



Delhi

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Best Places to Eat

- » Saravana Bhavan (p71)
- » Bukhara (p72)
- » Indian Accent (p74)
- » Monsoon (p72)
- » Olive (p74)
- » Gunpowder (p73)
- » Rajdhani (p71)

Best Places to Stay

- » Shanti Home (p67)
- » Devna (p68)
- » Brineteen (p68)
- » Cottage Yes Please (p65)

Why Go?

Medieval mayhem, the New India, stately maiden aunt: give it a chance and this schizophrenic capital could capture your heart. Yes, it's aggravating, polluted and hectic, but hey – nobody's perfect.

Like a subcontinental Rome, India's capital is punctuated by vestiges of lost empires: ancient forts freckle the suburbs; Old Delhi was once the capital of Islamic India; the British built New Delhi, with its exaggerated avenues; and even-newer Delhi features utopian malls linked by potholed roads. These disparate, codependent elements are all now gloriously intertwined via the new metro system.

There are also magnificent museums, temples, mosques, and a busy cultural scene – and shopaholics, you are home: all the riches of India twinkle in Delhi's emporiums.

Prepare yourself to tuck into some of the subcontinent's finest food, including the famous *Dilli-ka-Chaat* (Delhi street food) – which, rather like the city itself, jumbles up every flavour in one bite.

When to Go

Delhi has an extreme climate, with hot summers and cold winters. It's at its best from October to March, when the weather is bright and sunny but not too hot. May to August are the months to avoid, when it's hot and humid, and the monsoon season, with rains starting in June and at their heaviest from July to September, is worth avoiding if you can.

Top Tips

- » Ensure your taxi or autorickshaw driver has taken you to the hotel/shop you requested, as some try to offload passengers at places where they receive commission.
- » Decline offers from taxi or auto drivers to take you to hotels/shops of their choice.
- » Avoid chatty young men who hang around touristy spots, some of whom claim humbly to be students wanting to improve their English.
- » Don't believe the helpful chaps who try to direct you to a 'tourist office' around Connaught Place. There is only one Government of India tourist office, at 88 Janpath.
- » Carry small denominations (below ₹50) as drivers often have a lack of change.
- » Ignore touts who surreptitiously dirty your shoe and offer to clean it at a price.

DON'T MISS

One of Delhi's most mystical and atmospheric experiences is to hear *qawwali* singers and musicians perform devotional songs at the Hazrat Nizam-ud-din Dargah (p51). This is a beautiful Islamic holy shrine, where song performances take place after sunset prayers on Thursday. The air is thick with incense and the shrine thronged with pilgrims.

Delhi's Top Festivals

- » To check dates contact India Tourism Delhi (p80).
- » Delhi celebrates **Diwali** and Dussehra (Durga Puja) with particular verve.
- » **Republic Day** (26 January, Rajpath, p53) Incorporates a spectacular military parade.
- » **Beating of the Retreat** (29 January, Rajpath, p53) The closing of the Republic Day celebrations is marked by the Beating of the Retreat – more military pageantry. Tickets are essential for both events and are available at India Tourism Delhi.
- » **Independence Day** (15 August, Red Fort, p44) India celebrates its Independence from Britain in 1947 and the prime minister addresses the nation from the Red Fort ramparts.
- » **Qutb Festival** (October/November, Qutb Minar, p84) Held over several days, featuring Sufi singing and classical dance performances.
- » **Delhi International Arts Festival** (DIAF, December) Three weeks of exhibitions, performing arts, films, literature and culinary events at Delhi-wide venues.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi train station, Old Delhi train station, and the Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT).

Fast Facts

- » **Population** 12.8 million
- » **Area** 1483 sq km
- » **Area code** 011
- » **Main languages** Hindi and English
- » **Sleeping price indicators** \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹5000, \$\$\$ above ₹5000

Planning Your Trip

- » Book accommodation ahead at <http://hotels.lonelyplanet.com>
- » Call your hotel to confirm the day before you arrive
- » Book train tickets for longer journeys at least a week ahead on www.indianrail.gov.in

Resources

- » Delhi Tourism (<http://delhitourism.nic.in/delhitourism/index.jsp>) lists government-rated home-stays and recommended tourist agencies.
- » A free AA map is available in many places but, for street-by-street detail, Delhi newsstands sell the excellent 245-page *Eicher City Map* (₹340).