

## How to get there

Agra lies 223 km south of central Delhi, and it takes about 3 1/2 hours to get there by car. You can hire a taxi/bus for the day from Vinstring Holidays according to the size of your group. There are also several trains operating between Delhi and Agra and you can check out the Indian Rail website: [www.indianrail.gov.in](http://www.indianrail.gov.in). Please contact SmartReiser or Vinstring Holidays for prices.

Most visitors to Taj use the new Agra Express Way for the journey, which is a really fast and good way to travel. There are a couple of road side Food Courts en route, and the best one is by the Mathura Exit, approx. 2 hours from Delhi. Here you'll find different options for breakfast/food as well as clean toilets.

Your car/bus will be parked in Agra while you visit the Taj Mahal, the Agra Fort or whatever you wish to see. Cars and buses are not allowed closer than 1 km from the Taj Mahal. From the arrival centre/parking lot you can catch a free ride with electric carts to the main entrance. You'll meet a lot of local souvenir sellers from the moment you arrive at the Taj parking, and they can be pretty intense in their efforts to sell their merchandise.

When you reach the entrance of the Taj, you have to buy a Taj Mahal entry ticket for 1300 Rupees (This is the price for foreigners as of 2019. The price for Indian nationals is much lower).

Contact information for our travel agent in Delhi:

Vinstring Holidays

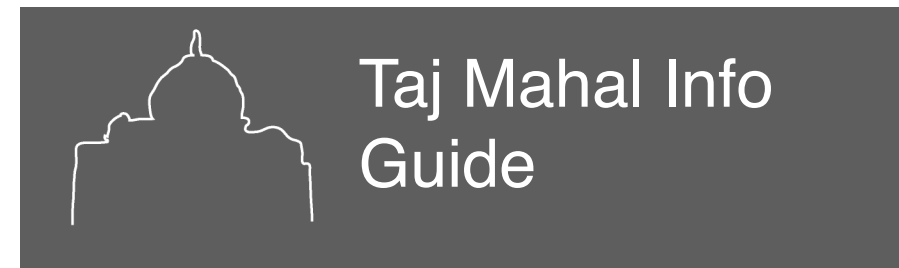
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English



### The Taj Mahal, Agra

Taj Mahal is regarded as one of the eight wonders of the world, and some Western historians have noted that its architectural beauty has never been surpassed. The Taj is the most beautiful monument built by the Mughals, the Muslim rulers of India and is built entirely of white marble. Its stunning architectural beauty is beyond adequate description, particularly at dawn and sunset.

### History

Taj Mahal (meaning Crown Palace) stands on the bank of River Yamuna, which otherwise serves as a wide moat defending the Great Red Fort of Agra, the center of the Mughal emperors until they moved their capital to Delhi in 1637. It was built by the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan in 1631 in memory of his second wife, Mumtaz Mahal, a Muslim Persian princess. She died after giving birth to their 14th child.

### Other things to see in Agra

If you have time to see more, we advice you to see the Agra Fort, which is situated a short distance from the Taj Mahal. You can see the view of the Taj Mahal from the Agra Fort. (below)



It is also a good option to see one of the Marble Centres in Agra. There you can see how they make decorative marble products made in the same traditional way as the Taj Mahal. You can buy products from there, but it is quite expensive. Let your group leader approach the manager and ask how much commission he will receive if his group shops there. He will be given the commission in cash at the end when the group is finished purchasing.

## Taj Mahal overview

### Museum

In the left part of the garden there is a museum, where you can see pictures of Shah Jahan and his wife, the original drawings of the Taj Mahal and get more insight into the history around the construction of the Taj Mahal. It costs a few rupees to get in.

Mosque

Mausoleum

Minarets

Guest house

Pool area

Photo point  
You can get your group photo taken by a photographer from the platform in front of the Main Gateway. They will be ready within an hour. Ca. Rs 70 - 80 per print.

Main Gateway

Main Entrance and ticket booth.



The death so crushed the emperor that all his hair and beard were said to have grown snow white in a few months.



When Mumtaz Mahal was still alive, she extracted four promises from the emperor: first, that he build the Taj; second, that he should not marry again; third, that he be kind to their children; and fourth, that he visit the tomb on her death anniversary. He kept the first and second promises.

Construction began in 1631 and was completed in 22 years, at a cost of 32 Million Rupees. Twenty thousand people were deployed to work on it. The material was brought in from all over India and central Asia and it took a fleet of 1000 elephants to transport it to the site.



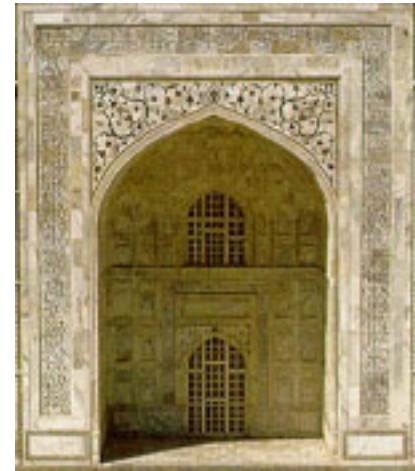


## Architecture

The renowned Iranian architect Ustad Isa designed the Taj Mahal and it is best appreciated when the architecture and its adornments are linked to the passion that inspired it. It is a "symbol of eternal love". Expert craftsmen from Delhi, Qannauj, Lahore, and Multan were employed. In addition, many renowned Muslim craftsmen from Baghdad, Shiraz and Bukhara worked on many specialized tasks.



The Taj rises on a high red sandstone base topped by a huge white marble terrace on which rests the famous dome flanked by four tapering minarets. Within the dome lies the jewel-inlaid cenotaph of the queen. The entire mausoleum (inside as well as outside) is decorated with inlaid design of flowers and calligraphy using precious gems such as agate and jasper.



The main archways, chiseled with passages from the Holy Qur'an and the bold scroll work of flowery pattern, give a captivating charm to its beauty. The central domed chamber and four adjoining chambers include many walls and panels of Islamic decoration.

So exquisite is the workmanship that the Taj has been described as "having been designed by giants and finished by jewellers". The only asymmetrical object in the Taj is the casket of the emperor which was built beside the queen's as an afterthought. The emperor was deposed by his son, Aurangzeb, and imprisoned in the Great Red Fort for eight years but was buried in the Taj. During his imprisonment, he had a view of the Taj from his bedroom window.

The mausoleum is a part of a vast complex comprising of a main gateway, an elaborate garden, a mosque (to the left), a guest house (to the right), and several other palatial buildings. The Taj is at the farthest end of this complex, with the river Jamuna behind it. The large garden contains four reflecting pools dividing it at the center. Each of these four sections is further subdivided into four sections and then each into yet another four sections. Like the Taj, the garden elements serve like Arabesque, standing on their own and also constituting the whole.