look official but charge excessive fees.

If you feel you cannot fill out the e-Visa application, were rejected, or want a professional third party to file the application for you, please consider: [iVisa](#).

Requirements: Your passport must be valid for at least six months from the date of arrival and have at least two blank pages.

3.2 Currency and Money Matters in India

The currency used in India is the Indian Rupee (INR). You can find the [exchange rate here](#).

INR Notes come in denominations of ₹10, ₹20, ₹50, ₹100, ₹200, ₹500, and ₹2,000.

While many hotels, upmarket restaurants, and major shops in larger Indian cities accept credit/debit cards (Visa/Mastercard), cash is essential for taxis, small vendors, street food, rickshaws, and nearly everything in smaller towns.

ATMs are widely available in cities and major towns. Look for ATMs attached to major banks (e.g., SBI, HDFC) and use them during daylight hours. A common withdrawal limit is around ₹10,000 per transaction.

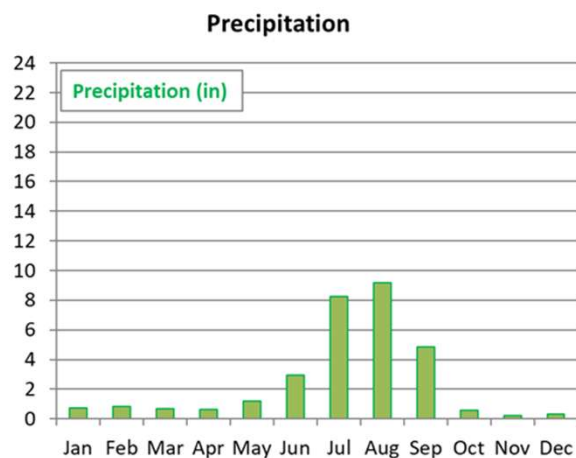
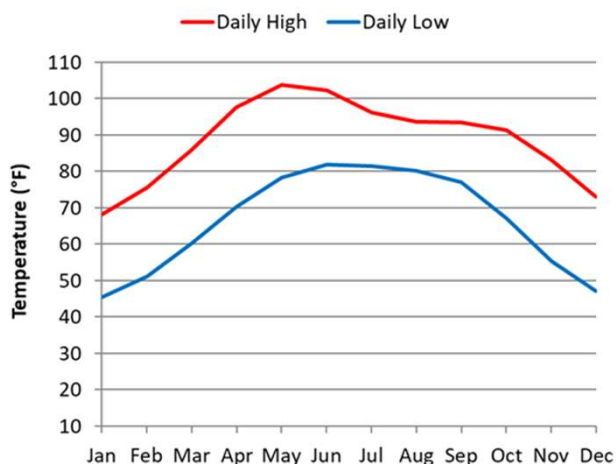
Avoid exchanging large sums at airports or hotels due to poor rates. Use bank ATMs or reputable authorized money changers.

3.3 Climate and Best Time to Visit India

India's climate varies widely by region. The best time to visit the popular Northern and Central regions is generally during the dry, cooler season.

- **Peak Season (October to March):** Ideal weather for sightseeing in the north (Delhi, Rajasthan, Golden Triangle). Days are warm, and nights are cool.
Caution: December and January can be very cold with heavy fog in the north.
- **Hot Season (April to June):** Temperatures soar, often reaching 100°F or more, making travel uncomfortable. This is the best time, however, for wildlife spotting as animals congregate around limited water sources.
- **Monsoon Season (June/July to September):** Heavy rainfall, high humidity, and travel disruptions, especially in coastal areas and the Himalayan foothills. The exception is Ladakh, which is best visited during this time.

Here is the climate that you can expect during your trip to Delhi:



3.5 Transportation within India

Transportation within a city

The main modes of transportation offer a mix of safety, convenience, and cost. Your key safety tool is the license plate color, which indicates a vehicle's legal status.

Vehicle Type	Plate Color	Text Color	Purpose
Commercial & Transport	Yellow	Black	Must be used by vehicles for hire (taxis, tuk-tuks, buses, trucks). The driver must also hold a commercial driving permit.
Electric Vehicle (EV)	Green	Yellow	Used for Commercial electric vehicles (e.g., e-rickshaws, e-taxis).
Self-Drive Rental	Black	Yellow	Used for vehicles that are rented out to customers who drive themselves.
Private & Personal	White	Black	Cannot be used for commercial purposes (transporting passengers or goods for a fee).
Electric Vehicle (EV)	Green	White	Used for Private electric vehicles.

Safety Rule: Never get into a taxi or vehicle that is accepting fares if it has a **white license plate**. This indicates a private, non-commercial vehicle operating illegally.

3.5.8 Trains - Indian Railways

([reviews](#), [website](#))

Trains are the quintessential Indian travel experience and the best way to cover longer distances.

- **Classes for Foreigners:** Don't worry about the overcrowded railroad cars that you may have seen on the internet; foreigners cannot book those cars. The available classes for foreigners (SL, AC-1, AC-2, AC-3, EC, CC) are similar to those in the Western world.
- **Booking:** Since the seats in the higher classes are limited, **book well in advance**—ideally at least 1–2 months for popular routes. We found AC-2 seats booked three months out for the Agra-Jaipur route, but AC-1 and EC were available.
- **Classes Explained:**
 - **EC (Executive Class):** The highest class on many routes (advertised as 1st/Business class). Does not act as sleeper, as it is only used during daytime.
 - **AC-1 (First Class AC):** Slightly lower quality than EC class, also used as highest quality sleeper class at night.
 - **AC-2 / AC-3 (Second/Third Class AC):** Comfortable, enclosed sleeper/seating cars.
 - **CC (Chair Class):** Basic reserved seating.
 - **SL (Sleeper Class):** Seats convert into lie-flat beds (often non-AC).
- **Experience:** We booked **EC** seats for several train trips and found them to be in-between 1st and 2nd class on European long-distance trains.

India Travel Guide



3.13 Highlights of the History of India

Pre-Historic and Ancient India (c. 7000 BCE – 700 CE)

- **7000 BCE:** The Neolithic settlement of Mehrgarh in modern-day Pakistan shows the earliest evidence of farming in South Asia.
- **3300–1700 BCE:** The Indus Valley Civilization (Harappan Civilization) flourishes, developing planned cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro with advanced sanitation and grid systems.
- **1500–500 BCE:** The Vedic Period begins, leading to the composition of the **Vedas**, the foundational texts of Hinduism, and the establishment of the early social order.
- **1200 BCE:** Composition of the Rigveda (earliest Indo-Aryan text and key to early Indian linguistics/history).
- **800–600 BCE:** The **Upanishads** are composed, marking a philosophical shift toward concepts like *karma*, *dharma*, and reincarnation.
- **600 BCE:** Sixteen major kingdoms, the **Mahajanapadas**, emerge across northern India, with Magadha becoming the dominant power.
- **563 BCE:** **Siddhartha Gautama** (the Buddha) is born. He later founds Buddhism, which challenges the existing Vedic rituals and caste system.
- **540 BCE:** **Vardhamana Mahavira** is born, laying down the final precepts of Jainism, emphasizing non-violence (*ahimsa*).
- **500 BCE:** Rise of **Taxila** as a major center of learning and an early university (crucial for education and cultural transmission to the North-West and Central Asia).

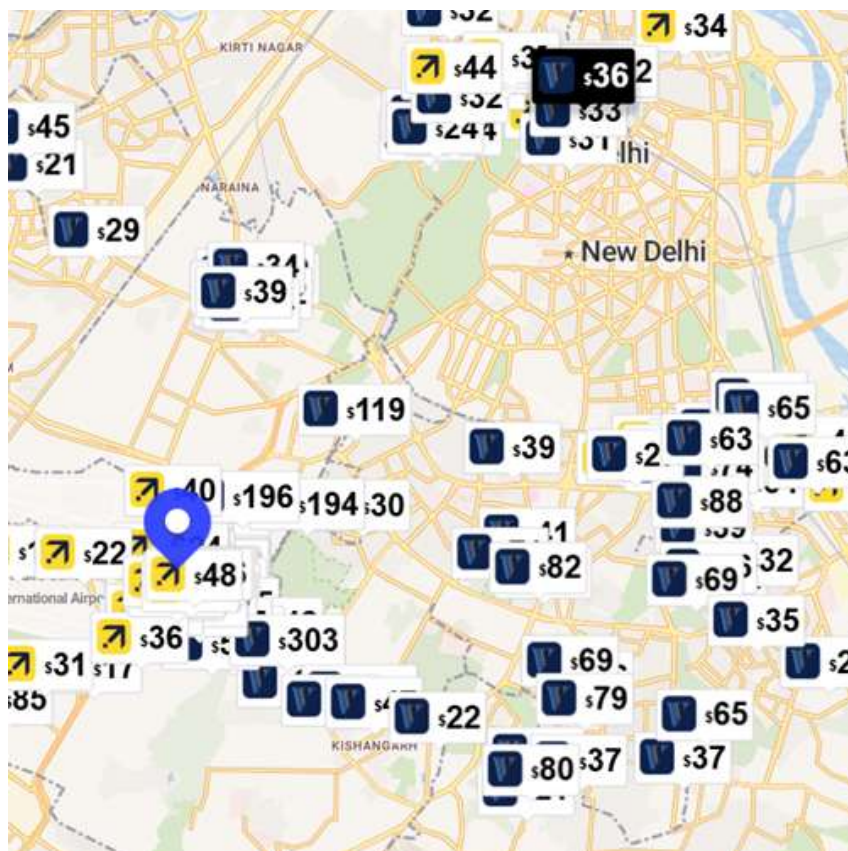
- **326 BCE: Alexander the Great** of Macedon invades the North-Western frontier, fighting the Battle of the Hydaspes against King Porus before his army mutinies and turns back.
- **322 BCE: Chandragupta Maurya** founds the **Mauryan Empire**, unifying much of the subcontinent for the first time.
- **268–232 BCE: Ashoka the Great** reigns, conquering Kalinga (**Kalinga War of Ashoka**) and subsequently embracing Buddhism, using his edicts to promote the principle of *Dharma*.
- **250 BCE: The Third Buddhist Council** is held under Ashoka's patronage, leading to the dispatch of Buddhist missions across Asia.
- **185 BCE:** The Mauryan Empire declines, leading to the fragmentation of North India and the rise of the Sunga dynasty.
- **200 BCE–300 CE:** The **Sangam Period** flourishes in South India, seeing the development of the early Chola, Chera, and Pandya kingdoms and the composition of classical **Tamil literature**.
- **200 BCE – 200 CE:** Spread of Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, and Kushan cultural exchange (Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara).
- **100 BCE:** Satavahana Dynasty in the Deccan (first major post-Mauryan power in central India).
- **100 BCE – 200 CE:** Composition of the **Charaka Samhita** (medicine) and **Sushruta Samhita** (surgery), foundational texts of **Ayurveda** and evidence of advanced ancient Indian scientific achievement.
- **78 CE: Kanishka I** becomes the ruler of the Kushan Empire, expanding it and patronizing Mahayana Buddhism.

- **320 CE: Chandragupta I** establishes the **Gupta Empire**, ushering in India's 'Golden Age' of art, science, and literature.
- **5th Century CE:** Formal establishment of Nalanda University.
- **400 CE:** The Sanskrit poet and dramatist **Kalidasa** composes his masterpieces, including *Shakuntala*, marking the height of classical Sanskrit literature.
- **427 CE:** Formal establishment of **Nalanda University** in Bihar, which became the largest and most famous Buddhist monastic center of learning in the ancient world.
- **499 CE:** The astronomer and mathematician **Aryabhata** writes the *Aryabhatiya*, detailing the concept of zero for use in mathematics, the value of pi, and heliocentrism.
- **6th-7th Century CE: Bhakti Movement** begins in South India (with the Alvars and Nayanars), emphasizing personal devotion and challenging caste-based worship—a crucial precursor to the medieval Bhakti movement.
- **550 CE:** The Gupta Empire declines, and North India fragments into smaller regional kingdoms.
- **606–647 CE: Harshavardhana** of the Pushyabhuti dynasty unites much of North India and patronizes the arts and Buddhism.
- **712 CE: Muhammad bin Qasim** leads the Arab invasion of Sindh, establishing the first permanent Islamic foothold in the subcontinent.

Option 3: Stay Near the Airport (Aerocity)

- **Pros:** Luxury hotels in this area (like [Pullman New Delhi Aerocity](#) and [Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt](#)) are outside the main city chaos, offering a quieter, more serene environment, and the air quality can be slightly better. Excellent and affordable 5-star hotel options are available here.
- **Cons:** You are far from the main historical and cultural sights, requiring longer commutes into the city center.

Here you can find the accommodations that are available when you visit:



We have had very positive experiences in these hotels in Delhi:

- [5-star Hotel Pullman New Delhi Aerocity](#)
- [5-star Hotel Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt](#)
- [Boutique Hotel B Nineteen](#)

4.2.1 Pullman New Delhi Aerocity An Accor Hotels Brand

([map](#), [booking](#), [expedia](#), [agoda](#), [hotels](#), [kayak](#), [tripadvisor](#))

The Pullman New Delhi Aerocity is a fantastic, contemporary 5-star hotel that excels in convenience and modern luxury standards. It is located within Aerocity, a high-class hotel development complex close to the airport. As such, it is an excellent choice for business customers and for international arrivals and departures.

Location and Accessibility

The hotel is located a **5–10 minute taxi/Uber ride** from all terminals of Indira Gandhi International Airport (DEL), making it a logical choice for late arrivals, early departures, and business travelers whose schedules demand fast transit.

