

## Sites of Mughal Heritage

Christian A. Hedrick and  
Sharon C. Smith

For over three centuries the Mughal dynasty produced some of the world's greatest architecture. Emerging originally from Afghanistan, the Mughals celebrated their victory over much of South Asia with an aggressive building campaign. The result of this effort generated an architecture that not only harkened back to their origins in Central Asia, but imaginatively conflated the architecture of the conquered Hindus with architectural symbols of Islam.

The following short list of thirty monuments was selected out of hundreds of buildings in order to illustrate several important ideas. The assembled list not only demonstrates key moments in Mughal history, but, as will be seen from the diversity of their programs and time periods that they represent, allows for a broad consideration of Mughal culture and history through its architecture. Furthermore, we thought it important that the monuments chosen be, at least to some degree, still extant in order to further encourage their visitation and study. Some monuments, such as those representing the grand expressions of power embodied in the rich tradition of royal tombs, demonstrate the evolution of forms and organizational strategies that were clearly seen as fundamentally important to the Mughals as each ruler outdid his predecessor. Also included are important mosques, or specific parts of mosques and other religious buildings, that demonstrate the dynasty's evolving relationship with its subjects, its symbolic expressions of political power, or its fervent dedication to Islam. Indeed, Mughal history, culture and, ultimately, its heritage were written in stone and, as such, can still be read today.



1  
Bagh-e Babur  
Kabul, Afghanistan, founded  
c. 1528

This eleven-and-a-half-hectare terraced Garden on the western slopes south of Kabul was laid out by the founder of the Mughal dynasty, Zahirud-Din Muhammad Babur. It was his favourite among the ten gardens that he built in and around Kabul, and he decreed that it be his final resting place.



2  
Jahangiri Mahal  
Agra, India, 1560–70

This residential palace was built by Akbar within the Agra Fort complex. Situated at the southern end of the Fort and facing the Yamuna River, it is one of the few original structures that has survived, nearly intact, from Akbar's time. It is thought that the building was originally constructed as a *zenana* (a residential palace for the imperial women).



3  
Humayun's Tomb  
Delhi, India, 1560–70

Probably commissioned by either Humayun's widow and principal wife, Haji Begum, or his son Akbar, the Tomb provides the first example of

the monumental scale set within a *chahar-bagh* that would characterize subsequent Mughal imperial architecture. Designed by Sayyid Muhammad and his father, it is also the first to mark the grave of a Mughal emperor.



4  
Lal Qila  
Agra, India, 1565–73

Begun by Akbar in 1565 on top of the foundations of a fortress attributed to Sikandar Lodi (r. 1489–1527), Agra's "Red Fort" has been modified many times. However, Akbar was responsible for the use of the red sandstone veneer. Inspired by the architecture of Gujarat and Bengal, the fort features trabeated construction and Hindu decorative motifs.



5  
Fatehpur Sikri  
India, 1571–85

Founded as the new capital of the Mughal Empire, this "City of Victory" was begun by Emperor Akbar. Based on Persian planning principles, the city comprises dozens of significant monuments and one of India's largest mosques. The city served as the Mughal capital for fourteen years but was subsequently abandoned.



6  
Buland Darwaza  
at the Jami Masjid, Fatehpur Sikri,  
India, 1571–72

The Buland Darwaza, or “Lofty Gate”, is a massive and imposing forty-metre-high gateway into the mosque. Conflating Hindu and Persian elements, the gate is reminiscent of Humayun’s Tomb in Delhi. Since it symbolically faces Gujarat, it may have been created to commemorate Akbar’s victory there or in the Deccan.



7  
Panch Mahal  
Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1571–74

The Panch Mahal is a rectangular, colonnaded structure open on all sides. It is positioned to act as a ‘transition’ building between the semi-public spaces that surround the Daulat Khana courtyard. Its function is unknown, but some believe it played a role in Emperor Akbar’s daily ritual of displaying himself to the public.



8  
Salim Chishti’s Tomb  
Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1571–80

Set within the Jami Masjid, the white marble Tomb occupies a prominent

position opposite the Buland Darwaza [6] and was built by Akbar to honour the Sufi saint. Legend has it that Akbar, who lacked an heir, sought assistance from the saint, who predicted the birth of Jahangir.



