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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP

Shashwat Nagpal

Offbeat New Delhi - the Top 10 must do list

New Delhi, 1 Day

Table of contents:

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 4

New Delhi Snapshot 7

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: Your umpteenth time in New Delhi? Seen it all? Done it all? Not quite looking forward to the India Gate, Humayun Tomb, Qutub Minar, Red Fort circuit?

We understand.

That's why, to perk up your jaded senses, we have come up with our Top 10 Offbeat things to do in New Delhi.

From a never-inhabited fort to an ancient step-well. From an imperial memorial to a mystic saint. From a haunted jail to a meandering maze...each is a prescription mood elevator for the depressed traveler.

So, go ahead. Get on to the track not usually taken. And tick off the numbers. As for the busload of tourists heading the other way, wave at them. One day, they will also follow in your footsteps...

(Photo courtesy: varunshiv/flickr)

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - New Delhi

DAY NOTE: The sequencing of destinations has been done geographically and not in terms of any ranking. Tughlaqabad fort is the southernmost and we move north from there. You can, of course, do it the other way round. And start from the Coronation Memorial.

Tughlaqabad Fort
A fort guarding a city

Jamali Kamali
Slave dynasty's architecture

Bhulbhulaiyan
A ghost lived here?

Lal Gumbad
Pre-Mughal Architecture

Hazrat Nizamuddin
Old, traditional settlement

Feroz Shah Kotla
Built in 1354

Ugrasen Ki Baoli
An ancient step well

Salimgarh
Haunted prison

Saint James Church
The oldest church

Coronation Memorial
Coronation site

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Day 1 - New Delhi

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: The sequencing of destinations has been done geographically and not in terms of any ranking. Tughlaqabad fort is the southernmost and we move north from there. You can, of course, do it the other way round. And start from the Coronation Memorial.

contact:
tel: +91 11 2332 0005

location:
Tuglaqabad
New Delhi DL 110062

1 Tughlaqabad Fort

DESCRIPTION: The fort stands high on an outcrop of rocks, with walls reaching 27 meters in places, stretching over a parameter of seven kilometers. This sprawling fortress was built in less than four years in the early 1300s to guard against the attacks by Mongols from central Asia. It was also connected to Old Delhi by a secret underground passage. But the fort was fated to be abandoned right after construction. Legend has it that it had been cursed by a Sufi saint. Today, it lies as beautiful ruins surrounded by rampant wilderness and numerous peacocks. It is a popular destination for trekkers and picnickers. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of Saad.Akhtar

contact:
tel: +91 11 2464 7005 (Tourist Information)

location:
Near Qutub Minar Complex
New Delhi DL 110030

2 Jamali Kamali

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
There is less bustle here than at the Qutub. Use this as a short pit stop to unwind before setting off on your itinerary again.

DESCRIPTION: The Jamali Kamali masjid (mosque) and tomb is situated near the Qutub Minar complex and is set within a beautiful park. The mosque's simple lines give it an air of simple elegance and quiet contemplation. Through the door on the right lies a small chamber in which Jamali and Kamali are buried. Jamali was a saint and a poet who was a favorite of the ruling king. The identity of Kamali is unknown. The tomb chamber is closed to the public but the outside premises are worth a view. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of Shashwat_Nagpal

contact:
tel: +91 11 2332 0005

location:
Mehrauli Village
New Delhi DL 110030

3 Bhulbhulaiyan

DESCRIPTION: This was constructed in 1562 as a tomb for Adham Khan, who was killed by king Akbar. This is situated next to the entrance of Mehrauli village and is also locally known as Bhulbhulaiyan, which means 'a maze'. According to folklore, this tomb is inhabited by ghosts. It is a beautiful structure in midst of green wilderness - an ideal spot to get a good view of the first fort of Delhi. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of Dilliwallah

