



Agra & the Taj Mahal

Includes ➔

History	351
Sights	351
Activities	358
Tours	358
Sleeping	359
Eating	363
Drinking & Nightlife	365
Shopping	365
Fatehpur Sikri	369

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pinch of Spice (p364)
- ➔ Time2Eat – Mama Chicken (p365)
- ➔ Esphahan (p364)
- ➔ Lakshmi Vilas (p365)
- ➔ Dasaprakash (p365)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Bansi Homestay (p361)
- ➔ N Homestay (p361)
- ➔ Tourists Rest House (p363)
- ➔ Oberoi Amarvilas (p361)
- ➔ Saniya Palace Hotel (p359)

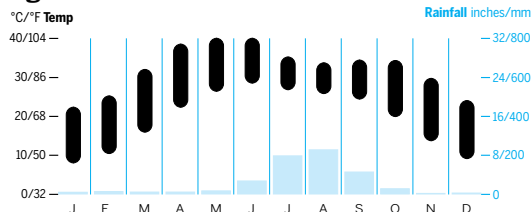
Why Go?

Agra's Taj Mahal rises from the dust-beaten earth of Uttar Pradesh as it does in dreams, but even the wildest imaginations leave travellers underprepared for that breath-stealing moment its gates are traversed and this magnificent world wonder comes into focus. Skipping it would be a bit like drinking chai without spoonfuls of sugar: absurd. Simply put, it's the most beautiful building in the world and it's almost impossible to see it without feeling awestruck.

But Agra, with its long and rich history, boasts plenty more besides. For 130 years this was the centre of India's great Mughal empire, and its legacy lives on in beautiful artwork, mouth-watering cuisine and magnificent architecture. The Taj is one of three places here that have been awarded Unesco World Heritage status, with the immense Agra Fort and the eerie ruined city of Fatehpur Sikri making up a superb trio of top-draw sights.

When to Go

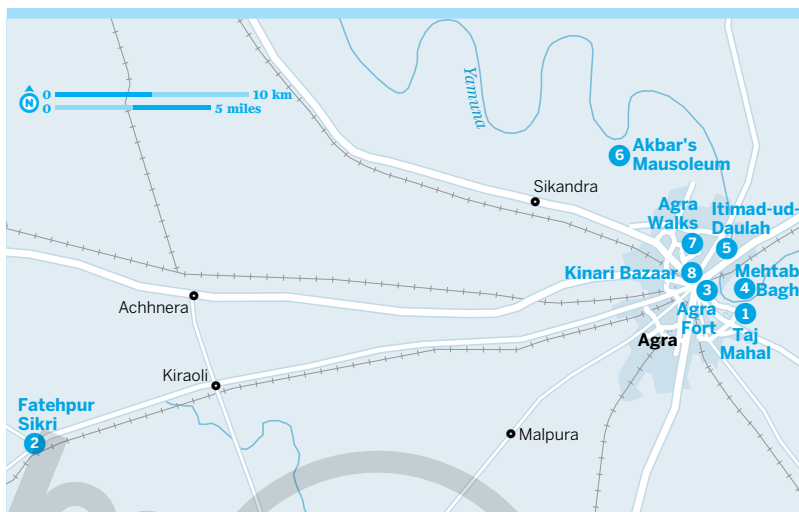
Agra



Sep–Oct The best time to visit. Most of the monsoon rains are over and summer temperatures have cooled.

Nov–Feb Daytime temperatures are comfortable but big sights are overcrowded. Evenings are nippy.

Mar–Apr Evening chill is gone but raging-hot mid-summer temperatures have yet to materialise.



Agra & the Taj Mahal Highlights

- 1 Rising before dawn to take in the **Taj Mahal** (p352) minus the crowds, returning later for the cinematic sunset view
- 2 Exploring the fascinating abandoned city of **Fatehpur Sikri** (p369)
- 3 Gawking at the immensity of the red-sandstone walls that surround **Agra Fort** (p353)
- 4 Hiring a rickshaw for the day, taking in a tour of Agra's Mughal gardens, ending at sunset with **Mehtab Bagh** (p358)
- 5 Crossing the Yamuna River to **Itimad-ud-Daulah** (p355), an exquisite marble tomb nicknamed the Baby Taj
- 6 Hitting the suburbs for **Akbar's Mausoleum** (p355), the beautiful resting place of the Mughals' greatest emperor
- 7 Strolling deeper into ancient Agra on a captivating jaunt with **Agra Walks** (p358)
- 8 Battling the throngs at hectic **Kinari Bazaar** (p366), one of India's most mesmerising markets

History

In 1501 Sultan Sikandar Lodi established his capital here, but the city fell into Mughal hands in 1526, when Emperor Babur defeated the last Lodi sultan at Panipat. Agra reached the peak of its magnificence between the mid-16th and mid-17th centuries during the reigns of Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jahan. During this period the fort, the Taj Mahal and other major mausoleums were built. In 1638 Shah Jahan built a new city in Delhi, and his son Aurangzeb moved the capital there 10 years later.

In 1761 Agra fell to the Jats, a warrior class who looted its monuments, including the Taj Mahal. The Marathas took over in 1770, but were replaced by the British in 1803. Following the First War of Independence of 1857, the British shifted the administration of the province to Allahabad. Deprived of its ad-

ministrative role, Agra developed as a centre for heavy industry, quickly becoming famous for its chemicals industry and air pollution, before the Taj and tourism became a major source of income.

Agra

☎ 0562 / POP 1.7 MILLION

👁 Sights

The entrance fee for Agra's five main sights – the Taj, Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's Mausoleum and Itimad-ud-Daulah – is made up of charges from two different bodies, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Agra Development Association (ADA). Of the ₹750 ticket for the Taj Mahal, ₹500 is a special ADA ticket, which gives you small savings on the other four sights