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About Agra



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Agra is a prominent destination on the World Tourism map, with three world heritage sites – The Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri and Agra Fort. It is more than just a decadent city of graveyards and stones. It is a vibrant centre of culture, art and religious philosophies that have enriched mankind and shaped human thought over the centuries. Agra is famous for handicrafts products such as marble inlay work, leather footwear, brassware, carpets, jewellery, zari work and embroidery.

Agra lies 200 km south of Delhi, on the fertile Indo Gangetic plain which is furrowed by several rivers, the most important of which is the Yamuna. Agra is situated on its west bank, between Mathura and Surajpur, two sites of great antiquity. Agra is 169 metres above sea level and covers about 65 sq km.

The tinkling of anklets, the fragrance of ittr (perfume) and the colours of rustling silk and brocade create an air of enchantment for the visitor to Agrabana, the historic city of the Mughals, which unfolds many a splendid tale of royal ambition, love and sacrifice. Agrabana, which literally means 'paradise' in Sanskrit, offers the modern traveller an unforgettable experience of beauty, love and history, enlivened by a rich collection of anecdotes. on this journey into a fabled past, the traveller enters a world where every stone, pillar and marble slab speaks of the consummate artistry of the Mughals and their love of all things beautiful.

Agra was also a leading educational centre during Mughal rule. In fact the origins of urdu, a fine blend of Hindi and Persian, can be traced to Akbar's court. Modern Agra is proud of a pioneering university – a leading centre of higher learning in North India – with over a hundred colleges and

institutions in Uttar Pradesh affiliated to it.

To most visitors, Agra is synonymous with the legendary Taj Mahal. Yet there is so much more to the city. It encompasses more life and passion than merely that captured by its most famous landmark – Taj Mahal.

PLACES OF INTERESTS IN AGRA

TAJ MAHAL

Taj Mahal has been described as 'a tender elegy in marble'. one of the seven wonders of the world, the Taj Mahal is the finest example of symmetry and balance in architecture and is now on the World Heritage list. It was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as the final resting place for his beloved Queen, Mumtaz Mahal. Done in white marble, it took 22 years and over 20,000 workers and craftsmen to complete this rhapsody in stone (1630-52 CE). The main structure is set amidst landscaped gardens. While it is surrounded by high walls on three sides, it is bound by the river Yamuna at the rear.

AGRA FORT

Few forts in the world have a more fascinating story to tell than the Great Fort of Agra. originally planned as an impregnable military structure by Akbar, the Agra Fort, over a period of time,

acquired all the elegance, lavishness and majesty of an imperial palace. Situated 1 km upstream from the Taj Mahal and on the right bank of the Yamuna,



the Agra Fort was built under the direction of Akbar, by Mohammed Quasim Khan, his Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Kabul. It took eight years to complete and entailed an expenditure of three and a half million rupees.

FATHEHPUR SIKRI

Fatehpur Sikri, about 37 km southwest of Agra, was built by the side of an artificial lake about 3 km long and 1.6 km wide. Still perfectly preserved, this complex of palaces, mosques, gardens and pavilions is a rich legacy of the Mughal era. You can stroll through the Emperor's bedroom, climb to the top of the Panch Mahal, the five tiered palace and look down on the Pachisi courtyard. Then move to the Anup Talau, the sandstone platform on a pond, where Mian Tansen once sang. No trip is complete without a visit to Salim Chisti's Dargah, where you can tie a thread on the lattice work of its walls and make a quiet wish.

RAM BAGH

The oldest Mughal garden in India, Ram bagh was built by Emperor babar in 1528, on the bank of the Yamuna. It lies about 2 km north of the Taj Mahal. The pavilions in this garden are designed so that the wind from the Yamuna, combined with the greenery, keeps them cool even during the peak of summer. The original name of the gardens was Aram bagh, or 'Garden of Relaxation', and this was where the Mughal Emperor babar used to spend his leisure time and where he eventually died. His body was kept here for some time before being sent to Kabul.

MEHTAB BAGH

The Mehtab bagh, or 'Moonlight Garden', is on the opposite bank of the River Yamuna from the Taj Mahal.

MATHURA

Holy Mathura, about 55 km from Agra and 10 km south of Vrindavan on the west bank of the Yamuna, is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna, who is said to have been born in a prison here. Mathura is one of the oldest cities in India, much older than even Agra. Its history can be traced back prior to the days of the Mughal dynasty, which ruled from 325 bCE to 184 bCE.

BHARATPUR BIRD SANCTUARY

bharatpur bird Sanctuary is situated 60 km from Agra. Cormorants, darters, spoonbills, egrets, storks and black ibises are found in large numbers. In winter, migratory birds from as far as Siberia and Northern Europe collect here. Dabchicks, pheasant tailed jacanas, moorhens and coots find their natural surroundings here.

ITMAD-UD-DAULAH'S TOMB

About 4 km north of the Taj, on the left bank of the Yamuna, is the perfectly proportioned marble mausoleum Itmad-ud-Daulah. Nurjehan constructed this splendid marble monument in her father's memory. This double storied marble tomb is replete with mosaic and inlaid with semi-precious stone.



SIKANDRA

Sikandra is 8 km northeast of the Agra-Delhi road. It is on the same side of the river Yamuna as the Taj. Sikandra was built in 1492 by Sikander Lodhi, a ruler of one of the last dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate. Akbar, in his time, ordered the construction of Sikandra again, this time as a site for his mausoleum but he died before it could be completed. The work was completed by his son Jehangir in 1613. The tomb is a combination of Muslim and Hindu architectural styles. The building of red sandstone is four storeys tall, approximately 31 metres in height. The first three storeys are of red sandstone, while the fourth is entirely of marble.

DAYAL BAGH

DAYAL BAGH (SOAMI BAGH) Situated 12 km from the Hotel, this is the headquarters of the Radhasoami religious sect, founded in 1861 by Shri Shiv Dayal Singh, also known as Swamiji Maharaj. built to commemorate the Supreme Creator, this tall, unfinished façade of marble, lined with exquisitely carved pillars and panels, was estimated to cost about five million rupees when it was conceived. by current estimates, the cost of work finished and work still to be done would run into tens of millions of rupees. About 500 devotees stay in the colony adjoining the samadhi. It is claimed that this may rival the Taj Mahal in splendour when completed