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contact:
tel: +91 11 2464 7005(Tourist Information)
fax: +91 11 2469 7352 (Tourist Information)

location:
Panchshila Park
New Delhi 110017

4 Lal Gumbad

DESCRIPTION: The Lal Gumbad is one of the many grand pieces of ancient architecture that beautifully adorn the city of Delhi. Lal Gumbad or the Red Mausoleum is the tomb of Shaikh Kabir-Ud-Din Auliya, who was buried here in 1397, during the pre-Mughal era. The square-shaped tomb is erected of red sandstone, with a conic-shaped plastered dome on the roof. The serene lawns of Panchshila Park, where the tomb is located, exudes a wonderful ambiance. Don't miss this gorgeous monument, when in Delhi! © wcities.com

contact:
tel: +91 11 2464 7005 (Tourist Information)

location:
Mathura Road
New Delhi DL 110013

hours:
Daily dawn to dusk

5 Hazrat Nizamuddin

DESCRIPTION: Nizamuddin is a historic village settlement, which continues to exist within modern Delhi. It gets its name from the Sufi saint, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, who was born in 1236. The area is full of craftsmen shops, traditional Mughal bakeries, ittar (exotic perfumes) bazaars, restaurants, old houses, traditional Islamic bookshops, and numerous shrines devoted to saints and poets. You are immediately transported back in time when you enter Hazrat Nizamuddin. It has a magical ambience. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of JitendraSingh

contact:
tel: +91 11 2332 0005

location:
Bhahadur Shah Zafar Road
New Delhi DL 110002

6 Feroz Shah Kotla

DESCRIPTION: Ferozabad was constructed in 1354 by Feroz Shah Tuglaq. It now lies in ruins at Feroz Shah Kotla. This place now seem like a menacing fortress, but the most famous structure here is the Ashoka Pillar, on which the great king and philosopher, Ashoka's teachings are inscibed. Amongst the ruins are also the remains of a mosque and a well. It has been bought to this state by the endless stipping of its materials to construct newer buildings. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of johnhanscom

contact:
tel: +91 11 2464 7005 (Tourist Information)

location:
Near Kasturba Gandhi Marg,
New Delhi DL 110001

hours:
Call for details

7 Ugrasen Ki Baoli

DESCRIPTION: This baoli (step well) is a small structure built of rubble and dressed stone. Shaded by a massive neem tree, it has no roof. Step wells of this kind were once the lifeline of settlements. They not only provided water but also served as points and centers of community activity; places where people gathered to cool off and socialize. The well has five levels where each level has an arched area, which was used as a resting place. The center of the well has water and the water is linked to a well dug in a covered platform. Today, it stands quietly and ignored amidst the corporate buildings of Connaught Place. If you look over the highest wall of the baoli, you will see a surrounding ring of imposing high rises. It's quite a view. © wcities.com

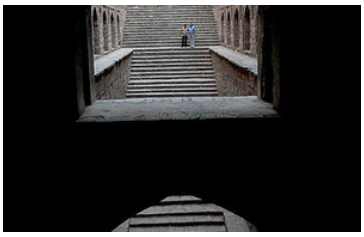

Photo courtesy of INDIAFOCUS

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contact:
tel: +91 11 2464 7005 (Tourist Information)

location:
Ajmere Gate
New Delhi 110006

hours:
Daily dawn to dusk

8 Salimgarh

DESCRIPTION: About 1.5 kilometers north of the Red Fort are the ruins of the small fort of Salimgarh. It was built by king Salim Shah, in 1546, as an island fort on the Yamuna River. The next king, Aurangzeb, converted this fort into a state prison, and the British continued using it as such till the 1940s. Many freedom fighters from the Indian Independent Movement were jailed here for extensive periods of time. That however, is not its only claim to fame; Salimgarh is also considered as one of the most haunted places in Old Delhi. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of ramesh_lalwani

contact:
tel: +91 11 332 0005

location:
Kashmere Gate
New Delhi DL 110006

hours:
M-Sa

9 Saint James Church

DESCRIPTION: Built in 1836, it is the oldest surviving church in the city. St. James Church was built in a western classical design with a Greek cross plan. Three of the arms of the cross have porticoes, while the east arm contains the altar. The dome is very similar to the dome of Florence Cathedral in Italy which was the first renaissance structure in the world. Delicate stained glass windows were added to the building in 1860. Some of the decorative elements have a Mughal influence and these are more prominent and visible in the base of the dome and also in the steps leading to the church. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of delhi.daredevil

contact:
tel: +91 11 2462 9365

location:
Near Majnu Ka Tila, Ring Road
New Delhi DL

hours:
Call for details

A Coronation Memorial

DESCRIPTION: Coronation Memorial has the statue of King George V, which once stood under the canopy near India Gate. The king is attired in the coronation robe he wore for the Darbar (royal court) in 1911. It is surrounded by other statues, including those of Lord Willingdon and Lord Hardinge, all standing on red sandstone plinths. The statues retain their old glory but they are situated within a neglected walled garden. © wcities.com

Photo courtesy of Etheral

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New Delhi Snapshot

Local Info

Historically significant, politically dominant and culturally vibrant, Delhi is not an easy city to bracket. As India's capital it enjoys the privileges of power. Its continuous thread of rich history is a mother lode that throws up riches wherever you go. Delhi can be thought of as a layer of successive cites that followed one-another in the wake of time. A simpler way to look at modern Delhi is to follow the nine-district division of 1997. These districts are: Central, North, South, East, West, North-East, South-East, North-West, and South-West District.