The hotel is also only a **10–15 minute walk** away from the Airport Express Metro Line (Aerocity Station). The Metro ride itself takes less than 5 minutes to the airport, or allows for quick, air-conditioned access to central Delhi (Connaught Place) in under 30 minutes, bypassing the city's traffic entirely.

Factoring in the walk to the metro, the ride, and then a taxi/rickshaw to your specific attraction in Delhi, you will need to calculate **more than one hour of total travel time** in the morning and evening if you choose to stay at the Pullman. Alternatively, you can take an Uber directly from the hotel, which may reach your attraction in the same or slightly shorter time.

Our personal opinion is that the high quality of the Pullman makes the one-hour travel time worthwhile, but this is a decision every traveler must make. Our Delhi itinerary in this **Purple Travel Guide** takes this travel time into account.

Design and Comfort

Our flight arrived early in the morning, and while the hotel could not guarantee availability at 10 a.m., we were fortunate to be immediately escorted to our room without any surcharge.

The Pullman distinguishes itself with a sleek, international, and very spacious design. The ambiance is professional, **quiet**, and contemporary, relying on modern Indian art to provide local flair. The rooms are a major highlight; our room was a generous 388 square feet (36 m²), and spotlessly clean with almost no signs of wear. Considering the proximity to the busy DEL airport, the **soundproofing was excellent** and important. Also excellent were the comfortable beds, the A/C, and the large bathroom with its powerful rainfall shower.

The hotel provides **two complimentary bottles of water**, and staff are happy to provide more upon request.

Dining and Facilities

Breakfast is served buffet-style, offering a huge selection of Western, Indian, and other international items. The staff is attentive, happy to make you any type of coffee or tea you desire. The hotel also features excellent restaurants for dinner. These are, as expected, on the pricier side, but we found the food quality and taste to be totally worth the money.

For amenities, the hotel provides everything expected of a top-tier brand, including a beautiful **outdoor swimming pool**, a spa, and a well-equipped 24-hour fitness center.

Verdict

The Pullman New Delhi Aerocity is a fantastic base for travelers who prioritize **luxury accommodation, excellent food, and comfort**. While it is close to the airport and therefore excellent for early departing and late arriving flights, the distance to the tourist attractions in downtown Delhi should not be neglected. But if you consider this in your travel plans, we think you will love the hotel and find it a wonderful experience to start or conclude your once-in-a-lifetime trip to India.

The Pullman New Delhi Aerocity was our favorite hotel in Delhi, and our second favorite hotel in all of India, with the [Courtyard by Marriott Agra](#) being our most favorite hotel in India.

India Travel Guide

Here are some photos that we took:



4.3.1 Courtyard by Marriott Agra

([map](#), [booking](#), [expedia](#), [agoda](#), [hotels](#), [kayak](#), [tripadvisor](#))

Unlike most Courtyard Marriott hotels, the **Courtyard by Marriott Agra** is officially a **5-star hotel** that provides an oasis of modern, international comfort in the historic city of Agra. It is a large, well-maintained property that manages to balance its corporate backing with genuinely warm Indian hospitality, offering a perfect haven after a long day of sightseeing.

We are proud to say that this was, in fact, **our personal favorite hotel in all of India**. We have only met super-nice hotel personnel across India, but somehow the staff of the Marriott was even nicer, super polite, and they treated us like **royalty**, even though we only booked a normal room.

Location and Accessibility

The hotel is located on Fatehabad Road, which is the main hospitality stretch in Agra. This means it is very well positioned for your visits to the main attractions Agra has to offer:

Taj Mahal: The Courtyard is an approx. **10–15 minute drive** by Uber, taxi, or auto-rickshaw to the East Gate of the Taj Mahal. This easy access is crucial if you plan to visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise.

Agra Fort: The historic Agra Fort is also only about a **15–20 minute drive** away.

While the hotel is not in walking distance to any major attraction, it is located in a secure, developed area that makes travel efficient and comfortable.

Design and Comfort

The hotel is bright, modern, and spacious, adhering to the high international standards expected of a Marriott brand. The architecture is contemporary, often utilizing Indian stone and traditional motifs subtly to provide a sense of place.

Our room was a comfortable **344 sqft (32 m2)**, and it had the standard Marriott Courtyard room design. The bedding and climate control were excellent, the bathroom was modern and clean, and the rain forest shower had good water pressure. Our room had a lovely pool view.

Like the other 5-star hotels, you can expect two complimentary bottles of water daily and in-room tea and coffee facilities.

Dining and Facilities

As with the high-end hotels in Delhi, the **breakfast buffet here is exceptional**. It features an enormous variety of both Western, Indian, and other global breakfast items, all prepared with quality ingredients. The staff in the main restaurant (MoMo Cafe) were attentive, kind, and clearly a highlight of the overall experience. We had an excellent chat with them.

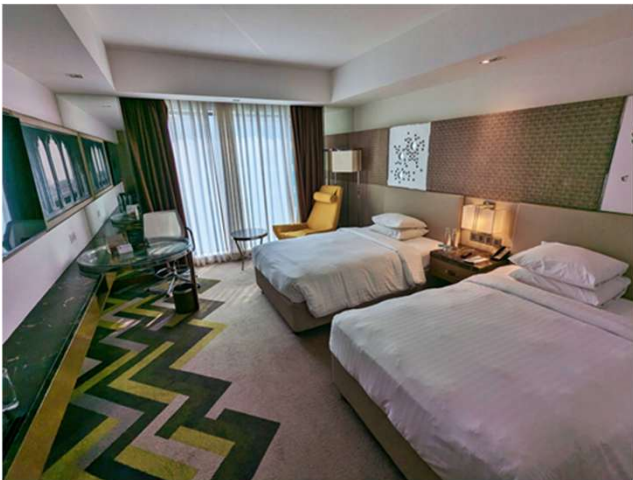
One thing you need to do: Take advantage of the specialty restaurant, **Anise**, for a romantic dinner in the evening. They have a live show of traditional Indian music in a romantic setting, and as in MoMo Café, they treat you like royalty! As expected, the restaurants are on the expensive side, but the taste and high-quality service make the experience completely worthwhile.

The hotel's facilities are pristine, centered around a large and beautiful **outdoor swimming pool** surrounded by lush greenery, which is a wonderful place to relax in the afternoon heat. It also includes a well-maintained fitness center and a full-service spa.

Verdict

The Courtyard by Marriott Agra is a top-tier **5-star choice** in the city. It offers a perfect blend of Marriott's global standard of comfort and a genuine sense of relaxed, Indian hospitality. Its convenient location for accessing the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, combined with exceptional dining, amenities, and some of the best hotel staff that gave us the royal treatment, is why **we rate it as our favorite hotel in India**. It is the ideal place to ensure your experience of Agra is as luxurious and stress-free as possible.

Here are some photos that we took:



India Travel Guide



India Travel Guide





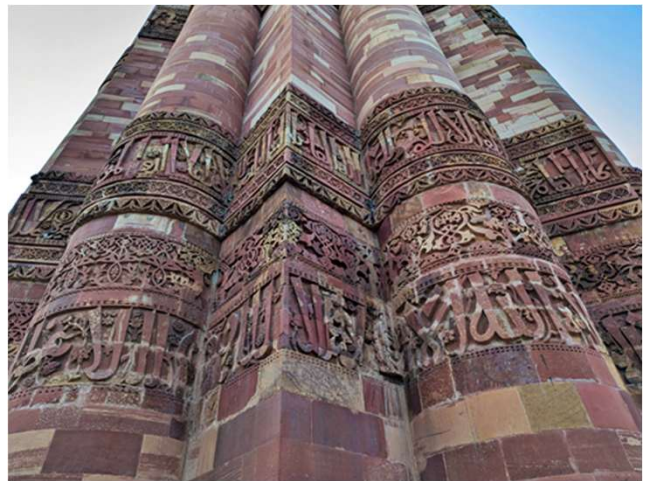
5. India's Golden Triangle: A 7-Day Classic Itinerary

This itinerary is designed to give you a comprehensive 7-day experience of India's Golden Triangle (Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur), focusing on historical highlights and cultural immersion. If you have extra time, we've included optional 'Add-On Days' below, which can extend your trip to an 11-day adventure based on your specific interests.

Day	Daytime	Night
<u>1</u>	<u>Arrive in Delhi</u> ; <u>Qutub Minar</u> ; <u>India Gate lights at night</u>	<u>Delhi</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>Red Fort</u> ; <u>Jama Masjid</u> , <u>Chandni Chowk</u> ; <u>India Gate</u> ; <u>Red Fort Light and Sound Show or India Gate lights at night</u>	<u>Delhi</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Humayun's Tomb</u> ; <u>Lodhi Art District</u> ; <u>Raj Ghat</u> (Ghandi cremation site)	<u>Delhi</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Morning train to Agra (1:40h)</u> ; <u>Taj Mahal</u> ; <u>Agra Fort</u> ; <u>Taj View Point ADA (sunset view of Taj Mahal)</u>	<u>Agra</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>transfer to Jaipur with stops at: Fatehpur Sikri Fort</u> ; <u>Chand Baori Stepwell (Batman step well)</u>	<u>Jaipur</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>Amber Palace</u> ; <u>Panna Meena ka Kund Stepwell</u> ; <u>Jal Mahal (Lake Palace)</u> ; <u>City Palace</u> ; <u>Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds)</u>	<u>Jaipur</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>train to Delhi</u> ; <u>Gandhi Smitri</u> ; <u>Agrasen ki Baoli</u>	<u>Delhi</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>Depart Delhi</u>	

5.1.6.1. The Qutub Minar

The star attraction is the tallest brick minaret in the world, standing at **240 ft (73 m)** high. Its five stories tell a long and complicated story of ambition, repair, and shifting architectural styles across three different reigns.



Construction Timeline and Meaning

Reign	Construction Details	Architectural Style & Meaning
Qutb-ud-din Aibak (1192–1199 CE)	Began construction and completed only the first story (base) of the tower.	Built as a Minar of Victory (or 'Tower of Triumph') to mark the establishment of Muslim rule in Delhi. It was also used by the muezzin to call the faithful to prayer at the adjacent Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque.
Iltutmish (1211–1236 CE)	Added the second, third, and fourth stories, nearly completing the structure.	He solidified the tower's architectural language, ensuring the Minar remained a symbol of the flourishing Delhi Sultanate.
Firoz Shah Tughlaq (1351–1388 CE)	The original fourth story was damaged by lightning. He repaired the damage and added a fifth and final story.	Tughlaq added the final story using white marble, differentiating it from the red sandstone base and giving the Minar its distinctive multi-era appearance.

Architectural Details: The Five Stories

The minar is a fascinating study in layered architecture, with each section visually communicating its builder and era:

- **The First Three Stories (Aibak & Iltutmish):** These sections are constructed entirely from **red and buff sandstone**. The most striking feature here is the **alternating fluting**—the vertical projections that line the exterior. The first story features a pattern of **alternating angular (star-shaped) and circular flutes**. The second story features only circular flutes, and the third only angular flutes. This rhythmic pattern gives the Minar its distinct texture.
- **The Upper Two Stories (Tughlaq):** The fourth and fifth stories, added by Tughlaq after the lightning strike, use a combination of **white marble and sandstone**. They are cylindrical and relatively plainer, providing a clear visual break from the dense carving of the lower levels.
- **Inscriptions:** Look closely at the bands circling the exterior. These contain hundreds of intricate carvings featuring verses from the **Quran** in the elegant Kufic and Nashk scripts, alongside historical records documenting the tower's construction, repair, and the name of its builder, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, and his successors, Iltutmish and Firoz Shah Tughlaq.

5.1.6.2. The Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque (Might of Islam)

The **Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque** (meaning 'Might of Islam') is perhaps the most historically charged structure in the complex. It stands as the **oldest surviving mosque in North India** and is the location where Hindu and Islamic architectural traditions violently collided.





5.1.7.2 The National War Memorial (Rashtriya Samar Smarak)

Located right east from the **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Canopy**, this modern memorial, inaugurated in 2019, is the nation's definitive tribute to soldiers who have died in the service of India since 1947.

- **Design:** The memorial features a highly symbolic circular, four-concentric-circle design known as the **Chakra Vyuh**. Each circle represents a value:
 - **Amar Chakra (Circle of Immortality):** The central zone where the new Eternal Flame is housed.
 - **Veerta Chakra (Circle of Bravery):** Features six bronze murals depicting famous battles.
 - **Tyag Chakra (Circle of Sacrifice):** The ring dedicated to the names of the fallen inscribed on granite tablets.
 - **Rakshak Chakra (Circle of Protection):** A ring of more than 600 trees symbolizing the defending soldiers.
- **Experience:** The NWM is designed for quiet contemplation and reflection, offering a moving experience that complements the grand, historical statement of the India Gate.
- **Security:** Be prepared to go through a metal detector to enter this memorial.



The Spectacular Night View

When the sun sets, India Gate transforms into a breathtaking spectacle. The entire structure and its surroundings are brilliantly illuminated by **powerful floodlights**. The sight of the massive arch glowing against the night sky, reflected in the nearby canals and fountains, is mesmerizing and draws massive crowds of tourists and locals alike. It is arguably the best time to visit for purely aesthetic reasons.

Practical Information

- **Accessibility:** India Gate is easily reached via taxi or Uber, the **Central Secretariat Metro Station** (Yellow and Violet Lines), followed by a short auto-rickshaw ride or a 20-minute walk down the Kartavya Path.
- **Timing:** The complex is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, making the evening visit for the lighting display highly recommended.
- **Security:** Due to its importance, the area is heavily guarded, especially during major holidays. Expect increased security checks in the vicinity.

