

AGRA

HISTORICAL PLACES

THE TAJ MAHAL: Taj Mahal is Taj (crown) of India Sheer poetry in marble. Majesty and magnificence, unrivalled, the Taj Mahal is the only one of its kind across the world. The monumental labour of love of a great ruler for his beloved queen. The ultimate realization of Emperor Shahjahan's dream. One of the wonders of the world. From 1631 A.D., it took 22 years in its making. An estimated 20,000 people worked to complete the enchanting mausoleum, on the banks of the Yamuna. For a breathtaking beautiful view of the Taj Mahal, one has to see it by moonlight.

Taj Museum

To the left of the above mentioned platform is the Taj Museum. Original drawings available here show the precision with which the architect had planned this monument. He even anticipated that it would be completed in 22 years. Drawings of the interiors show the position of the graves in such precision that the foot of the graves faces the viewer from any angle.

The Mosque and the Jawab

To the left of the Taj is a mosque made of red sandstone. It is common in Islam to build a mosque next to a tomb, as it sanctifies the area and provides for a place for worship. This mosque is still used for Friday prayers. An identical mosque is also built to the right of the Taj and is known as the Jawab (answer). Prayers are not held here as it faces west i.e. away from Mecca, the holy city of the Muslims. It was built to maintain symmetry.

Sources: www.india.gov.in

AGRA FORT : Near the gardens of Taj Mahal stands the important 16th-century Mughal monument known as the Red Fort of Agra. This powerful fortress of red sandstone encompasses within its 2.5-km-long enclosure walls, the imperial city of the Mughal rulers. The forbidding exteriors of this fort hide an inner paradise. There are a number of exquisite buildings like Moti Masjid - a white marble mosque akin to a perfect pearl; Diwan-i-Am, Diwan-i-Khaas, Musamman Burj - where Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan died in 1666 A.D., Jahangir's Palace, Khaas Mahal and Sheesh Mahal. Agra Fort, an excellent example of Mughal architecture, is one of the few UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India.

Sources: www.india.gov.in

FATEHPUR SIKRI: The royal city at Fatehpur Sikri, situated 26 miles west of Agra, Uttar Pradesh, was built under the orders of the great Mughal Emperor Akbar. In honour of Saint Shaikh Salim Chisti, Akbar founded a magnificent city on Sikri ridge. The Buland-Darwaza was added some five years later. Among other important buildings are

the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti, Naubat-or Naqqar Khana (drum-house), Taksal (mint), Karkhanas (royal workshop), Khazana (treasury), Hakim's quarters, Diwan-i-Am (hall of public audience), house of Maryam also called Sunahra Makan (Golden House), palace of Jodh Bai, Birbal's house, etc.

Sources: www.india.gov.in

RAM BAGH: It was created by Emperor Babar and is one of the earliest Mughal gardens. History says that Babar was temporarily buried here, before being interred at Kabul. The Persian influence can be well discerned in the layout of the garden that was designed in such a way as to resemble paradise in Islam.

Sources: www.indiatravelportal.com

SOAMI BAGH: Soami Bagh which houses the Samadhi of the founder of Radha Swami Faith, 'Swamiji Maharaj' is a majestic building built with pure white marble. The most impressive features of the Samadhi are the detailed and exquisite carvings on the walls, arches and pillar capitals.

Sources: www.up-tourism.com

SUR SAROVAR (KEETHAM LAKE): Situated within Surdas Reserve Forest is a Scenic Lake, Sur Sarovar. It is a tranquil spot, ideal for relaxed outings. A wide variety of fishes and water birds add to the lake's natural charm and beauty.

Sources: www.up-tourism.com

SHOPPING

SADAR BAZAAR: The market is conveniently located pretty close to the Agra Cantt Railway Station. Sadar Bazaar is highly reputed market in the city. The market is a specialty destination for different handicraft items as well as the famous Agra shoe and other leather products. Agra is the best place to buy leather and marble goods.

RELIGIOUS PLACES

MANKAMESHWAR MANDIR : Temple in Agra is devoted to Lord Shiva. The temple is situated at Rawatpara, near Agra Fort Railway Station. It is one of the temples devoted to Lord Shiva located at four corners of Agra.

Sources: www.agraguide.com

OTHER PLACES

PATNA BIRD SANCTUARY: Sanctuary is located in the Jalesar town of Etah district; the Patna Bird Sanctuary is spread over an area of 108 hectares. Over 300 different species of exotic birds cluster here during the breeding season in winter months. The intertwined date trees convert the sanctuary scenically into a mini Goa.

Sources: www.up-tourism.com