Central/New Delhi: When the British decided to shift the capital from Kolkotta to Delhi in 1912 they envisioned a capital city that would be a true reflection of British imperial power. Thus were conceived buildings to project imposing grandeur. Today, in this part of Delhi you can view the results of this vision. The President's House, the India Gate, the Parliament House, Connaught Place are a few examples. This area of Delhi is characterized by wide-open boulevards and a generally low skyline.

North Delhi: The moment you head north of Connaught Place, the city seems to close upon itself. The streets become narrower, the roads winding, the traffic chaotic. This is the part of the city whre you will find Shahjahahnabad or the 'Old City'. With the Chandani Chowk, Jama Masjid and the Red Fort as your focal points you can launch into walks that take you through narrow winding lanes and throw up surprises at almost every turn. Paharganj-the backpacker paradise and the University further north are the other significant areas.

South Delhi/South-East Delhi: Full of high-end stores, happening nightspots, plush residences, specialty restaurants and a bevy of 5-Star hotels this is the hip part of town. The roads are generally wide, you get a sense of green almost everywhere you go. This part of town also boasts of the Qutub Minar, Tughlaqabad Fort, the Lotus Temple, the Hauz Khas ruins and the Lodhi Gardens.

West Delhi/North-West Delhi: Primarily residential, this area does have a few points of interest. There is a new Delhi Haat at Pritampura that's next to theNetaji Subhash Place Metro station. This area has also recently seen a number of swank new malls come up, especially in the Rajouri Garden area. Even the Hilton has opened recently in Janakpuri.

East Delhi/North-East: Primarily residential till recently, this area has seen a spurt of building activity recently. With the Akshardham Temple built on the banks of the Yamuna and the Commonwealth games Village next door, East Delhi is certainly on the tourist map.
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History

Delhi has not always been the capital of India but has played an important role in Indian history. One of the fascinating aspects of the city has been the'visibility' of its historic past. If not for the demands of urbanization, large portions of the city could well be earmarked as archaeological sites. This is because the rulers of the dynasties from the 13th and 17th centuries established eight cities in different parts of Delhi. The first four were towards the south where the Qutub Minar stands. The city's history dates much further back than the 13th century. Excavations have proved that the Old Fort site was inhabited 3,000 years ago. And fine pottery dating back to 1,000 BC, from the time of the Hindu epic of Mahabharata, called the Painted Grey Ware, has been found. The excavations also cut through houses and the streets of the Sultanate of Rajput, Post-Gupta, Gupta, Saka-Kushan and Sunga periods reaching down to the Mauraya dynasty(300 BC). The association of Emperor Ashoka(273-36 BC) has come to light after the discovery of the Minor Rock Edict in one of the city's districts. However, the core of the first city was created by Anangpal Tomar in the 12th century. He built Lal Kot, the first ever fort in Delhi. Prithviraj Chauhan, the successive king, added massive ramparts and gates, and constructed the Quila Rai Pithora. Today, only the ramparts are visible near Qutub Minar.

The second city, called Siri, was built by Alauddin Khilji in 1303. Nothing remains but the embattlements. He also dug a vast reservoir, Hauz Khas, to supply water to his people. Many historians consider the Delhi of yore as a"rival to Cairo, and even equal to Constantinople!" The Khiljis were replaced by the Tughlaq dynasty in 1321. Of its eleven rulers, only the first three were interested in architecture and each of them established a new city. Tughlaq architecture is more austere in comparison to the ornate structures built by the Khiljis. Ghitasuddin Tughlaq built the fortified town of Tughlaqabad, which lies eight kilometers east of the Qutub Minar Complex. Though partially in ruins, it is still worth a visit.

Ghiyasuddin's successor, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq built Delhi's fourth city, Jahanpanah. It largely comprises a walled enclosure between Quila Rai Pithora and Siri. Nothing from this time survives, and the Sultan is best remembered for his eccentric schemes, the strangest one to shift the capital from Delhi to Dulatabad in the Deccan region and back again to Delhi.