5.2 Day 2: Self-Guided Tour of Delhi

Today is your first full day in Delhi, and you are diving headfirst into the city's rich, layered history. Your itinerary takes you from the towering Mughal grandeur of the **Red Fort** and the electrifying, historic chaos of **Chandni Chowk** in Old Delhi, straight to the solemn modern architecture of **India Gate** and the **National War Memorial** in New Delhi.

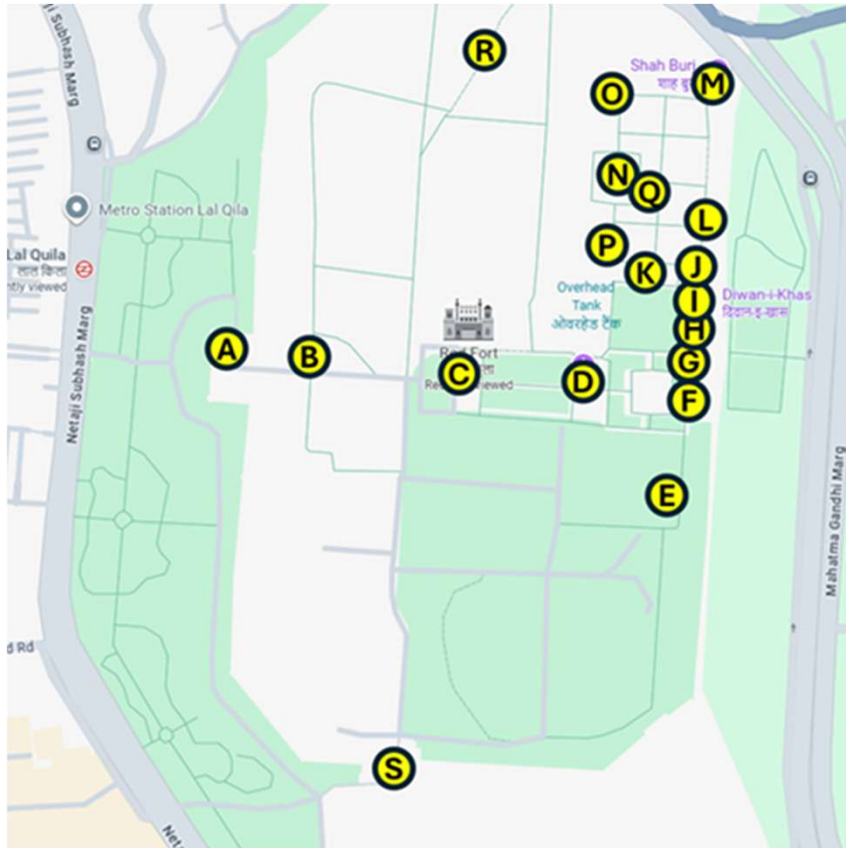
This schedule is a perfect balance between ancient power centers and colonial-era planning, offering a comprehensive view of the capital's evolution.



- 1 = [Red Fort](#)
- 2 = [Jama Masjid](#)
- 3 = [Chandni Chowk](#)
- 4 = [India Gate, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Canopy, National War Memorial](#)

The Red Fort Complex: A Detailed Tour of Key Structures

The following detailed breakdown covers the 17 key points of interest, generally following a processional route an emperor would have taken from the public entrances to the private palaces.



- A = [Lahori Darwaza \(Gate\)](#)
- B = [The Chhatta Bazaar](#)
- C = [The Naubat Khana \(The Drum House\)](#)
- D = [Diwan-i-Aam](#)
- E = [The Mumtaz Mahal](#)
- F = [The Rang Mahal](#)
- G = [Nahr-i-Bihisht \(Stream of Paradise\)](#)
- H = [The Khas Mahal](#)
- I = [Diwan-i-Khas](#)
- J = [The Hammams](#)
- K = [Moti Masjid](#)
- L = [The Hira Mahal](#)
- M = [The Shah Burj](#)
- N = [Zafar Mahal](#)
- O = [Bhadon Pavilion](#)
- P = [Sawan Pavilion](#)
- Q = [Hayat Baksh Bagh](#)
- R = [The Red Fort Baoli](#)
- S = [The Delhi Gate](#)

I. The Imperial Entry and Public Zones

5.2.1.A The Lahori Darwaza (Lahore Gate)

The **Lahori Darwaza** serves as the magnificent primary entrance and ceremonial face of the Red Fort, acting as the crucial architectural link between the royal complex and the bustling city of Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi) that laid beyond its walls. It is the gateway through which all modern visitors enter and is steeped in both Mughal history and modern Indian national identity.



Feature	Architectural and Historical Significance
Builder & Date	Shah Jahan, completed in 1648 CE.
Name Origin	The gate is named for its orientation, facing west toward the Mughal Empire's cultural and political center of Lahore (now in Pakistan).
Context	Strategically built to open onto the broad, central thoroughfare of Shahjahanabad, known then and now as Chandni Chowk. This ensured the Emperor's processions and public ceremonies were visible to the populace.
The Original Structure & Size	The gate is a massive, three-story structure built of red sandstone, projecting immense power. Its impressive central arched opening measures 41 ft (12.5 m) tall and 24 ft (7.3 m) wide. It is flanked by impressive semi-octagonal turrets (burj) and topped with delicate white marble chhatris (open pavilions) and crenellations.
Aurangzeb's Barbican (Key Detail)	The gate's original frontal symmetry was intentionally broken by Emperor Aurangzeb. He added a massive, high-walled defensive forecourt called a barbican in front of the gate. This addition serves two purposes: defensively, it prevents a direct, unimpeded frontal charge; and politically, it forces visitors to make a sharp, 90-degree turn before entering, reducing their velocity and imposing humility before reaching the court.
Visitor Experience	The gate leads directly into the Chhatta Chowk (Covered Market), where royalty and high officials once shopped. This transition immediately immerses you from the outside world into the commercial heart of the fort.
National Importance	The Lahori Darwaza holds immense symbolic value in modern India. It is the historic spot where the Prime Minister of India hoists the national flag and delivers the annual address every Independence Day (August 15th).

5.2.1.B The Chhatta Bazaar (Covered Bazaar)

Immediately upon passing through the massive Lahori Gate, visitors step into the **Chhatta Bazaar** (Covered Bazaar). This stunning, barrel-vaulted arcade is one of the most distinctive and modern elements of Shah Jahan's design, offering an immediate transition from the world of military defense to the world of royal commerce.

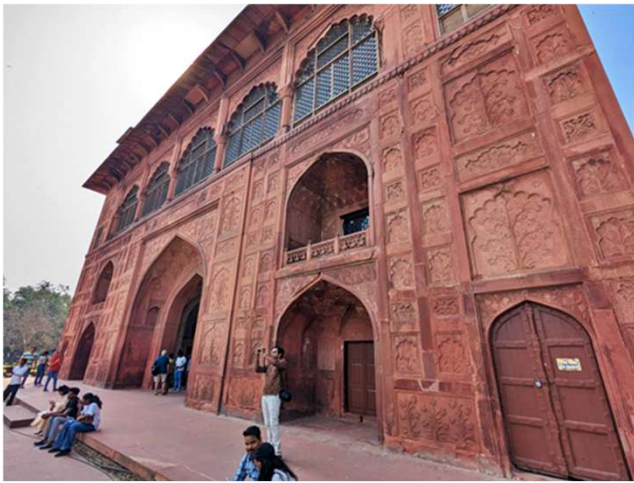


Feature	Architectural and Historical Significance
Builder & Date	Shah Jahan, constructed simultaneously with the Fort, completed in 1648 CE.
Function	This was the exclusive retail hub for the nobility, particularly the women of the royal zenana (harem), who were often cloistered and did not shop in the public markets. It provided a secure, climate-controlled, and high-end shopping experience.
Original Name	It was originally known as Bazaar-i-Musaqqaf (Covered Market) or sometimes the Meena Bazaar (referring to the painted, colorful decorations and the market's occasional use by noblewomen to sell their own crafted goods during festivals).
Architecture	The bazaar is a unique example of 17th-century covered commercial architecture in India. It consists of two parallel rows of 32 square apartments (shops) on either side, which are protected by a continuous, vaulted ceiling. This barrel vault was revolutionary, providing shade, temperature control, and security.

Commerce & Luxury	The shops were intentionally small and uniform, designed to maximize revenue and ensure standardized trade. Here, merchants sold only the finest luxury goods to the royal court: silks, brocades, jewelry, precious metals, ivory carvings, perfumes, spices, and weapons of exceptional craftsmanship.
Hydraulic Cooling	In addition to the cool shade provided by the thick stone vaulting, the building was ingeniously integrated into the fort's water system. A channel ran through the center of the bazaar, which was periodically filled with water, allowing evaporation to further cool the air circulating through the market, a highly sought-after comfort in Delhi's intense heat.
Visitor Experience	Today, the Chhatta Bazaar retains its commercial function, selling souvenirs and handicrafts, giving modern visitors a tangible link to its original purpose as the entrance to the ultimate Mughal imperial city.

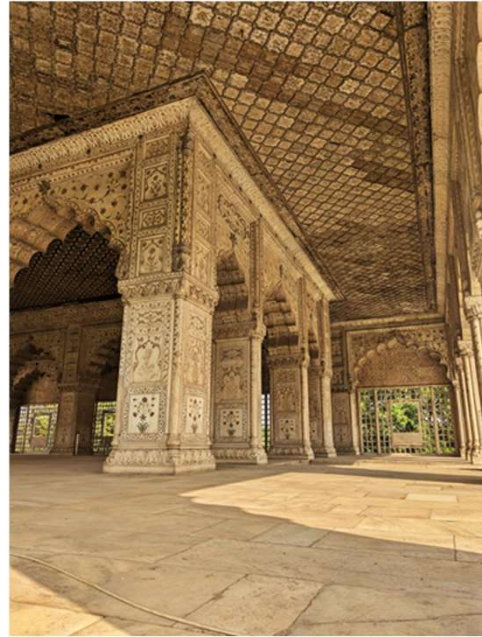
5.2.1.C The Naubat Khana (The Drum House)

The **Naubat Khana** (meaning 'Drum House' or, more formally, the **Naqqar Khana**) stands prominently as the ceremonial gateway between the public entry courtyard and the inner palace complex. It is a striking two-story, rectangular structure, built entirely of red sandstone, and serves as the visual and acoustic **threshold** to the [Diwan-i-Aam](#) (Hall of Public Audience).



5.2.1.I Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience)

The **Diwan-i-Khas** (meaning 'Hall of Private Audience') was the most exclusive and sumptuously decorated hall in the entire Red Fort. It was the absolute pinnacle of imperial protocol, reserved only for the most high-stakes meetings: private discussions with the **highest nobility (*Umara*)**, trusted ministers, diplomatic envoys, and foreign heads of state.





Feature	Architectural and Historical Significance
Builder & Date	Shah Jahan, completed in 1648 CE.
Function	Confidential Administration. This was the seat of the Emperor's inner council, where state policy was formulated, top-secret decisions were made, and royal honors and titles were conferred.
Architecture & Material	The hall is a breathtaking pavilion, built almost entirely of pure white marble. Unlike the Diwan-i-Aam, the Diwan-i-Khas is smaller, more intimate, and refined. Its structure is defined by its series of graceful, cusped arches that support a flat roof.
Opulence & Gilding	The columns, arches, and ceilings were once entirely covered in pure gold gilding and vibrant paint, creating an astonishing spectacle of wealth and power that left foreign dignitaries speechless. The white marble provided a luminous background for this incredible detail.

Pietra Dura Inlay	The marble columns are heavily decorated with spectacular pietra dura (inlaid stone mosaic). These intricate floral motifs—depicting jasmines, poppies, and tulips—were crafted from semi-precious stones (such as carnelian, lapis lazuli, and agate), transforming the structure into a glittering jewel box.
The Peacock Throne (Takht-e-Taus)	This hall is the precise spot where the legendary Peacock Throne (Takht-e-Taus) once stood on a raised platform. The throne was one of the most magnificent pieces of furniture ever created, inlaid with thousands of jewels, and valued in the 17th century at nearly twice the cost of the entire Red Fort complex.
The Paradise Couplet	The walls of the Diwan-i-Khas famously bear the iconic Persian couplet inscribed in gold: 'Agar Firdaus bar ru-ye Zamin ast, Hamin ast-o hamin ast-o hamin ast.' (If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this). This inscription perfectly encapsulates Shah Jahan's vision of the Red Fort as a divine, terrestrial paradise.
Tragic History (The Plunder)	The opulence was short-lived. As you noted, the fort was captured by the Persian invader Nader Shah in 1739 CE. He looted the palace, seizing both the Peacock Throne and the Koh-i-Noor diamond. The throne was disassembled and carried back to Persia, leaving the Diwan-i-Khas tragically vacant of its most famous artifact.

5.2.3 Chandni Chowk – The Moonlit Square: Old Delhi's Pulsing Heart

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Once you are done visiting Jama Masjid, we are ready to start our Self-Guided Walking tour of Chandni Chowk.

Chandni Chowk was originally built by Emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century. This area was the grand boulevard of his new capital, Shahjahanabad. Today, it remains one of the largest and busiest wholesale markets in Asia, offering a sensory overload of sights, sounds, and smells. While the chaos can be overwhelming, this is where you witness the true, pulsating spirit of Delhi.

Why You Should Visit

Chandni Chowk is the perfect antidote to the solemnity of the Red Fort, providing a vibrant, living contrast. Where the fort was the symbol of imperial power, the Chowk was the **economic and social artery** that fed the empire. You come here not for a single monument, but for the experience: to taste the historic street food, navigate the winding *galis* (lanes), and observe the intense, concentrated commerce that has flourished here for nearly four centuries.