9  
Hujra-i-Anup Talao  
Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1572

Near the Anup Talao [12] is a profusely ornamented chamber popularly referred to as the “Pavilion of the Turkish Sultana”, but now officially known as the Anup Talao Pavilion. According to some, Akbar used this structure to receive visitors and honoured guests. However, its intended function has been the subject of much scholarly debate.



10  
Diwan-i-Khass  
Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1572–75

This small building houses a massive ornamental column at its centre, upon which sits a massive capital with four *jali*-lined bridges. Theories describe this structure as having been used for religious discussions or as a “Jewel House”. The building’s plan has attracted many interpretations based on its symbolism.



11  
Diwan-i-Am  
Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1572–75

This public audience hall served various purposes of a public nature. It was where the emperor made his first daily public appearance and was also the site of court ceremonies, the reception of guests, and the administration of justice, as well as major festivals and celebrations of military victories.



12  
Anup Talao  
Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1576

The Anup Talao, or “peerless pool,” was built on a wide platform (*chabwtara*) set in a pool to the north of the imperial apartments in the Mahal-i-Khass courtyard. As part of a system of mini tanks and canals, it served to cool the air in the vicinity of the royal living quarters. In 1578 Akbar’s court historian recorded an order to fill the Anup Talao with copper, silver and gold coins, which were later distributed by the emperor himself.



13  
Mausoleum of Akbar  
Sikandra, India, 1612–14

Most probably begun by Akbar and finished by his son Jahangir, the Mausoleum expands upon themes seen

earlier in Humayun’s Tomb. It comprises a larger pavilion at the centre of a still larger *chahar-bagh*, yet at the same time symbolically harkens back to India’s Hindu architecture by including *chhatris* and corbelling.



14  
Gateway to the Mausoleum of Akbar  
Sikandra, India, 1612–14

This tall, sandstone-clad gate with ornate marble *pietra dura* inlay, carvings and inscriptions marks the entry to the *chahar-bagh*. It consists of a colossal arched niche flanked on either side by double-stacked balconies surmounted by four towering, white marble minarets at each corner.



15  
Mausoleum of Itimad ad-Daula  
Agra, India, 1622–28

Built in the *hasht bihisht* style, the pavilion has *chhatri*-topped towers in each corner that provide views of the Yamuna River and more than thirty gardens on its banks. Commissioned by Empress Nur Jahan in honour of her father, Mirza Ghiyas Beg (called Itimad ad-Daula, “Pillar of the Empire”) (d. 1622), the tomb stands in a *chahar-bagh*.



16  
Tomb of Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana  
Delhi, India, 1627

The mausoleum of the poet and minister known as “Rahim” (1556–1626) is a precursor to the Taj Mahal in terms of architectural style. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture announced plans to restore the Tomb in 2014.



17  
Jahangir's Tomb  
Lahore, Pakistan, 1627–37

The Tomb, a *chahar-bagh rawza* (paradise garden mausoleum), is set in the Bagh-i Dilkusha on the Ravi River. The combination of red sandstone and white marble floral inlay in the *takhgah*, which measures eighty-four square metres, echoes Humayun's Tomb in Delhi. Inside, a white marble cenotaph with *pietra dura* and calligraphic motifs rests on a *chabutara* (platform).



18  
Shish Mahal  
Lahore, Pakistan, 1631–32

Shah Jahan built this pavilion, located within the Shah Burj of the Shahi Qila, for an empress. It has a highly ornate chamber, and the central portion of the facade is composed of five cusped marble arches supported by coupled

marble columns on bases inlaid with precious stones. The interior is decorated in *ayina kari*-style glass mosaic.



19  
Taj Mahal Complex  
Agra, India, 1631–53

Encompassing about seventeen hectares, this walled garden-tomb complex on the Yamuna River includes a mosque, guest house, gates and, most famously, the mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal, considered the greatest architectural achievement of the Indo-Islamic world. Constructed in white marble with *pietra dura* inlay, it rises above the garden over a reflecting pool.