Firoz Shah Tughlaq, a man interested in history, hunting, architecture and irrigation created the fifth city, Firozabad, situated in the current Firoz Shah Kotla. Its ruins include the Ashoka Pillar and a mosque. Delhi's growth remained stagnant under the reign of the Sayyids and the Lodhis. The only notable architectural pieces by them were tombs, the best of which can be seen at Lodhi Gardens.

The last king of the Lodhis was defeated by Babur, the founder of the Mughal Dynasty. He shifted the capital from Delhi to Agra. The first six Mughal rulers were extraordinary men, and their rule witnessed a powerful resurgence in Islamic

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Architecture and culture. Babur's son, Humayun, built the sixth city of Delhi called the Purana Quila or Old Fort, which is off Mathura Road.

In 1638, the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan shifted the capital back to Delhi while he was building the Taj Mahal in Agra. The foundations were laid for the seventh city, Shah Jahanabad, on the banks of Yamuna river. It took nine years to complete. Many monuments remain intact today Red Fort, Jama Masjid, and Chandni Chowk.

Finally, the eighth city, New Delhi, was constructed by the British. The site chosen was a wilderness of Raisina, while the city was designed by the architect Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker. It took 20 years to build and cost 15 million pounds. All of central Delhi- Connaught Place, India Gate, Rashtrapati Bhavan, is a testimonial of their creativity. In 1947, it became the capital of partitioned India, and Hindu and Sikh refugees poured in from Pakistan. Many have invaded Delhi through the ages. Tameerlaine attacked it in the 14th century, Babur occupied it in the 16th century and the Persian emperor, Nadir Shah, sacked the city and took the Kohinoor Diamond(now a part of the British royal family's crown jewels) and the famous Peacock Throne off to Iran. The British captured Delhi in 1803, but during the uprising of 1857, it became the center of resistance against the British.
©

Hotel Insights

From the most expensive 5-star to the basic room-only accommodation, New Delhi offers it all. Whatever be the nature of your trip, it is advisable to stay either in and around the central business district – Connaught Place(CP) or in South Delhi. Connaught Place is well connected to every part of the city, the main metro station(Rajiv Chowk) is bang in the center, the railway station is nearby, and with the metro airport line nearing completion, even the airport will be just a 20-minute ride away.

From colonial grandeur to boutique chic. From upscale modern to wallet-friendly. CP has a range of options when it comes to hotels. You are sure to find what you are looking for. The Imperial,The Park,Le Meridian,The Metropoliton Nikko,The Lalit are the more upscale properties.Hotel Hans Plaza,Hotel Janpath and are comfortable and affordable.Hotel Alka andMarina are located right in the middle of the shopping district.Marina still exudes an old-world charm whileAlka could be a hotel from anywhere. Choose them only if you do not want to spend much on the room and want to be a few steps away from the shopping. If you are on a tight budget, travel a few minutes by rickshaw or by foot from CP to backpacker nirvana – Paharganj. The metro station for Paharganj is: Ramakrishna Ashram.

Paharganj

Tightly packed and bustling with young tourists, the Paharganj area is the place to go to if you are not finicky about the size of the room, the quality of linen, or the view. Rooms start at around$10 for the most basic. If you decide to walk-in and book, make sure you see a couple of properties. Always insist on seeing the room they are offering before paying up. Avoid ‘friendly’ people on the street who offer to ‘help’ you find a hotel. Always be extra careful of your belongings. Some of the hotels you can consider in and around Paharganj are:Pallavi Palace,Metropolis Tourist Home andChand Palace. On the road connecting CP toJama Masjid isHotel Broadway. It has a famous restaurantChor Bizzare and some rooms with a view of the old city andJama Masjid.

B&B, Guest Houses

Mostly found in posh, South-Delhi colonies, these offer a convenient location, mostly for business visitors. You can check out the list of top B&B and Guest houses in New Delhihere.

5 Star Hotels

Apart from CP, New Delhi has 5-star properties almost everywhere. Here is a rough area-wise listing of the top 5-star hotels. **North Delhi:**Oberoi Maidens. Central Delhi:Taj Mahal,Claridges,The Ashok. **South Delhi:**ITC Welcomgroup,Taj Palace,Hyatt,Jaypee Vasant Continental,Radisson,Sheraton. **Gurgaon:**The Trident.