History and Importance

The Chowk's name, '**Moonlit Square**' or 'Moonlit Crossing', comes from the central canal that once ran down its length. This canal brought water from the Yamuna River into the city. It was essential for providing water to the royal buildings (including the Red Fort), watering the median gardens, and, most famously, reflecting the moonlight and the silver shops that lined its banks—hence the name 'Moonlit Square'.

The space occupied by the canal was a **linear water feature and garden**, defining the street's central axis from the Lahori Gate of the Red Fort all the way to Fatehpuri Mosque.

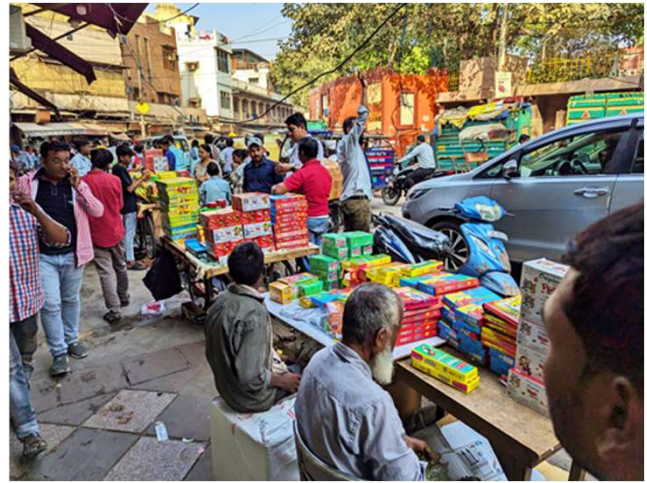
After the 1857 Revolt (the First War of Independence), the British consolidated power and made radical changes to Old Delhi to assert control and modernize the city according to their own standards. They saw the canal and the Mughal gardens as outdated, drained the canal, filled in the water channel, and paved over the central median. In the newly paved center of the road, the British built a prominent **Victorian-style Clock Tower (Ghanta Ghar)** around 1880. This tower became the new, distinct **central landmark** of the entire square, effectively replacing the visual and structural presence of the canal and its reflections. The British also installed a **tram line** where the canal once flowed. The bazaar was designed by **Jahanara Begum**, Shah Jahan's favorite daughter, making it a rare example of a major public work commissioned by a Mughal woman. The street originally stretched from the Lahori Gate of the Red Fort to the Fatehpuri Mosque.

Modern Day: Despite the transformation, the essence of trade and specialization remains. The street has fractured into numerous *galis* and sub-markets, each dedicated to a specific commodity (e.g., spices, paper, jewelry).

Architecture

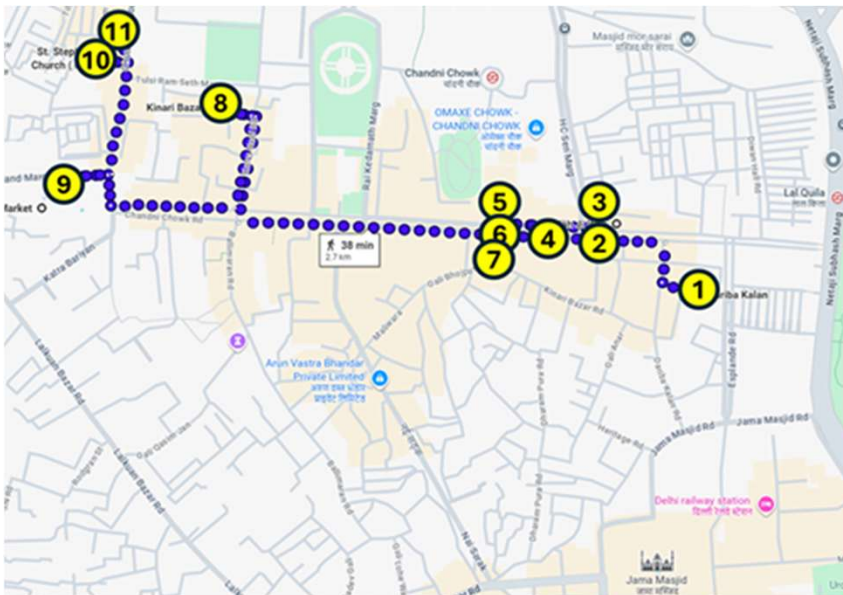
While the grandeur of the original Mughal architecture has been largely obscured by shops and modernization, evidence of its past remains. The street is anchored by major religious institutions—the **Fatehpuri Masjid** at the western end and the **Shwetambar Jain Temple** and **Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib** closer to the Red Fort—illustrating the area’s historic religious tolerance and diversity. Look up past the storefronts and advertisements to spot the original, beautiful Mughal-era *havelis* and intricately carved residential balconies.





5.2.3.0 Self-Guided Walking Tour of Chandni Chowk

This Self-Guided Walking Tour of Chandni Chowk starts at the Silver Chowk and focuses on the most significant stops in and around the main Chandni Chowk road, allowing you to walk (or take a cycle rickshaw) through the best of Old Delhi.



- 1 = [Dariba Kalan \(The Silver Chowk\)](#)
- 2 = [Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib](#)
- 3 = [Wah Ji Wah Restaurant](#)
- 4 = [Ghantewala Confectioners](#)
- 5 = [Natraj Dahi Bhalla](#)
- 6 = [Pt. Babu Ram Paranthe Wala](#)
- 7 = [Paranthe Wali Gali \(Street of Parathas\)](#)
- 8 = [Kinari Bazaar](#)
- 9 = [Gadodia Market](#)
- 10 = [St. Stephen's Church](#)
- 11 = [Fatehpuri Wholesale Market](#)

5.2.3.1 Dariba Kalan (The Silver Chowk)

([map](#), [reviews](#))

The **Dariba Kalan** is a legendary street that serves as the enduring heart of luxury commerce in Old Delhi. It is not defined by a single shop but by the dense, narrow concentration of trade that has existed here since the 17th century. Walking this lane offers a tangible connection to the glittering world of Mughal aristocracy and the exclusive retail hub of the imperial capital.





Feature	Significance and Experience
Name Origin	The name Dariba Kalan literally means 'The Street of the Peerless Pearl' or 'The Big Incomparable Street.' This reflects its original status as the most exclusive market selling pearls, diamonds, and precious stones to the royal court and the elite women of the zenana.
Primary Commerce	While it began with pearls, the street became synonymous with high-quality silver jewelry and artifacts after the Mughal era. Today, it is Delhi's most famous silver market, offering an incredible variety of intricate silver jewelry (necklaces, bangles, payals or anklets), traditional pooja items, and antique-style silver artifacts and utensils.

The Perfume Legacy (Attar)	The lane is also famous for its shops selling authentic attar (or ittar). These are highly concentrated, non-alcoholic natural perfumes and essential oils—a direct remnant of the luxury trade that catered to the Mughal court. Scents like rose, jasmine, sandalwood, and khus (vetiver) transport you back to the opulent palace chambers.
The Experience & Safety	<p>This narrow, bustling alley is a true feast for the senses. The small shops are crammed with an endless display of intricate metalwork, and the air is thick with the scent of silver polish and exotic attar. However, due to the dense crowds and high-value commerce, visitors should exercise extreme caution.</p> <p>Pickpockets are highly active in this crowded environment. Secure all valuables, keep bags zippered and in front of you, and avoid wearing conspicuous jewelry.</p>
Contextual History	Located just off the main Chandni Chowk thoroughfare, the Dariba Kalan provides a fascinating glimpse into the commercial order of Shahjahanabad. It was deliberately situated close to the palace complex (Red Fort) to ensure security and exclusive access for the Emperor's treasury officials and family members.

5.3.1 Humayun's Tomb

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Admission Fee: Foreign Tourists: ₹600 (at the time of writing).

Photography and Videography: photography is allowed and free of charge, and Video filming permit is ₹25 per person.

Opening Hours: Open daily from sunrise to sunset (typically 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM).

Best Time to Visit: Early morning at opening time to avoid the midday heat and the main crowds. The light is also best for photography.

Time Needed: Budget 90 to 120 minutes to comfortably explore the main tomb and surrounding gardens and structures.

Humayun's Tomb is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a breathtaking piece of architecture that bridges the gap between earlier central Asian mausoleums and the ultimate expression of Mughal funerary architecture: the [Taj Mahal](#) in [Agra](#), built nearly a century later.

Why You Must Visit

- **Precursor to the Taj Mahal:** Humayun's Tomb introduced several design elements, most notably the **Charbagh garden** and the use of the double-dome, which were perfected in the Taj Mahal.
- **Architectural Serenity:** Unlike the busy Red Fort, the complex offers much more space and quietude. The vast, geometrically arranged gardens provide a peaceful, meditative atmosphere.
- **Historical Significance:** It houses the body of the second Mughal Emperor, Humayun, and contains over 150 graves of Mughal royalty, earning it the nickname, '**Dormitory of the Mughals**'.

History and Importance

The tomb was commissioned in 1569 by **Hamida Banu Begum**, Humayun's Persian wife, nine years after the Emperor's death. Its construction signaled the return of Mughal power to India under Humayun's son, Akbar the Great, after a '**Period of Exile**' from **1540–1555**. In this 15-year period between the reigns of the second and third emperors, the Mughal dynasty lost control of India.

- **The Loss of Power:** Emperor **Humayun** inherited the throne from his father, Babur, but was defeated and driven out of India in 1540 by the Afghan ruler **Sher Shah Suri**.
- **The Exile:** Humayun was forced to flee west, spending years wandering through Persia (modern-day Iran) and Afghanistan. During this time, his son, **Akbar**, who would become the greatest of the Mughal emperors, was born in exile.
- **The Return:** In 1555, with Persian military aid, Humayun successfully defeated the successors of Sher Shah Suri and regained the throne of Delhi. However, he died tragically just six months later after falling down the stairs of his library.

More details about the tomb:

- **Persian Influence:** Its design marks the first major infusion of Persian architecture into the Indian subcontinent. The chief architect, **Mirak Mirza Ghiyas**, was Persian, and he brought with him the concept of the octagonal central chamber and the expansive, symmetrical garden plan.
- **The Final Resting Place:** The tomb served as the primary burial site for Mughal emperors and family members for nearly 300 years (first burial: 1570, last burial: 1856), reinforcing its importance as a dynastic mausoleum.
- **British Connection:** The last Mughal Emperor, **Bahadur Shah Zafar**, was captured here by the British in 1857, marking the official end of the Mughal Empire in India.

Architecture and Design

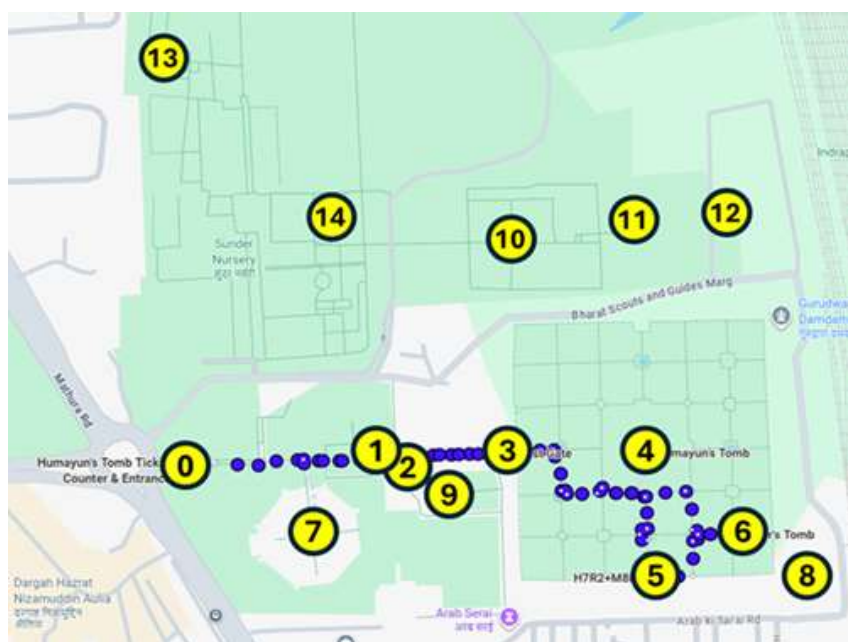
The tomb is the first structure in India built in the **Charbagh style**, a quadrilateral garden layout based on the four gardens of Paradise mentioned in the Quran.

- **The Tomb Structure:** The main mausoleum sits on a massive, two-tiered stone plinth. It is constructed primarily of **red sandstone**, beautifully contrasted with **white marble** used for the dome, ornamental inlay, and borders.
- **The Double Dome:** The dome itself is revolutionary for its time, featuring a **double layer**—a tall outer shell providing the iconic silhouette and a lower inner shell creating an intimate ceiling for the burial chamber. This technique was vital for future Mughal structures.
- **Symmetry and Water:** The Charbagh is divided into four main sections by walkways and two central water channels that represent the four rivers of Paradise. The intricate geometric symmetry is a defining feature of the entire complex.

5.3.1.0 Self-Guided Walking Tour of the Humayun's Tomb Complex

The complex is vast and extends beyond the main mausoleum. The structures surrounding Humayun's Tomb will help you understand the site's rich historical and architectural context. As the site is vast, and we don't have unlimited time, we have designed a Self-Guided Walking Tour of structures 1-7 inside the Humayun's Tomb Complex. Feel free to visit structures 8-14, if you have time.

Start at the ticket office labeled 0.