20  
Nishat Bagh  
Srinagar, India, c. 1633

Attributed to Asaf Khan, Nur Jahan's brother, Nishat Bagh sits on Dal Lake, near Srinagar. Rising through a progression of terraces, its main feature was a watercourse. Its jets, steps and pools allowed a near continuous flow to the lake over twelve levels, one for each sign of the zodiac.



21  
Diwan-i Khass  
Delhi, India, 1635

Situated within the Lal Qil'a, this hall of private audience was constructed of white marble inlaid with precious stones. The building features engrailed arches on all sides and each of its corners is topped by a pillared *chhatra*. The Peacock Throne rested on a pedestal in the centre until its removal in 1739 by Nadir Shah.



22  
Wazir Khan Mosque  
Lahore, Pakistan, 1634–35

Commissioned by Hakim 'Ilm Uddin, also known as Wazir Khan, the Mosque is located between the Delhi Gate and Shahi Qila, over the shrine of a thirteenth-century Iranian saint. Much of the Mosque, including its octagonal minarets, is constructed of brick and decorated with *kashi* (faience tile).



23  
Shalimar Garden  
Lahore, Pakistan, 1641/42

Among the best preserved Mughal gardens, Shalimar Bagh was constructed in the *chahar-bagh* tradition. Encompassing three large terraces over various levels, the Garden features canals, pools, pavilions,

fountains and *abshar* (cascades) with fragrant flowering plants. The last terrace, known as Farah Bakhsh (Dispensary of Pleasure), was a *zenana*; the two lower ones, collectively called the Faiz Bakhsh (Dispensary of Plenty), served more public functions.



24  
Jama Masjid  
Delhi, India, 1644–58

One of Shah Jahan's final building projects, the Jama Masjid served as the main mosque of his new city of Shah-jahanabad, which it overlooks. Sitting on a high plinth on top of a hillock, it features three gates, four towers and two forty-metre-high minarets clad in red sandstone and marble. A projecting *pishtaq* accentuates the prayer hall entrance.



25  
Diwan-i-Khas-o-Am  
Lahore, Pakistan, 1645

Within the Shahi Qila, this *sang-e murmur* (marble) pavilion was placed to provide transition from the highly public area of the Diwan-i Am to the private apartments of the imperial harem. Its core of vaulted chambers is bordered on three sides by an arcaded veranda.



26

### Moti Masjid

Lahore, Pakistan, 1645

The small marble “Pearl Mosque” was built as the private mosque for the royal harem. Standing on the western side of Shahi Qila, Moti Masjid is one of the few buildings within the fort that deviates from the overall north-south orientation of the complex, allowing the *mihrab* to face Mecca.



27

### Moti Masjid

Agra, India, 1647–53

Shah Jahan had this “Pearl Mosque” built in the Lal Qil'a [4] for the royal court. Predominately made of white marble, the building features common motifs including multi-lobed arches, *chhatris* and domes. The understated mosque with minimal ornamentation rests on a high plinth, with a red sandstone-clad blind wall marking the perimeter.



28

### Badshahi Mosque

Lahore, Pakistan, 1673–74

Commissioned by Alamgir Aurangzeb, Badshahi Masjid is one of the world's largest mosques; it is also considered one of the last great monuments of the Mughal period. Standing opposite

the main gate of the Shahi Qila, it features grand gateways, four red sandstone, tapering minarets, three vast marble domes and an open courtyard.



29

### Lalbagh Fort Complex

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1678

Located in the Mughal provincial capital of Bengal, the never-completed fort was begun by then-governor Muhammad Azam Shah and continued by Shaista Khan. A large *chahar-bagh* and three axially aligned buildings comprise the site: a mosque; the *hasht bihisht*-style tomb of Pari-Bibi; and the Diwan-i Am with a hammam (bath).



30

### Mausoleum of Safdarjung

Delhi, India, 1753

The last example of a Mughal enclosed garden-tomb in Delhi, the Mausoleum of Safdarjung recalls earlier models such as Humayun's Tomb and the Taj Mahal, albeit on a less grand scale. Red sandstone and marble, set within a *chahar-bagh*, the two-storey structure retains all the elements of its noble prototypes, including the *chhatri*, *pishtaq* and central dome.