Most hotels offer online bookings. It makes sense to book early, especially during peak tourist season. If you are planning to visit during the off-season, hunt for offers and discounts on the web. Almost all hotel chains have one offer or another going. Better still, use ouradvanced hotel search to find exactly what you are looking for.
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Restaurants Insights

Delhiites love to flaunt their heritage of Maharajas and dynasties. And hence it is one of the prominent cities when it comes to the art of dining out. The city is full of restaurants, and almost all the upscale ones have a grand and regal air about them. The most favored cuisine is Indian, i.e. Mughlai and Tandoori. Still, international cuisines are thriving in Delhi like never before. Although a step behind Mumbai's nightlife, Delhi is fast catching up and finally breaking the five-star monopoly. With the choices spilled all over the extensive city, here are a few pointers.

South Delhi/Greater Kailash/South Extension

This is the fashionable district and people aspire for an address in this area. It has shopping centers, designer boutiques, coffee shops, malls, and some pretty good restaurants and clubs. Most of the city's nightclubs and bars are situated here. There are many designer resto-bars too, such as Shalom, Olive Bar and Kitchen, Buzz, Diva, Suede, and Punjabi By Nature. Be it a restaurant in the middle of the scenic deer park(Park Baluchi), a bar amidst a rural village(The Rooftop Bistro), or a nightclub next to McDonald's and a cinema hall, the dining and drinking culture is very successful in adapting itself to Delhi's diverse mini-habitats.

Central Delhi/Connaught Place

Most of the bars and restaurants in the high-rises offer a spectacular panoramic view of Delhi. Be sure to dress up and bring plastic money when dining at The Imperial or enjoying spirits at Patiala Peg. Head towards Nirula's for its 21 varieties of ice

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creams or to the Yellow Brick Road, an all-night coffeehouse with the best pastries in town. For an after dinner drink, go to Agni at The Park or any of the five-stars' elegant lounge bars with live music.

North Delhi/Chandni Chowk

Get a real flavor of Indian hospitality at the street-side cafes of the historic Chandni Chowk where some restaurants are more than a hundred years old. Or visit the oddest, most eccentric Chor Bazaar, a restaurant named the"Market of Thieves," serving Indian cuisine at Hotel Oberoi Maidens.

Dilli Haat

This complex houses many small shops displaying extraordinary traditional Indian crafts. But in addition, it is a powerhouse of regional cuisines. Kiosks run by different Indian states offer their authentic food. You can find Assamese, Tamil, Gujarati as well as Goan cuisine here. While you may savor Punjabi food at Punjabi By Nature, you'll see that everyday is a carnival at Dilli Haat.
©

Nightlife Insights

The cultural capital of the country, Delhi has many key centers and foundations that keep the art pulse of the city high. Music recitals, dance programs, theater, book readings and art exhibitions are just a small part of all that's on offer.

Art Exhibitions

Step into India Habitat Centre, India International Centre, Art Today, Lalit Kala Academy, or Dhoomimal Art Gallery to find the latest and the oldest in Indian contemporary art. Photography exhibitions, art installations, mixed media, or ceramic works, Delhi is truly a vibrant center for all art activity. If it is a bit bourgeois for your taste, visit the thriving artisan bazaar of Dilli Haat or live in studios of artists and painters at Garhi Studio, where you can witness live art processes.

Music/Dance/Theater

Numerous concerts, performances and plays are organized almost everyday. Mostly concentrated in central Delhi, the centers, such as India Habitat Center and Triveni Kala Sangam have become patrons for the Indian performing arts. Classical Indian music is so popular here that famous Indian musicians perform Morning Ragas, live in Nehru Park, under a sprawling tree in the early hours of Sunday mornings.

Museums

There are countless fascinating museums dedicated to preserving the history of India in New Delhi. The National Gallery of Modern Art has one of the best collections of contemporary Indian art, while The National Museum has ancient as well as contemporary works in painting, sculpture, ceramics and metals. The Crafts Museum has one of the most interesting collections of folk tribal art, textiles and crafts. Then there is the Rail Museum, which has engines dating back two hundred years. Tibet House, Natural History Museum, Red Fort Archeological Museum, Field Museum, and Gandhi Smriti are also definitely worth the visit.

Film/Misc

The PVR multiplexes in Vasant Vihar, Saket and Naraina have introduced a new culture of entertainment to the city. The nightlife is incomplete without a film on the evening itinerary. Regular film festivals are also organized here.