0 = Entrance

1 = [Bu Halima Gate](#)

2 = [Arab Serai Gate](#)

3 = [West Gate](#)

4 = [Humayun's Tomb](#)

5 = [South Gate](#)

6 = [Barbers Tomb](#)

7 = [Isa Khan Tomb](#)

8 = [Nila Gumbad](#)

9 = [Afsarwala Tomb](#)

10 = [Mirza Muzaffar](#)

[Hussain Tomb](#)

11 = [Chota Batashewala](#)
[Tomb](#)

12 = [Unknow Mughal's](#)
[Tomb](#)

13 = [Lakkarwala Burj](#)

14 = [Sunderwala Mahal](#)

5.3.1.1 Bu Halima's Gate

The **Bu Halima's Gate** marks the initial entry point into the sprawling Humayun's Tomb complex. While it may appear modest compared to the subsequent structures, this gateway, and the small tomb behind it are essential for understanding the **transitional and ceremonial** function of the complex, serving as a prelude to the grandeur of the main mausoleum.



Feature	Detailed History and Significance
History & The Bu Halima Mystery	The identity of Bu Halima is uncertain. She was likely a highly respected wet nurse (Anaga or Daya) or a noblewoman attached to the Mughal court, possibly during the time of Babur (Humayun's father). Wet nurses and their families often gained immense political and social power within the royal structure, warranting a prominent tomb site.

Architecture	The gate is a two-story structure built of sturdy red sandstone and rubble masonry , featuring a single, deep central arch. It is stylistically simpler than the grand gates that would later define the <i>Charbagh</i> surrounding Humayun's Tomb, representing an earlier, transitional phase in Mughal architecture.
Bu Halima's Tomb	Immediately inside the gateway lies Bu Halima's Tomb . This small, simple, square structure rests on a raised platform (<i>chabutra</i>). Its understated design is typical of earlier Mughal tomb architecture —a crucial contrast to the colossal scale and complex ornamentation of Humayun's Tomb nearby.
Garden Design	The small area surrounding the tomb, known as Bu Halima's Garden, is designed as a less formal version of the Charbagh layout . It features basic symmetrical water channels and walkways, establishing the expectation of the much larger, more perfect paradise garden that awaits the visitor deeper within the complex.
Importance to the Visit	This spot is essential because it functions as the ceremonial forecourt . It serves as a psychological boundary, separating the chaos of the outside world from the solemn, spiritual order of the complex. While you may only stop briefly, it sets the stage for the meticulous planning and symmetrical perfection of the main site.

5.3.1.2 Arab Serai Gate

The **Arab Serai Gate** marks the entrance to a crucial, yet often overlooked, part of the Humayun's Tomb complex: the residential and logistical quarter built specifically to house the workforce for the monumental construction project. This massive gate emphasizes security and scale, giving insight into the organization required for such an ambitious undertaking.



Feature	Detailed History and Significance
History & Purpose	The Arab Serai (Caravan Stop or Inn) and its gate were built by Humayun's chief consort, Hamida Banu Begum , in the 1560s. The structure was designed to provide secure lodging for the hundreds of Persian artisans, craftsmen, calligraphers, and workers who were brought from Persia (modern-day Iran) to build Humayun's Tomb.

Architecture	The gate is a massive, imposing structure built using robust rubble masonry and fortified with prominent turrets and solid bastion walls. Its sheer scale and defensive appearance underscore its role as the single, secured entry point to the residential quarter. It needed to protect both the highly skilled workforce and the precious building materials stored inside.
The Serai Quarter	Inside the gate lay the <i>Serai</i> itself—a vast, walled courtyard designed to serve as a self-contained, temporary town. It included residential cells, stables, storage areas, and probably small workshops. This entire quarter was necessary because the Mughal capital was still in flux during the early years of Akbar’s reign, and skilled foreign labor required maximum security.
Importance to Construction	The gate and the protective walls of the <i>Serai</i> are essential evidence of the complex logistics and security measures required to execute the tomb’s design. The use of Persian artisans ensured that the tomb incorporated the latest Persian architectural ideas, making it the first significant example of the Indo-Persian synthesis that would define later Mughal building (like the Taj Mahal).

The Experience

Admiring the sheer thickness and height of the gate walls allows you to appreciate the practical challenges faced by the builders. It represents the 'behind-the-scenes' military and logistical planning necessary to execute a masterpiece of this scale.

5.3.1.3 West Gate

The **West Gate** is the primary entrance for modern visitors to Humayun's Tomb, and historically, it was the grand ceremonial entrance. Its architecture is specifically designed to create a moment of awe, offering the first impressive, sweeping view of the vast **Charbagh Garden** and the magnificent tomb at its center.



Feature	Detailed Architecture and Significance
Primary Function	The gate served as the grand ceremonial entrance into the main <i>Charbagh</i> complex. Its placement ensured that the visitor's first glance captured the full, symmetrical glory of the tomb and its surrounding paradise garden, exactly as the Empress Hamida Banu Begum intended.
Architecture	It is an imposing, rectangular structure built primarily of rich red sandstone , beautifully framed by white marble inlay. It features a large central arch flanked by smaller arches on either side.

5.3.1.4 Humayun's Tomb (The First Garden-Tomb)

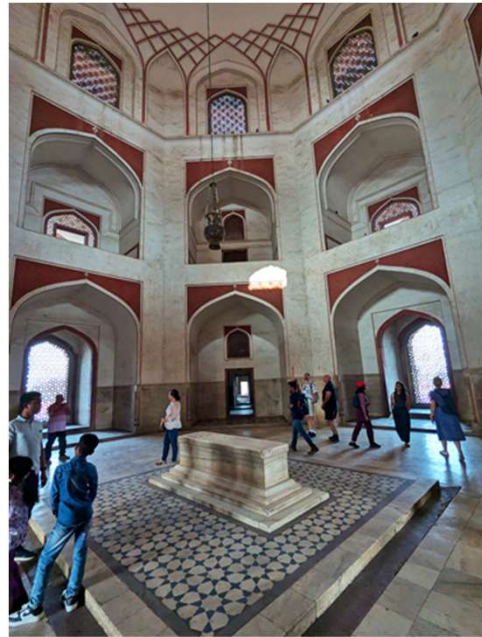
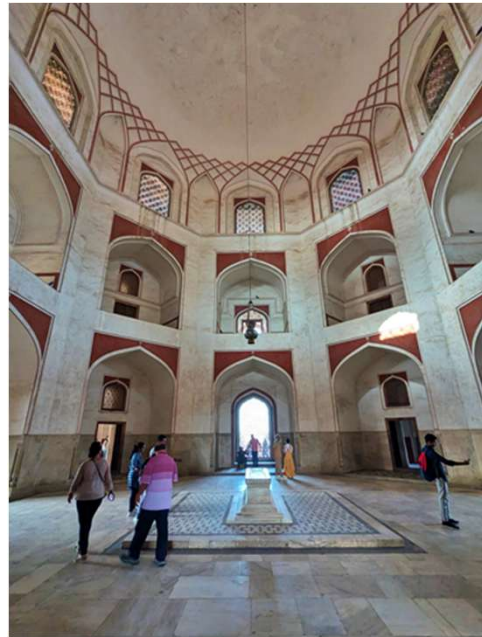
Please also see the [description earlier in this chapter](#).

The **Maqbara-i Humayun** (Tomb of Humayun) is the central and most magnificent structure of the complex. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the first substantial example of the great Mughal architectural style, defining the aesthetic principles that would later culminate in the Taj Mahal.



India Travel Guide







Feature	Detailed History, Architecture, and Significance
Patron & Date	Commissioned by Humayun's chief consort, Empress Hamida Banu Begum , in 1565 CE , nine years after his death. The construction was overseen by her and completed in 1572 CE, marking a powerful, early example of female patronage in Mughal architecture.
Chief Architect	Mirak Mirza Ghiyas , a highly regarded Persian architect. His presence ensured the tomb incorporated the latest and most advanced Persian architectural ideas.
Architectural Style	Indo-Persian Synthesis. This tomb is the first major structure to successfully merge the massive scale and <i>chhatri</i> (pavilion) elements of Indian tradition with the delicate geometry and precise symmetry of classical Persian architecture.

5.3.2 Lodhi Art District: Delhi's Open-Air Gallery

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Admission Fee: Free. The entire district is a public street, and there is no entry fee.

Opening Hours: Always Open (24/7). Since it is a residential area, it is best visited during daylight hours (9:00 AM – 6:00 PM) for the best light and to respect the residents.

Best Time to Visit: Mornings (10:00 AM – 1:00 PM) or Late Afternoons. Early morning light is excellent for photography, and the late afternoon provides cooler temperatures.

Footwear: Comfortable walking shoes are essential, as the best way to explore is by walking block-to-block.

Time Needed: Budget 60 to 90 minutes for a thorough walk-through of the main blocks, or a 10-20 min tuk-tuk ride along the main streets.

Facilities: Public restrooms are scarce. Plan to use facilities at one of the many cafes in the nearby market areas.

Important Tip: Do not rely on a set map, as murals change and fade. The best approach is to simply wander and allow yourself to get visually lost in the vibrant blocks.

The **Lodhi Art District** is a relatively new phenomenon in Delhi's urban landscape, transforming a collection of mundane government buildings into India's first-ever dedicated public street art district. It is a stunning display of contemporary creativity, acting as a vibrant canvas for artists from India and around the world.

Why You Should Visit

- **A Modern Contrast:** After spending time in the ancient, red-sandstone monuments of Old Delhi, the Lodhi Art District provides a necessary cultural palate cleanser, showcasing the city's dynamic, current artistic spirit.
- **Accessible Art:** This is one of the most accessible and democratic art spaces in the city. You don't need to enter a museum or gallery; the art is the street itself, easily viewed by foot or tuk-tuk.
- **Iconic Photography:** The murals are massive, colorful, and unique, making the district an essential stop for photographers and social media enthusiasts looking for Delhi's most vibrant backdrops.

History and Importance

The Lodhi Colony buildings were originally built by the British in the 1940s to house government employees, resulting in rows of identical, uninspired apartment blocks. The transformation began in **2015** as part of the **St+Art India** initiative. At the time of writing, there were 58 beautiful murals.

- **The St+Art Project:** The non-profit organization St+Art India Foundation collaborated with local authorities to use the blank walls of the colony as giant canvases. Over a period of years, dozens of national and international artists were invited to create murals based on themes relevant to contemporary India, social issues, and environmental protection.
- **Urban Renewal:** This project has successfully used art as a tool for urban renewal, breathing new life into a neglected government housing area and transforming it into a major cultural and tourist hub.
- **Themes and Message:** The murals tell stories, often covering themes like gender equality, environmental sustainability, mental health, and the diversity of Indian culture, making the district a place of profound social commentary as well as beauty.

What Can Be Seen There

The art district primarily covers the area around **Lodhi Colony, Blocks 10 to 17**. The experience is centered entirely on the monumental murals.

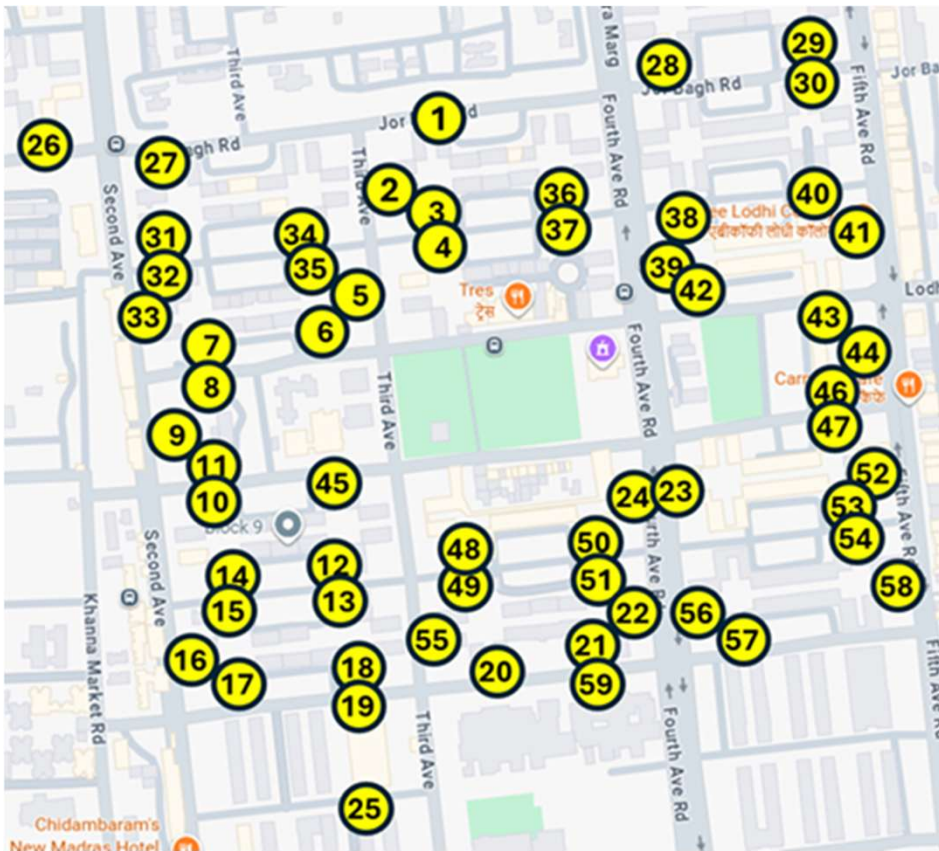
- **The Murals:** There are currently **60 murals** scattered across the building walls. Key highlights include:
 - **‘The Eye of the Tiger’:** A massive, photorealistic depiction of a Bengal tiger.
 - **‘The Origin of the World’ (by Lady Aiko):** A vibrant, Japanese-inspired piece that fuses traditional patterns with street art aesthetics.
 - **‘We Love Delhi’ Installations:** Smaller, more frequent pieces that emphasize community pride and connection.
- **Lodhi Gardens:** While not strictly part of the Art District, the historic **Lodhi Gardens** ([map](#), [reviews](#)) are located adjacent to the colony. These beautiful Mughal-era gardens, dotted with 15th-century Lodi dynasty tombs, offer a green, quiet contrast to the vibrant streets.
- **Trendy Cafes and Shops:** The surrounding neighborhoods of Khan Market and Lodhi Colony have seen an influx of chic cafes, boutique shops, and trendy restaurants, making it a great place to stop for lunch or coffee after your walk.

