

Charming Chandni Chowk

Shahjahanabad, the capital Mughal emperor Shah Jahan established in the 17th century, lies 2 km north of Connaught Place. Popularly known as **Purani Dilli** (Old Delhi) now, the walled city was once the capital of Muslim rule in India. A world in itself, it will take you on a historical trip in its crowded, labyrinthine lanes. Its historical sites are imposing, the markets vibrant and colourful, and the sights and smells simply unforgettable.

If you take the Metro, get down at **Chandni Chowk Metro Station** and head towards the Chandni Chowk exit. Get on to a rickshaw there and go to **Lal Qila** (Red Fort) via the Town Hall. Alternatively, take a taxi or auto-rickshaw from your hotel straight to the fort.

Red Fort

The fort, now a World Heritage Site, was built between AD 1639





Diwan-i-Khas: Its centrepiece was the Peacock Throne

and 1648 after Shah Jahan decided to move his capital from Agra to Shahjahanabad. You can enter the fort from Netaji Subhash Road through the **Lahori Gate**. Next comes the covered bazaar of **Chhatta Chowk**, where jewellery and carpets are sold. You then reach the **Naubat Khana**, where musicians once used to play three times a day. It now houses the **War Memorial Museum**. The path eastward takes you to the **Diwan-i-Aam** or the Hall of Public Audiences. Immediately east is **Rang Mahal** or the Palace of Colours.

On its north is **Khas Mahal**, the emperor's personal palace. Further north you come to the **Diwan-i-Khas** or the Hall of Private Audience. This hall is made of marble, and its centrepiece used to be the Peacock Throne. Other attractions enclosed within the Red Fort are the **Hammams** or the Royal Baths; the **Shahi Burj**, which used to be Shah Jahan's private working area; and the **Moti Masjid** or the Pearl Mosque.

Netaji Subhash Marg

Metro Station:

Chandni Chowk

Open: Tue–Sun

Timings: Sunrise to Sunset

Entry Fee:

₹10 (Indians), ₹250 (foreigners)

Photography: Nil

(₹25 for video filming)

Sound & Light

Shows: 6pm onwards in English and Hindi

Ticket: ₹80 (adults), ₹30 (children)



Digambar Jain Temple:
Adding to a
secular Delhi

Having come out of the fort, set out in a cycle-rickshaw (₹80–₹100 per hour), or on foot if the streets are too congested. Enter **Chandni Chowk**, the busy commercial street which was designed by Shah Jahan's daughter, Jahanara Begum. First, on the right you will see the **Digambar Jain Temple**. It is said to be the oldest Jain temple in Delhi. It is a haven of tranquillity amid the noise and chaos of the main streets. In the same complex you will see flying creatures being treated at the **Bird Hospital**. Proceed next to the **Gauri Shankar Temple**, which has an 800-year-old brown *lingam* (Lord Shiva's phallic symbol) encased in marble. Next down the street is **Gurudwara**

Fatehpuri Mosque:
Proportionally not as
perfect as Jama Masjid





Gurudwara Sis Ganj: Where Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded

Sis Ganj, the welcoming Sikh temple that was built where Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, was beheaded by Aurangzeb. The trunk of the banyan tree under which the guru was killed is still there on the premises. Before you enter the *gurudwara*, take off your shoes and wash your hands and feet.

Adjacent to Gurudwara Sis Ganj is the **Sunehri Masjid** or "Golden Mosque". Its onion-shaped, copper domes were once gilded, which earned the mosque its name. It was from here that the Persian invader Nadir Shah watched as his men massacred some 3,000 citizens in AD 1739. If you turn left from the *gurudwara* you enter **Kinari Bazaar**, which is the best place to look for *zari* and *zardozi* trimmings. This bright bazaar specializes in wedding paraphernalia such as glittering tinsel decorations and ornate bridal accessories.

If you go straight you reach the **Fatehpuri Masjid**, designed by one of Shah Jahan's wives for herself.

A detour to the right takes you to the Church Mission Marg. Turn left and you will find yourself in **Khari Baoli** — Asia's largest spice market. The aromas of the spices will thrill you, but beware of pickpockets in the crowded area. Having seen and smelt the spices that led Vasco da Gama to discover India, double back down Chandni Chowk. You may turn right into Kinari Bazaar if you have not seen it already. Otherwise, if you go on, a right turn further ahead leads you to **Dariba Kalan** known for its pearl, gold and silver jewellery and *attar* (natural perfumes). Proceed down south towards Jama Masjid and you will see the tall spire of the **Shiv Temple**.

Jama Masjid

Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India, is also known as **Jami** or **Jummah Masjid**. A magnificent flight of red sandstone steps



Jama Masjid: Mughal architecture at its best



Courtyard of the Jama Masjid: 25,000 devotees can pray here at a time

takes you to the arched gateways (east, north and south) and through to a large, rectangular, open courtyard that can hold as many as 25,000 devotees. In the centre of the courtyard is an ablution tank, *hauz*, and in front of it, a raised platform called *dikka*. Leave your shoes outside for a small fee and cover your knees before you enter the mosque. Be careful about your timings. During the *namaaz* (prayers), tourists are not allowed inside.

Having explored the mosque, head down west to **Chawri Bazaar**, the paper market also known for its brass and copper items. Next you reach **Nai Sarak**, where people go for books and stationery of all kinds. Head south to **Churiwali Gali** and see the bangles on display. You can stop for a sumptuous meal at the **Karim Hotel**. Originating in the days of Bahadur Shah Zafar, it is currently ranked among the top restaurants in Asia for its authentic Mughlai food. Karim serves delicious Mutton Kebabs and Burrahs. You must also try their Nihari and Paaya.

Note: INTACH conducts regular walks of Chandni Chowk every weekend (contact 24641304, 24632269).

Off Netaji Subhash Marg, West of Red Fort

Metro Station:

Chawri Bazaar

Timings: 7am to Noon, 1.30pm to 6.30pm. Tourists not allowed during prayer hours.

Open: All days

Entry Fee: Free

Photography: ₹200