Nightclubs

Clubbing has taken off in a big way and the demand has spurred a number of nightclubs. Smaller, more creative and less expensive places have become the hangouts of the city's young. Try out Steel, Djinns, Turquoise Cottage and Capitol.

Shopping

A shopper's delight, Delhi is considered one big market. Shopping is the new pastime and department stores, shopping arcades(Ansal Plaza) and markets(Khan Market, South Extension, Karol Bagh) all compete to attract customers. For traditional textiles and fabric, visit Dilli Haat, Central Cottage Emporium, or The State Emporia. For antiques, Sundernagar is an ideal place to shop. The Hauz Khas Village has over 100 shops dealing in designer clothes, carpets, artifacts, old silver antiques and furniture. You can find Indian traditional textiles at Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan. The underground market of Palika Bazaar in the heart of Connaught Place sell an incredible range of electronics, photo equipment, music and DVDs.

Spiritual

De-stress, detox, or achieve nirvana with the help of the abundant spiritual and meditation centers. Attend daily yoga sessions at Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Nataraja Centre or Osho Rajyoga Meditation Center, dabble in astrology at Future Point, or practice Reiki and Pranic healing at Center of Light.
©

Things to Do Insights

Delhi is a big city. Many spend weeks here, and yet only manage to scrape the tip of the iceberg. Numerous travel agencies and tour operators organize day trips to the various monuments and attractions of the Delhi. The Delhi Tourism board also offers a wide spectrum of services to tourists. Assistance centers and tour offices are set up in various corners of the city. The Government of India Tourist Office+91 11 332 0005 New Delhi Railway Station,+91 11 336 4004,+91 11 373 2714 Indira Gandhi International Airport,+91 11 565 2011,+91 11 565 2021 Or visit the official New Delhi Tourist website. www.delhitourism.com

The city is so vast that it doesn't allow for simply walking during the sightseeing tours. However, the small feat can be accomplished by bunching tourist attractions close to each other.

Connaught Place

Connaught Place is not only the commercial hub of the city but a cherished symbol of Lutyens grand architecture. It is a mammoth circular building, and has inner and outer circles where numerous shops, restaurants, clubs and showrooms are located. In the middle of this circular giant lies the lush central park. On its side

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is the underground shopping market of Palika Bazaar. On emerging from the air-conditioned underground, walk towards Art Today in the inner circle. It is a gallery, which showcases valuable contemporary works of Indian artists. Nearby is Jantar Mantar, the ancient observatory built in 1725 to determine time and positions of the planets.

India Gate

Take an auto-rickshaw or a cab from Connaught Place and head towards India Gate. This structure is a tall gate made in sandstone to commemorate the soldiers of the Indian army. It is surrounded by vast manicured lawns with marble fountains, which lead to the Rashtrapati Bhavan(the President's Residence) on one end and the National Gallery of Modern Art on the other. The whole area is surrounded by Lutyen's buildings like The Secretariat, The National Museum and Shankar's Dolls Museum. The museums have massive collections and deserve at least a few hours each if not more.

Lodhi Garden

The Lodhi Garden is located in south Delhi. It is almost a botanical garden with hundred-year-old trees and rare plants, and beautiful Lodhi tombs and bridges from the 1500s. It is spread over many acres complete with manicured grass lawns, wooden benches, red mud pathways and jogging tracks. There are many tombs here and visiting all of them takes many hours. On the left of these gardens is the impressive Safdarjung Tomb. Located in the midst of a sprawling complex, it is one of the most beautiful pieces of architecture from the Mughal era. On the right of the Lodhi Gardens is India Habitat Centre and India International Centre. They are the two foremost cultural hubs of the city. Daily music, dance and literary performances, plays, book readings and art exhibitions are organized here.

Nizamuddin

The Nizamuddin area is full of ancient dargahs(Muslim shrines), which are not just popular tourist destinations but also revered pilgrimage sites. The most spectacular is Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah, which lies amidst a maze of small village-like lanes. On Thursdays, live Sufi music(Nizamuddin's qawwali) is performed in front of the shrine. The awe-inspiring Humayun's Tomb is also nearby.