The Architecture of the Canvas

The architecture of the buildings is integral to the art itself:

- **Canvas Type:** The district uses mid-20th-century government residential architecture—simple, boxy, three-to-four-story buildings with flat facades.
- **Impact of Simplicity:** This architectural simplicity is precisely what makes the district work. The uniform, unadorned walls act as perfect blank slates, allowing the scale and complexity of the murals to dominate the visual landscape.
- **Interaction:** The artists often incorporate the physical elements of the buildings like windows, ledges, pipes, into their designs, creating a dynamic interaction between the art and the existing structure.

Here is a self-guided tour that takes you to 27 fantastic murals:



#	Mural	Artist	Description and Significance
1	Terracotta	Tellas (Italy)	This mural is a striking work that draws inspiration from the intricate block-printing and natural foliage patterns deeply embedded in Indian textile and craft heritage. The mural utilizes a highly restricted color palette, mostly shades of muted terracotta red and white set against a soothing turquoise backdrop, to create a dense tapestry of stylized leaves, vines, and abstract floral motifs. The composition covers the entire building side in repeating, overlapping forms, offering a sophisticated, modern take on traditional design that transforms the otherwise simple wall into a rich, fabric-like piece of public art that celebrates the nation's rich legacy of patternmaking.



2	Gracious Heritage	Majlis Art Forum (India)	<p>This striking mural is a monumental tribute to India's wildlife and the necessity of conservation, dominated entirely by a monochromatic palette of deep green. The artwork features a pair of magnificent Indian elephants—a revered symbol of strength, wisdom, and heritage—rendered with highly detailed line work that brings out the texture of their skin against the vibrant background. By using just one primary color, Dey focuses the viewer's attention entirely on the grandeur of the animals and the critical importance of preserving the natural world that exists alongside the urban sprawl, making it one of the most visually distinctive and impactful murals in the district.</p>
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3	Letters for Lodhi	Yok and Sheryo (Australia/Singapore)	<p>This bright yellow mural is a highly graphic and playful work inspired by vintage Indian matchbox and pop art aesthetics. The composition is dominated by large, bold imagery, most notably a stylized, spotted, feline-like creature, and features a prominent archway over which the Hindi words ‘गुप्त द्वार’ (Gupt Dwar - Secret Door) are painted. The artists embedded various cryptic English and Hindi words around the arch, including ‘Fortune’ and ‘Health’, drawing inspiration from the traditional matchbox designs, and using the mural to provoke conversation about themes like justice, equality, and the cultural riches of the neighborhood.</p>
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5.4.1 The Taj Mahal: A Jewel of Mughal Architecture and an Eternal Love Story

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#), [tickets](#))

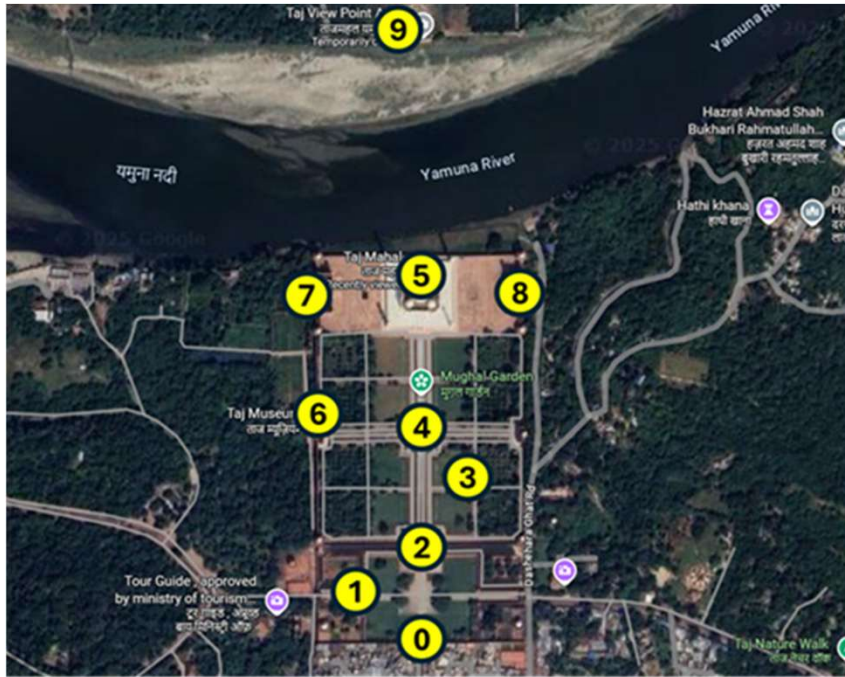
The Taj Mahal is the most universally recognized symbol of India itself. It is the culmination of Mughal architecture, an unparalleled marble marvel, and a testament to one man's enduring grief. This chapter details what you need to know about the 'Crown of Palaces', from its intimate history and flawless geometry to the practicalities of a visit.

Personally, I think the Taj Mahal is the most impressive building I have ever visited.



5.4.1.4 Exploring the Taj Complex: The Three Zones

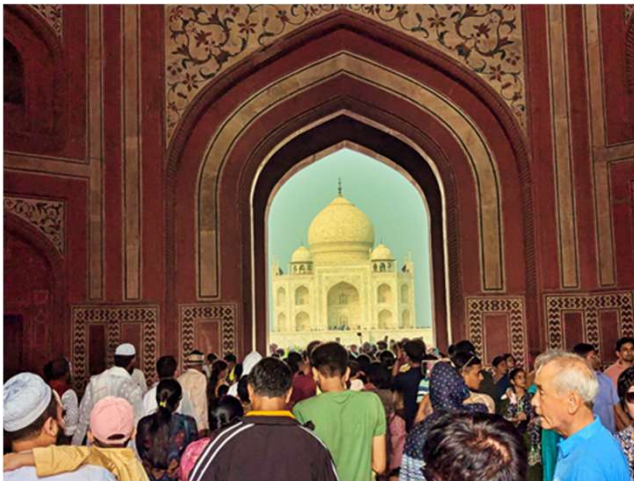
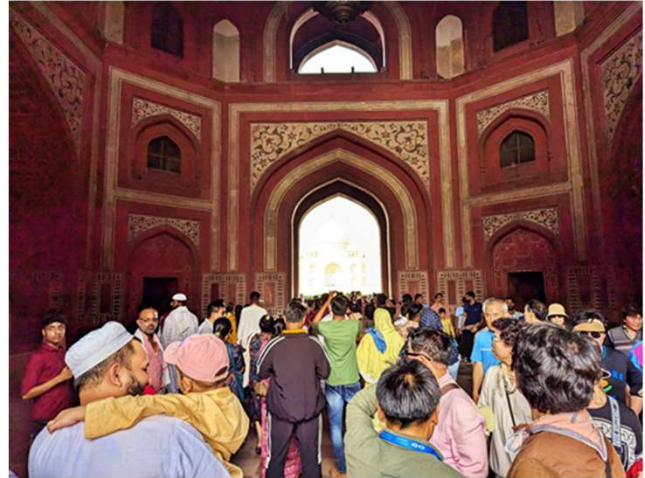
The entire complex is a massive 42-acre site, divided into three main zones that guide the visitor's journey toward the tomb.



- 0 = [Entrance](#)
- 1 = [Exhibition](#)
- 2 = [Great Gate / Darwaza-i Rauza](#)
- 3 = [Charbagh Garden](#)
- 4 = [Pool of Kawthar](#)
- 5 = [Main Taj Mahal Mausoleum](#)
- 6 = [Taj Museum](#)
- 7 = [Taj Mahal Mosque](#)
- 8 = [Jawab / Mehmaan khana](#)
- 9 = [Taj View Point ADA](#)

5.4.1.4.1. The Great Gate (*Darwaza-i Rauza*)

The journey begins at the massive red sandstone entrance gateway. This gate is an architectural masterpiece in its own right, designed to visually frame the tomb perfectly.

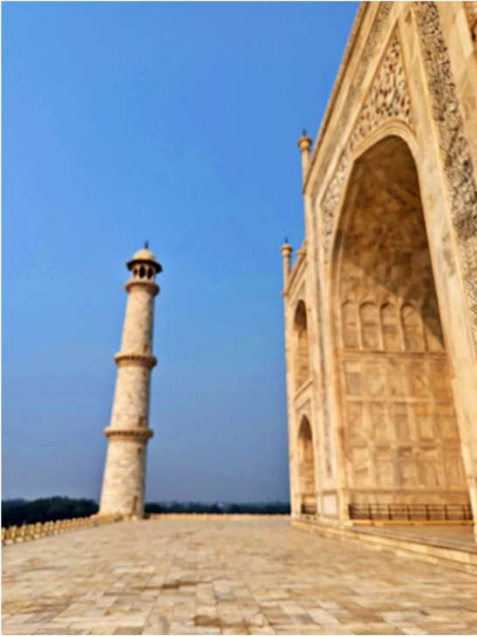


5.4.1.4.3 The Main Mausoleum and the Cenotaphs

The main marble structure stands on its raised plinth, accessible by a set of stairs.

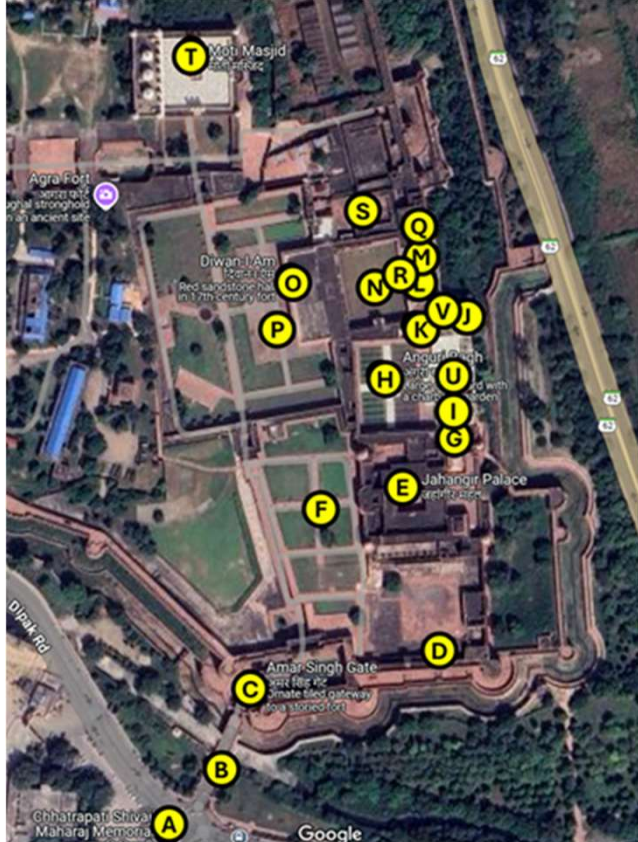
- **The Upper Chamber:** Inside the mausoleum, behind an exquisitely carved octagonal marble screen, are the **false sarcophagi (cenotaphs)** of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan. Visitors are allowed to enter the chamber, but are not allowed to touch or approach them. These are symbolic markers.
- **The Crypt:** The actual bodies are interred in a far plainer vault directly beneath the cenotaphs, at garden level, which is sealed off from public view. This lower chamber represents the resting place closer to the earth.





