

Capital of Ancient History & Culture

India's capital New Delhi is a mash-up of heat, traffic and crowds but the city is also a treasure trove of history, culture and food.

Words Vanessa Gibbs | Illustration Maggie Li | Art Direction Eurlie Liew

Museums & Art Galleries

Honour Mahatma Gandhi with a visit to the **National Gandhi Museum**, which houses exhibitions, relics and artwork related to the life and work of the activist icon. To learn more, head south to the **Gandhi Smriti Museum**, the house where he spent his final months and the location of his assassination in 1948.

Take in the imposing **India Gate**, built to honour Indian soldiers lost in World War I, then head to the **National Museum**, which is home to around 200,000 exhibits, including artworks and relics of Indian and international history dating back to 2,500 BC. For something newer, take a short walk to the **National Gallery of Modern Art**, home to thousands of artworks from the 1850s to the present day.

For an ultra-modern art experience, head to the Lodhi Colony neighbourhood to see

the bright and bold murals of the **Lodhi Art District**. Local and international artists have contributed over 50 works of street art to what is the country's first open-air public art district.

Temples & Tombs

For a pocket of peace in the city, head to the **Lotus Temple**. Built for the Baha'i religion but open to all, this lotus-shaped temple features 27 marble-clad petals and a glass roof surrounded by nine tranquil ponds and landscaped gardens.

Said to have inspired the Taj Mahal, **Humayun's Tomb** was constructed in 1572, 60 years prior. The symmetrical sandstone structure houses the tomb of Mughal Emperor Humayun. Several other tombs can be found in the surrounding 27-hectare garden, including that of the emperor's trusted barber.

Cross the river to the **Akshardham Temple**, the largest Hindu temple in the world. Built in 2005, the modern complex of structures features film screenings, exhibitions, boat rides and a music and fountain show set in the stepwell-themed courtyard at sunset.

Market Madness

In **Old Delhi**, the Chandni Chowk shopping district is a maze of market streets selling everything from spices to snacks and crafts to clothing. The hundreds of stalls are roughly grouped by what they sell, such as jewellery, perfumes, books and even antiques. Duck

into tiny side streets and explore the endless stalls with their goods piled from floor to ceiling. The markets are open every day except Sunday and haggling is expected. To the west of the Chandni Chowk district is the **Khari Boali** market, the largest wholesale spice market in Asia.

Along with a seemingly endless variety of spices, you can buy tea, masala chai, dried fruit and other local snacks here.

For something more upmarket, head south to **Khan Market**, where Delhi's expats and elites shop. Browse the smaller

collection of stalls and boutiques selling high-end clothing, shoes, books and Ayurvedic products. Stop by a café for a local lunch with a side of people-watching.

Old Delhi

Wander the skinny streets and twinkling bazaars of **Old**

Delhi, founded in 1639 as Shahjahanabad, when the Mughal Emperor of the time, Shah Jahan, moved the country's capital from Agra to Delhi. He constructed the **Red Fort**, which with its red sandstone structures and 18-metre-high walls was designated a World

Heritage Site in 2007. Opposite stands **Jama Masjid**, the largest mosque in India, with space for 25,000 people. Built by the same emperor, the iconic red sandstone and marble design can be seen throughout. Climb one of the two 40-metre-tall minarets for a view over the city.





Tempt The Taste Buds

Hidden in the labyrinth of markets in Chandni Chowk is an unassuming side street called **Paranthe Wali Gali**. Here, you'll find stalls selling *paratha*, stuffed flatbreads filled with a variety of ingredients like peas, potatoes, paneer and cauliflower. Dip into chutneys or top with pickles as a snack or pair with curries as part of a larger meal.

Thali refers to a platter of dishes served on a tray and usually includes an assortment of curries, chutneys, breads, rice and

vegetables. There's often a sweet dish too, so there's no need to wait for dessert. Restaurants across the city serve up the sizzling and fragrant meal and it's a great way to try a variety of dishes.

For dessert, try *jalebi*, deep-fried batter coated in syrup, from **Old Famous Jalebiwala**, which has been making the sugary snacks since 1884. Don't forget to wash it all down with a spicy masala chai tea.

Connaught Place

Connaught Place, or CP as the locals call it, is the business district

of Delhi. Central Park sits at the centre of a series of ring roads, which are now filled with high-end hotels, glitzy restaurants and luxury stores, along with retro cinemas and stalls selling street food, jewellery and souvenirs. Visit **Jantar Mantar**, an 18th-century structure built to measure the movement of stars and planets, and **Agrasen ki Baoli**, a 14th-century stepwell.

Parks & Green Spaces

Swap the traffic-clogged streets for one of Delhi's green lungs with a visit to **Deer Park**. As the

name suggests, you'll find deer roaming through a vast expanse of forested green space. Young couples get cosy on benches, families picnic by the lake, and locals enjoy slow jogs through the scenery.

Nearby **Lodhi Gardens** is a 36-hectare park perfect for finding peace in the chaotic capital. Relax and take in Mughal-era architecture with the 15th-century tombs of Bada Gumbad, Sheesh Gumbad and Muhammad Shah and the 16th-century Sikander Lodi tomb.

Head to south Delhi and take a meditative walk through **The Garden of Five Senses**, a landscaped park with floral displays, water fountains and 25 sculptures. Divided into multiple zones with different art and plants in each, the park was designed to stimulate each of the five senses. ■

Useful Tips:

GETTING AROUND



Taxis and **auto rickshaws** are plentiful. Agree on a price beforehand and haggle but expect to be charged more as a tourist. If you're doing a day of sightseeing, it's cheap and convenient to rent a driver for the day. Before you go, negotiate a rate upfront and agree on where you'll go and how long the driver will wait at each stop. The metro is crowded during rush hour but makes a great choice at other times of the day.

SCAMS

Delhi has a reputation for scams, but while there are a few opportunists, the city is largely safe. Ignore, or at least check for yourself, '**helpful warnings**', such as someone dressed as a train inspector saying you have the wrong ticket and need to buy a new one or a driver saying the hotel you're asking to go to is fully booked.

SCAM ALERT!

STREET FOOD



Don't be afraid to try the street food. Some of the city's best food is served from **small sizzling stalls**. Use your judgment and check cleanliness before ordering. If in doubt, go where the locals go and opt for vendors with the longest, fast-moving queues; this means the food is both good and fresh.

About the writer

Vanessa Gibbs is a freelance travel writer for magazines and brands. Away from her laptop, she loves to explore her hometown of London and scuba dive wherever she can, collecting passport stamps along the way.