Qutub Minar

The Qutub Minar complex lies in the southern-most part of the city. And a few kilometers away lies the border to the neighboring Haryana state. It is a sprawling complex with some of Delhi's most famous monuments, such as the Qutub Minar tower, the Iron Pillar, Tomb of Iltutmish, Alai Darwaza, and Alai Minar. A little away from the complex is Mehrauli. Ancient monuments like Bhulbhulaiyan, Gandak ki Baoli, Hathi Gate and Jamali Kamali are scattered all over this village-like area. Finding them all may be a bit difficult, therefore, it is advisable to carry a very good map or a guide.

Tughlaqabad Fort

On the southern edge of Delhi lie the eerie ruins of the Tughlaqabad Fort. It stretches for over seven kilometers and is a popular place for picnics or day treks as the climb up to the various parts of the fort can be quite adventurous. Nearby is the Asola Wildlife Sanctuary and the 11th century water tank of Surajkund.

Lotus Temple

If you prefer the sanity of civilization but don't want to miss the historical and tourist sites, visit the Lotus Temple. Here you'll find the bustling designer Hauz Khas Village, the allegedly haunted Chor Minar, and a charming sports complex of Siri Fort. The Lotus Temple announces its presence from miles away. An intimidating white structure in the shape of a lotus, it has been designed as a temple symbolizing the unity of all religious faiths. People from all religions are invited to meditate silently under the massive flower.

Old Delhi

On the other extreme of the city is Shah Jahanabad or Old Delhi. Rich in monuments of ancient dynasties, spend a day at the historic Red Fort(Lal Quila) or try delicious Indian fare at Chandni Chowk. Jama Masjid, the pinnacle of Mughal mosque architecture, lies close by and there are many interesting ancient Baolis strewn across the busy lanes.
©

Travel Tips

Getting There:

By Air:

Indira Gandhi International Airport(+91 11 565 2011) is located in the Southwestern region of the city. The airport has a bureaux de change, tourist information counters, snack bars, duty-free stores, a restaurant, 24-hour taxi counters and car rental booths. It is safer to book a taxi at the prepaid counter at the airport, as most taxi drivers in Delhi do not adhere to the standard meter. The approximate flying time from Delhi to Toronto is 18 hours, to New York is 16 hours, and to Sydney, 17 hours. The following airlines have counters at the airport:

Air Canada(+91 11 565 2850/ http://www.aircanada.ca)

Air France(+91 11 565 2294/ http://www.airfrance.com)

Air Mauritius(+91 11 565 2050/ http://www.airmauritius.com)

Delta Airlines(+91 11 565 2093/ http://www.delta.com)

Gulf Air(+91 11 565 2065/ http://www.gulfairco.com)

KLM(+91 11 565 2922/ http://www.klm.com)

Korean Air(+91 11 565 3304/ http://www.koreanair.com)

Kuwait Airways(+91 11 565 2295/ http://www.kuwait-airways.com)

Lufthansa(+91 11 548 2283/ http://www.lufthansa.com)

Malaysian Airlines(+91 11 565 2395/ http://www.malaysiaairlines.com)

Swiss Air(+91 11 565 2531/ http://www.swiss.com)

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The Domestic Airport(+91 11 329 5126) at Palam, is about 5 kilometers away from the International terminal. This is an important hub for International travelers who wish to travel within the country. The main domestic airlines that operate through this airport are Indian Airlines(http://indian-airlines.nic.in), Jet Airways(http://www.jetairways.com), Sahara Airlines(http://www.airsahara.net), Kingfisher Airlines(www.flykingfisher.com) and Go Air Airlines(http://www.goair.in). They offer flights to more than 40 cities across India. The airport has a prepaid taxi counter, tourist information counter, business center and car rental booths.

By Train:

New Delhi is the main hub for Indian Railways(+91 11 334 8787). Unlike Mumbai, Delhi does not have its own local train system, but its extensive national network connects it to all the major and small towns across the country. It has two major stations, one in Old Delhi, located about 7 kilometres from Connaught Place, and another in New Delhi, East of Pahar Ganj. The stations have ample waiting areas and food stalls. However, travelers should be careful with their luggage as chances of theft are high. Ticket reservations can be made at the IRCA building on Chelmsford Road, Pahar Ganj. There is a separate counter for tourists at the International Tourist Bureau(+91 11 334 6804), New Delhi station. You can also make online bookings, or get further information from the official website of the Idian Railways, www.indianrailways.com.