5.4.2.1 Self-Guided Walking Tour of Agra Fort

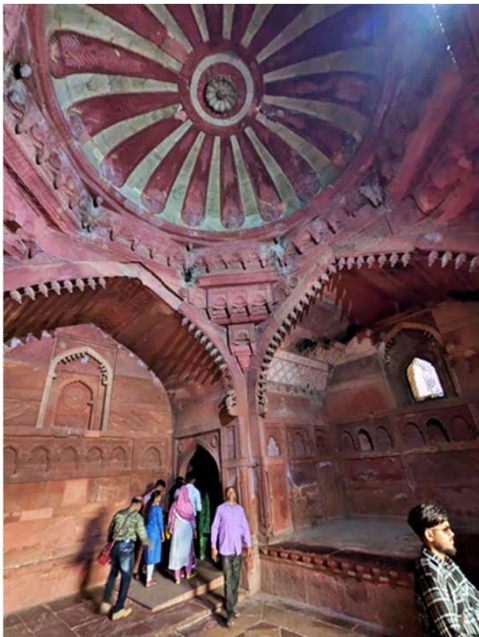
Only about a quarter of the original fort is accessible to the public today, but the sections that are open are spectacular. Here is what you can see:

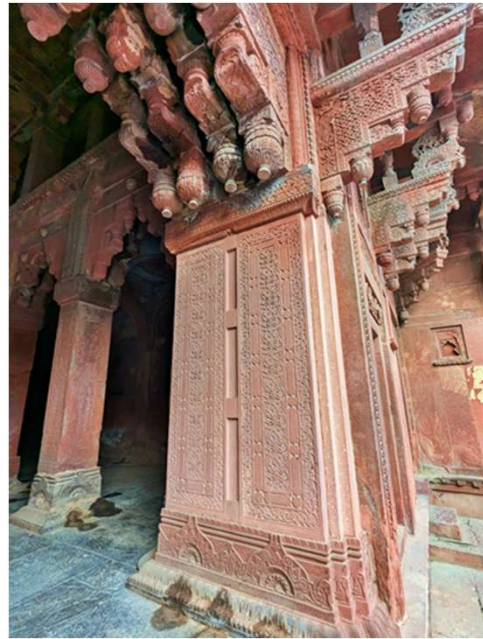
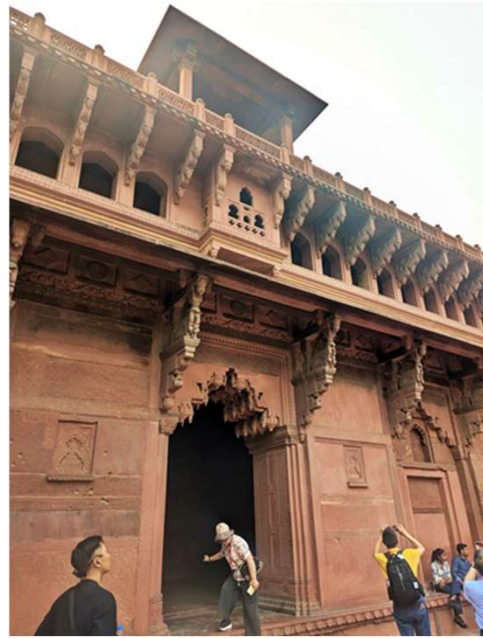


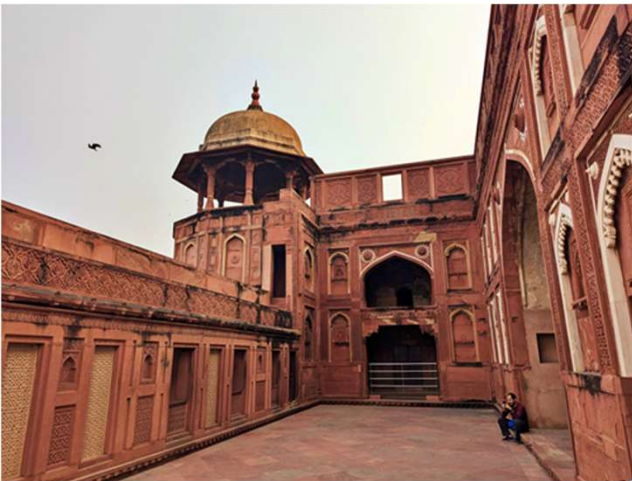
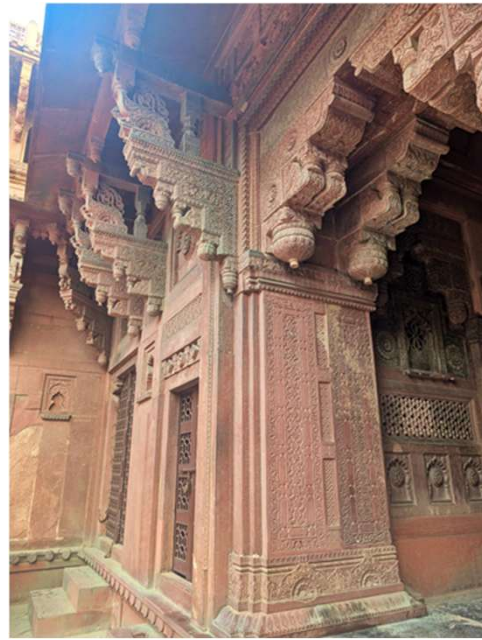
- A. [Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Memorial](#)
- B. [Ticket Booth](#)
- C. [Amar Singh Gate](#)
- D. [Step Well Akbari Mahal](#)
- E. [Jahangir Palace](#)
- F. [Hauz-i-Jahangiri](#)
- G. [Shah Jahani Mahal](#)
- H. [Anguri Bagh](#)
- I. [Roshnara Ara Pavilion](#)
- J. [Muthamman Burj](#)
- K. [The Shish Mahal \(The Glass Palace\)](#)
- L. [Diwan-i-khas](#)
- M. [Takht-E-Jahangir](#)
- N. [Machchi Bhawan](#)
- O. [Diwan-I-Am](#)
- P. [Tomb Of John Russell Colvin](#)
- Q. [Shahi Hamam](#)
- R. [Shah Jehan's Marble Throne](#)
- S. [Ratan Singh Ki Haveli](#)
- T. [Moti Masjid](#)
- U. [Khaas Mahal](#)
- V. [Meena Masjid](#)
- W. [Nagina Masjid](#)
- X. [Bengali Mahal](#)

5.4.2.1 E Jahangir Palace (Jahangiri Mahal)

The **Jahangiri Mahal**, or Jahangir Palace, stands as the most significant and largest surviving residential structure from the era of **Akbar the Great** (r. 1556–1605). While the Agra Fort is often associated with the marble elegance of Shah Jahan, this palace is a monument to its founder, Akbar, and his philosophy of cultural synthesis and military strength.







This palace is important, because it represents the **oldest and most robust layer of Mughal architecture** visible in the accessible areas of the Fort, built entirely of enduring **red sandstone**.

Historical Purpose: The Imperial Zenana

Despite its name, the palace was commissioned by Emperor Akbar around **1569 AD** for the use of the royal household, including his son Salim (who would later become Emperor Jahangir).

- **Residence of Women (*Zenana*):** The primary function of the Jahangiri Mahal was to serve as the chief residence for the **imperial women**—Akbar's many wives, consorts, mothers, and female relatives. Its colossal size was necessary to house the hundreds of individuals who made up the royal *zenana*.
- **A Self-Contained World:** The palace is a self-contained world, featuring courtyards, subterranean rooms for cooling, and enclosed terraces, all designed to ensure the privacy and security of the royal ladies, shielded from the public and the male court.

Architectural Masterpiece: Hindu-Persian Fusion

The architecture of the Jahangiri Mahal is a powerful statement of Akbar's vision of a unified empire, demonstrating a masterful blend of foreign and indigenous styles.

- **Red Sandstone Dominance:** Built entirely of red sandstone, the structure is military in style, contrasting sharply with the delicate marble of the later palaces.
- **Synthesis of Styles:** The design consciously integrates **Hindu, Central Asian (Timurid), and Persian** elements.
 - **Hindu Influence:** Look for the intricately carved **stone brackets** supporting the rooflines and balconies, which resemble features found in Hindu temples. The square doorways and projected eaves are typical of local Indian architecture.
 - **Timurid Influence:** The layout, featuring a large central courtyard and surrounding rooms, draws from the palace traditions of Akbar's Central Asian ancestors.
- **Absence of Pietra Dura:** Notably, the palace lacks the elaborate floral *Pietra Dura* (inlay work) seen in Shah Jahan's buildings. Instead, the decoration relies entirely on **carving, painting, and relief work** directly into the stone.

5.4.2.1.L Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience): The Throne of Power

The **Diwan-i-Khas** (Hall of Private Audience) represents the political and architectural climax of Emperor **Shah Jahan's** tenure in the Agra Fort. Unlike the massive, open-air structure of the Diwan-i-Aam (Public Audience), this smaller, more refined hall was reserved for the highest matters of state, where the future of the empire was decided in hushed tones.



History and Importance

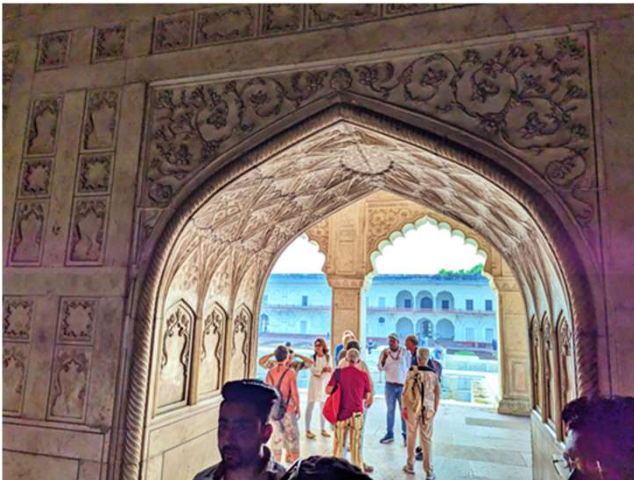
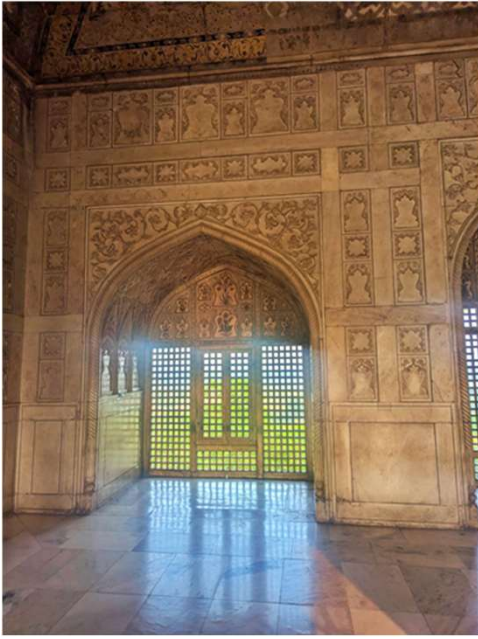
Constructed in pristine white marble by Shah Jahan around **1637 AD**, the Diwan-i-Khas marks the decisive shift from military functionality to ultimate imperial splendor.

- **Exclusivity:** This hall was the meeting place for the most **powerful nobles, trusted ministers**, foreign ambassadors, and visiting princes. Attendance was a sign of immense status, reflecting the Emperor's personal trust.
- **Political Theater:** This is where highly sensitive topics like military strategy, diplomacy, tax policy, and matters of succession were discussed. The structure itself, built of luminous white marble and delicate *Pietra Dura*, was designed to convey the immense wealth and sophisticated taste of the Mughal ruler to the world's most elite visitors.
- **The Peacock Throne (Historical):** The hall's main chamber was originally intended to house the legendary **Peacock Throne (*Takht-e-Taus*)**. This throne, studded with millions of rupees worth of jewels, was a dazzling symbol of Mughal wealth and power before it was moved to Delhi and later looted and destroyed.

5.4.2.1.U The Khaas Mahal: Zenith of Private Mughal Architecture

The **Khaas Mahal** (Private Palace) stands as a testament to the refined taste and architectural ambition of **Emperor Shah Jahan** within the massive, defensive structure of the Agra Fort. Constructed between 1631 and 1640, this exquisite white marble pavilion marks a pivotal moment in Mughal architecture, symbolizing the transition from the red sandstone style favored by Akbar to the pristine, elegant marble structures that define Shah Jahan's reign.





Location and Royal Function

The Khaas Mahal forms the centerpiece of the imperial residential quarters overlooking the Yamuna River. It is situated behind the massive [Diwan-i-Khas](#) (Hall of Private Audience).

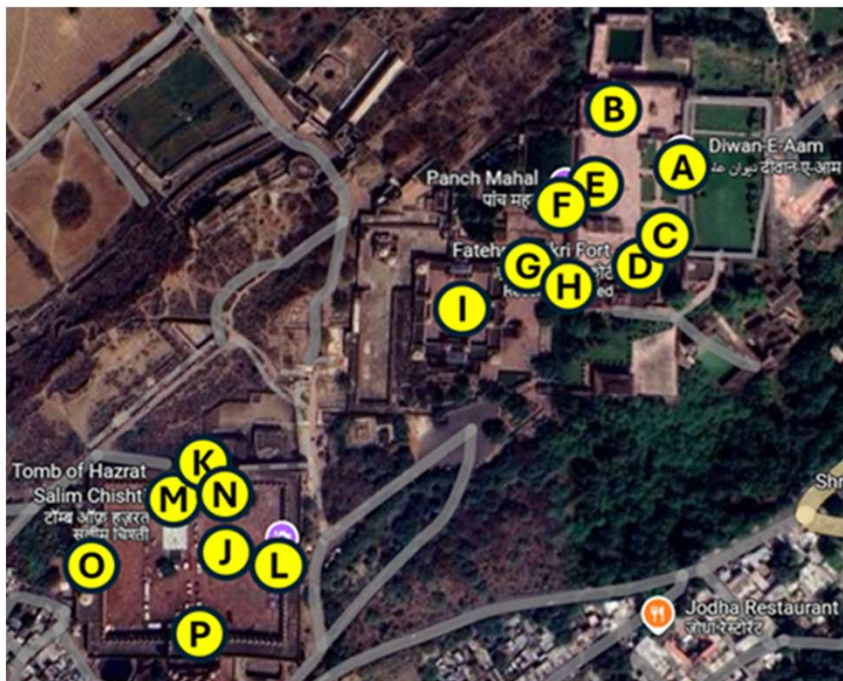
- **Private Residence:** The Khaas Mahal served as the **Emperor's private retreat and sleeping chamber**. It was the most intimate space within the palace complex, designed for conducting private affairs, resting, and enjoying the river breezes and garden views.
- **The Anguri Bagh:** The pavilion opens onto the **Anguri Bagh** (Grape Garden), a formal, four-part *Charbagh* that provided fragrant shade, sophisticated water channels, and an aesthetic complement to the white marble. The garden enhanced the palace's atmosphere, reinforcing the Mughal tradition of integrating architecture with nature.

5.5.1.0 Self-Guided Tour of Fatehpur Sikri

Admission Fee Note: There are two distinct areas in Fatehpur Sikri, each with its own entry requirements:

Imperial/Palace Complex: Requires a single, paid admission ticket.

Religious Complex (Jama Masjid): Admission is generally **free**, as it is a working religious site. However, there are separate fees for the **Buland Darwaza** entrance (if arriving from the outside) and local guides/services.



A = [Diwan-i-Aam](#)

B = [Diwan-i-Khas](#)

C = [Turkish Sultana's Palace](#)

D = [Anup Talao](#)

E = [Hauz-i-Shirin \(Elephant Pot\)](#)

F = [Panch Mahal](#)

G = [Mariam's House / Sunehra Makan](#)

H = [Jodhbai's Kitchen](#)

I = [Jodha Bai's Palace](#)

J = [Jama Masjid](#)

K = [North Gate](#)

L = [Badshahi Darwaza](#)

M = [Tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti](#)

N = [Royal Cemetery with Tomb of Islam Khan](#)

O = [Iwan](#)

P = [Buland Darwaza](#)

5.5.1.B Diwan-i-Khas: The Place of Intellectual Debate

The **Diwan-i-Khas** (Hall of Private Audience) at Fatehpur Sikri stands as a monumental statement on the unique governance style and intellectual curiosity of **Emperor Akbar**. Unlike the sprawling, simple Diwan-i-Am, the Diwan-i-Khas is a small, cube-shaped structure that housed some of the most profound and influential debates in Mughal history.



Architectural Innovation: The Great Central Pillar

What sets the Diwan-i-Khas apart is its revolutionary interior design, which is almost entirely dominated by a single, colossal element:

- **The Pillar:** Rising from the center of the hall is a massive, highly ornate **central pillar**. This pillar, built of red sandstone, features intricate carvings and is designed in the form of a complex, stylized lotus or *kalash*.
- **Akbar's Throne:** At the top of the pillar, a circular platform is supported by twenty-four serpentine brackets that radiate outwards. This platform served as **Akbar's throne**. He would ascend via a narrow, concealed staircase built into the wall.
- **The Bridges:** Four narrow, enclosed walkways extend from the central platform to the four corners of the chamber, creating a gallery level that rings the room.

Function: The Four Schools of Thought

The architecture was deliberately designed to reflect the function of the hall: a highly regulated, private space for debate, discussion, and spiritual learning.

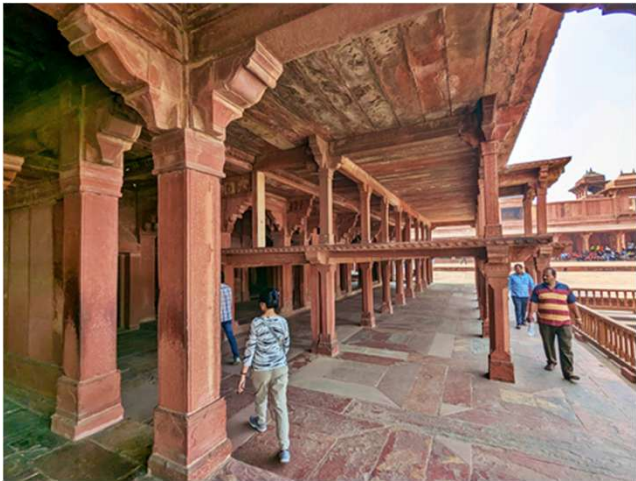
- **The Private Court:** The Diwan-i-Khas was used for meeting with a select few **high-ranking officials, foreign ambassadors, or religious leaders**. It was strictly limited, enforcing the hierarchy of the court.
- **The *Ibadat Khana* (House of Worship):** It is widely believed that this structure functioned as or adjacent to Akbar's *Ibadat Khana*, where he sponsored famous debates between theologians of all faiths: Muslims, Hindus, Jains, Christians, and Zoroastrians.
- **Symbolic Seating:** The layout is brilliantly symbolic: Akbar, elevated on his central platform, was positioned as the **unbiased moderator** or the *axis mundi* (center of the world). The four walkways radiating from his throne allowed the four major groups of debaters or officials to be seated on the corner platforms at the same elevated level as the Emperor, symbolically acknowledging their importance while maintaining his central authority.

This ingenious design makes the Diwan-i-Khas not just a beautiful building, but a tangible representation of **Akbar's philosophy of *Sulh-i-Kul*** (Universal Peace), where all religious ideas were given a platform for discussion.

5.5.1.F Panch Mahal: The Five-Story Palace of Winds

The **Panch Mahal** (Five-Story Palace) is one of the most visually distinctive and architecturally inventive structures in Fatehpur Sikri. Located adjacent to the **Zenana** (women's quarters), this unique pavilion was constructed by **Emperor Akbar** and is celebrated for its highly original, multi-tiered design, which fuses Islamic, Persian, and Indian architectural traditions.





Architectural Form and Function

The Panch Mahal is structured as a **pyramidal, five-storied palace**, built entirely of robust **red sandstone**. Its design is fundamentally progressive, utilizing open-air construction rather than enclosed walls.

- **The Structure:** Each successive story of the Panch Mahal is smaller than the one below it, culminating in a single domed **chhatra** (kiosk) at the very top. This tiered, receding plan gives it the appearance of a step pyramid or a magnificent, layered canopy.
- **A 'Palace of Winds':** Its open, columned structure was deliberately designed to maximize **cross-ventilation** and capture cool breezes, functioning as a massive **air-cooling pavilion**. The royal ladies of the court would use this structure, especially in the evenings, to escape the intense heat of the inner palaces.
- **The *Jalis*:** While the lowest floor is relatively open, the upper tiers were originally enclosed by delicate, perforated **stone screens (*jalis*)** between the columns. These screens provided privacy (*purdah*) for the royal women while allowing them to discreetly observe the activities in the courtyard below, including the **Anup Talao** (Incomparable Pool).

5.5.1.M Tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti: The Jewel of the Jama Masjid

Located within the vast courtyard of the Jama Masjid, the **Tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti** (*Dargah*) is the spiritual nucleus of Fatehpur Sikri. This pristine white marble mausoleum stands in stark contrast to the surrounding red sandstone of the mosque and palace, symbolizing the saint's purity and significance to the Mughal Empire.





The Prophecy that Built a City

The entire city of Fatehpur Sikri owes its existence to the saint who rests here. Emperor Akbar, desperate for a male heir, sought the blessing of **Sheikh Salim Chishti**, a revered Sufi saint of the Chishti Order. When a son (the future Emperor Jahangir) was born shortly after the prophecy, Akbar, out of devotion, moved his capital to the site of the saint's residence.

- **A Place of Pilgrimage:** The tomb remains a powerful destination for pilgrims today. Many visitors come to tie a thread to the famous **marble jalis** (screens) around the chamber, praying for the fulfillment of their own wishes, echoing Akbar's original supplication.

Major Sights of Amber Palace

Amber Palace is a maze and it is easy to get lost. You can either explore the site by yourself or hire one of the many guides that will surround you as soon as you enter.

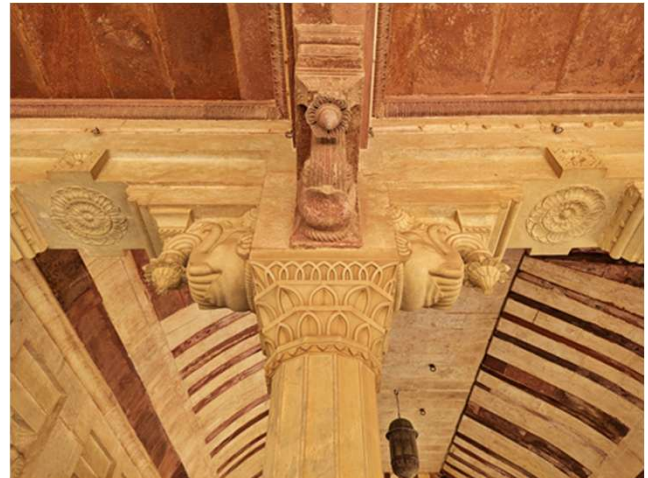
Your journey through Amer Fort begins at the foot of the hill and progresses through four ascending courtyards, moving from public spaces to the intimate royal quarters.



- 0 = Parking Lot near the top
- 1 = [Chand Pol \(Moon Gate\)](#)
- 2 = [Jaleb Chowk / 1st Courtyard](#)
- 3 = [Suraj Pol \(Sun Gate\)](#)
- 4 = [Ticket Office](#)
- 5 = [Sinh Pol Lion Gate](#)
- 6 = [2nd Courtyard](#)
- 7 = [Diwan-i-Aam](#)
- 8 = [Ganesh Pol Gate with Suhag Mandir](#)
- 9 = [Man Singh Temple Courtyard / 3rd Courtyard](#)
- 10 = [Diwan-i-Khas](#)
- 11 = [Sukh Niwas](#)
- 12 = [Hammam](#)
- 13 = [Palace of Man Singh I / 4th Courtyard](#)
- 14 = [Baradari](#)
- 15 = [Kesar Kyari Garden \(Light and Sound Show\)](#)

5.6.1.7 Diwan-i-Aam (Hall of Public Audience): The Seat of Justice

The **Diwan-i-Aam**, or the **Hall of Public Audience**, is the centerpiece of the Second Courtyard at Amber Fort. This grand, open-sided pavilion served as the nerve center of the kingdom, the place where the Maharaja formally met with his subjects, dispensed justice, and conducted the essential administrative business of the state.





Function: The King's Public Duty

This hall was designed to showcase the transparency and accessibility of the Rajput rule, while still emphasizing the sovereign's authority:

- **Public Court:** The Maharaja would sit upon a marble throne facing the courtyard, allowing **common people and military officials** to present their petitions, grievances, or reports. The proceedings were public, lending legitimacy and accountability to the ruler's decisions.
- **Ceremonial Hub:** During festivals or victory celebrations, the Hall served as the stage for royal ceremonies. It was here that visiting dignitaries were formally received and high-ranking officials were honored.

5.6.1.9 Third Courtyard (Mansingh Palace Section)

The **Third Courtyard**, accessed exclusively through the magnificent **Ganesh Pol**, represents the final threshold into the **private, residential world** of the Amber royalty. It is the most exquisite and luxurious section of the palace, primarily dedicated to the **Maharaja's personal and private audiences (Diwan-i-Khas)**, pleasure gardens, and the oldest royal quarters.



6 = 2nd Courtyard

8 = Ganesh Pol Gate with Suhag Mandir

9 = Man Singh Temple Courtyard / 3rd Courtyard

10 = Diwan-i-Khas

11 = Sukh Niwas

12 = Hammam

13 = Palace of Man Singh I / 4th Courtyard

5.6.3 Jal Mahal (Lake Palace)

([map](#), [reviews](#))

The **Jal Mahal** (literally 'Water Palace') is one of Jaipur's most instantly recognizable and captivating sights. Floating gracefully in the center of the **Man Sagar Lake**, this 18th-century structure is less a functional palace and more a royal pleasure retreat, renowned globally for its stunning aesthetic and unique architectural placement.







Architectural Wonders: No Foundation and Perfect Curve

The Hawa Mahal holds two remarkable distinctions in architectural engineering:

- 1. No Foundation:** The Hawa Mahal is considered the **tallest building in the world built without a traditional foundation**. The five-story structure remains upright and stable due to its **curved, pyramid-like shape** and its thin, lateral walls. This engineering trick distributes the weight efficiently, preventing it from toppling over. This is a testament to Rajput and Mughal architectural ingenuity.
- 2. Natural Air Conditioning:** The palace's iconic 953 small windows, or *jharokhas*, create a unique **air-conditioning system**. The design uses the **Venturi effect** to channel cool breezes (*Hawa*) through the palace, keeping the interior comfortable even during the extreme Rajasthani heat.



6. Closing Remarks

ABOUT RUDY FROM BACKPACK & SNORKEL

I was born in Germany and emigrated to the US in 2003. My wife and I are a truly multinational couple: I, with my German background, and she with her Chinese heritage. Both of us live in the USA.

Sadly, working in the US means we have much fewer vacation days compared to other countries like e.g. Germany and thus we cannot travel very frequently.

Through a lot of trial and error, we have found our ideal travel and vacation style. **Making Memorable Moments** by focusing on important destinations, planning time for meeting the locals and, of course, for relaxation are our priorities.

We have also learned to appreciate local foods and try to eat as many local dishes as possible. Just for fun, we try to eat at one Chinese restaurant in each country we visit. It is absolutely amazing how different Chinese food is all over the planet.



MAKING MEMORABLE MOMENTS

You may take 10,000 photos during your vacation, rush from one attraction to the next, but what you will remember in your heart is how you were **Making Memorable Moments**.

For me, that was e.g. Spider Rock in Canyon de Chelly (ever heard of this US National Park?). When I first saw it, I was blown away by this majestic natural obelisk and the beautiful canyon that it sits in. I have been there two more times and still feel the same.

Or think of Isla Mujeres, a small island outside Cancun, Mexico. On the surface, Playa Norte is supposedly Mexico's most beautiful beach and it is always crowded and the boats that anchor there play loud music.

Below the surface, Isla Mujeres is very relaxed, quite walkable and it has friendly locals, good authentic Mexican food and good international cuisine and is often very affordable.

Isla Mujeres is our personal paradise!



PACK YOUR BACKPACK & SNORKEL AND LET'S GO

Our travel style has evolved over the years. We are packing light these days when we travel and typically only need a small backpack per person - see our [Traveling Light Guide](#).

With this guide, I want to provide value to you and help you plan your own relaxing vacations with the goal of **Making Memorable Moments!**

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.