By Road:

Five National Highways pass through New Delhi. The Grand Trunk Road(National Highway 1) is used most frequently as it leads to the North of the country, towards Amritsar and Agra; National Highway 2 goes towards Calcutta in the East, and National Highway 8 passes through Jaipur in the West. Driving licenses require a minimum age of 18 years, and foreigners with international licenses can drive in the city without additional documents. Most cities and towns are located close to Delhi, and are well connected by road. The driving time from Delhi to Agra and Jaipur is under three hours, to Amritsar is under five hours, and the to the hill stations of Himachal Pradesh is under eight hours.

Bus Services:

Local buses are very congested, and are often not the preferred mode of transportation for the middle-class. Taxis and rickshaws are usually favored. However, the inter-state bus services are quite comfortable. They offer air conditioned, deluxe and ordinary buses to all major destinations around Delhi. The Interstate Bus Terminus(ISBT) is located at Kashmir Gate, North of Old Delhi Railway Station. The following state operators provide bus services in and around the city: Delhi Transport Corporation(+91 11 386 8836), Haryana Roadways(+91 11 296 1262), Himachal Pradesh Roadways(+91 11 251 6725), Punjab Roadways(+91 11 296 7842), Rajasthan Roadways(+91 11 252 2246) and Uttar Pradesh Roadways(+91 11 251 8709).

Getting Around:

Public Transport

New Delhi now boasts of its first metro network. The metro will be partly underground and partly elevated; and will extend up to 62 kilometers and more in the future.

By Bus:

The public buses in Delhi are uncomfortable and over-crowded. The Delhi Transport Corporation(+91 11 331 7445) has a centralized network of buses that have 300 routes across the city. A general All-Route Pass can be availed from any of the terminals at Red Fort, Delhi Gate and Shahdara Terminal.

By Taxi:

The most convenient way to move around is by taxi. Following a Government anti-pollution policy, all taxis now operate on CNG(Compressed Natural Gas) engines. Some taxis have electronic meters, but most taxis operate on a prior bargained rate. It is best to negotiate a price before stepping into one.

By Rickshaw:

Rickshaws too, form an integral part of the city's transportation. Widely-used, they also follow the same principle as the taxis. It is better to negotiate a rate before boarding this transport though. Four- and six-seater motorcycle rickshaws run on fixed routes at fixed prices, mostly between the Red Fort and Palika Bazaar at Connaught Place.

Car Hire:

Driving on Delhi roads can be quite a challenging task, as motorists often do not heed to traffic laws. The best option is to hire a car with a local driver to take you around town.

Some of the major car hire services are:

Europcar Inter-Rent(+91 11 688 3498)

Hertz(+91 11 687 7188), Eco Rent A Car(+91 11 462 3261)

Jai Jawala Tourist(+91 11 26252924).
©

Fun Facts

Green Facts:

1. Delhi is one of the'greenest' cities in the world with a green cover of almost 20%.

2. The entire public transport of the city runs on environment friendly Compressed Natural Gas.

Interesting Facts:

3. Qutub Minar in Delhi is the world's tallest brick minaret.

4. The walled city of Delhi originally had fourteen gates. Five are still standing. Here's the provenance behind their names. Ajmeri Gate: Facing Ajmer in Rajasthan; Lahori Gate: Facing Lahore in Pakistan. Kashmiri Gate: Pointing North to Kashmir. Delhi Gate: Road to earlier cities of Delhi Turkman Gate: Named after pious saint Hazrat Shah Turkam.

5. In between the rubble of the fifth city of delhi – Freoze shah Kotlastands the 3 century B.C. Ashokan Pillar. Emperor Feroz Shah Tughlaq brought this 27 tonne pillar

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to Delhi from Topar in Ambala, where the great Emperor Ashoka erected it.

Weird Fact:

6. Delhi has an International Toilet museum.

Spicy Fact:

7. Khari Baoli is the Asia's largest wholesale spice market. A must visit for the once-in-a-lifetime overdose of a spice cocktail high.

Random Facts:

8. Traffic in Delhi is like traffic in London. Drivers sit on the right side of the car.

9. Three-wheeled contraptions called Autos are a great way to see the city over short distances. And test your faith in God.

10. Delhi has not always been the capital of India. Under the British, Kolkotta had the honor for a long time till Delhi was reinstated in 1912.

11. Delhi has a rail museum with steam-age behemoths.

Fun fact:

12. Every Delhite is ever ready to help you out with directions. They will direct you even when they do not know what you are talking about. So check, crosscheck. And check again.

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