

Exploring Agra - Past, Present and Fascinating Trivia

Hey aspirants! We're back with another blog on the blog series '**Know Your City**'. The city you're going to learn about is '**Agra**'. So, without a further delay, let's start exploring the city.

Nestled along the banks of the Yamuna River in northern India, **Agra** is a city that encapsulates the rich tapestry of Indian history, culture, and architecture. With a history spanning over 1,000 years, it's a city that has witnessed the rise and fall of empires, from the Mughals to the British Raj. Most notably, Agra is renowned for the iconic Taj Mahal, a stunning marble mausoleum that attracts over 7 million visitors annually. But Agra is more than just a single monument; it boasts a vibrant culture, bustling markets, and an array of historic forts and palaces. Join me as we unravel the intriguing story of Agra, a city where time stands still amidst timeless wonders.

Before looking at the different aspects, one must know the city symbols of the particular city. The city symbols of **Agra** are:

Agra	
State	Uttar Pradesh
Official Language	Hindi
City Bird	Sparrow
City Animal	Sarus Crane
City Flower	Sankrant
MLA	Girraj Singh Dharmesh
MP	Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel
Mayor	Hemalata Diwakar
Municipal Commissioner	Ankit Khandelwal



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[Source : Food and Travel Magazine]

So now, let's move on to the first aspect of the blog i.e. **History of Agra**.

History of Agra

Agra, with its rich history, continues to enchant and captivate, making it an integral part of the Golden Triangle tourist circuit, along with Delhi and Jaipur, and the Uttar Pradesh Heritage Arc, alongside Lucknow and Varanasi.

- **The Early Years (Pre-Mughal Era):** Agra, a city steeped in history, boasts a legacy that stretches back over a millennium. Its origins are shrouded in the mists of time, with references in legends of Krishna and the Mahabharata. Sikandar Lodi, in 1504–1505, played a pivotal role in reestablishing the ancient city, setting the stage for Agra's historical significance.
- **Mughal Era:** The Golden Age, Agra's transformation into a legendary city began with the Mughals. It was the Mughal Empire's capital under emperors like Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. Under their rule, Agra thrived as a centre for culture and learning. Iconic monuments like the Agra Fort, Sikandra, and the renowned Taj Mahal, a mausoleum for Shah Jahan's beloved empress Mumtaz Mahal, emerged.
- **The Decline and Colonial Rule:** As the Mughal Empire waned in the late 18th century, Agra fell to various powers, including the Marathas and eventually the British East India Company. In 1834-1836, Agra briefly served as a presidency and later as the capital of the North-Western Province. During the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the city witnessed a turbulent period.
- **Post-Independence and Mughal Legacy:** After India's independence, Agra evolved into an industrial city and a major tourist destination. The Taj Mahal and Agra Fort were designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1983. The Taj Mahal became a global symbol of India, drawing dignitaries from around the world. Agra's historical significance, both as a former Mughal capital and a vital part of India's independence movement, continues to leave a lasting legacy.

Agra's legacy spans millennia, from mythological origins to Mughal magnificence and contemporary tourism appeal, making it a city that truly stands the test of time.

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[Source: Holidify]

Timeline for the major events that occurred in the History of Agra:

- **1504-1505:** Sikandar Lodi rebuilds Agra, making it an important city.
- **1526:** Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, acquires Agra after the First Battle of Panipat.
- **1556:** Akbar the Great establishes Agra as a centre of political, cultural, and economic importance.
- **1631:** Construction of the Taj Mahal begins under Emperor Shah Jahan.
- **1648:** Shah Jahan shifts the capital to Shahjahanabad (modern-day Delhi).
- **1803:** Agra falls under the control of the British East India Company.
- **1834-1836:** Agra serves as the capital of the short-lived Presidency of Agra.
- **1857:** Agra plays a role in the Indian Rebellion of 1857.
- **1983:** The Taj Mahal and Agra Fort are designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

This timeline showcases Agra's rich and diverse history in a simple way. Let's move on to the next aspect of this blog i.e., **Geographical aspects.**

Geographical Aspects of Agra

Agra's geographical setting, combined with its historical and cultural significance, makes it a city where the past and the environment harmoniously coexist. Located in northern India, it is situated on a plain with hills in the extreme southwest. The city is primarily watered by the Yamuna and Chambal rivers, along with the Agra Canal.

- **Climate:** The city experiences a tropical and subtropical steppe climate, characterised by warm winters, hot and dry summers, and a monsoon season.
- **Location:** Agra is situated about 210 km from New Delhi, 336 km from Lucknow, and 227 km from Kanpur.
- **Elevation:** Agra's average elevation is 170 metres above sea level.

Physiographic Aspects:

Agra's geography features predominantly flat terrain, with occasional hills near Fatehpur Sikri. These hills are offshoots of the Vindhya range in Central India.



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- **Terrain:** Agra is situated on a predominantly level plain, with some hilly terrain in the extreme southwest.
- **River:** The region is intersected by the Yamuna River and Chambal River, which play vital roles in its geography.
- **Canal:** Agra benefits from the Agra Canal, which aids in irrigation and water supply for agriculture.
- **Hills:** Sandstone hills near Fatehpur Sikri and along the southeastern borders, originating from the Vindhya range of Central India.
- **Rainfall:** Agra experiences a monsoon season that generally begins in the first week of July and ends in mid-September. However, monsoons in Agra are not as heavy as in other parts of India.

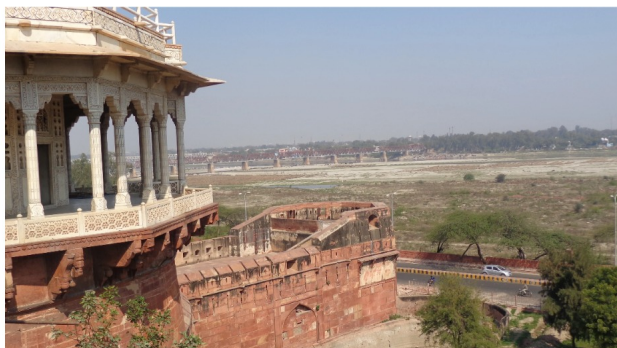
Demographic Snapshots:

- **Population:** Agra has a population of approximately 1.6 million, making it the fourth-most populous city in Uttar Pradesh and the twenty-third most populous city in India.
- **Sex Ratio:** The sex ratio in Agra city is 875 females per 1000 males, and the child sex ratio is 857 girls per 1000 boys.
- **Literacy Rate:** The city has an average literacy rate of 73.11%, with male and female literacy rates at 77.81% and 67.74%, respectively.
- **Population density:** Agra's population density is relatively high, given its size and population. This contributes to the city's vibrant and bustling atmosphere.

Soil and Vegetation:

The region's soil is influenced by its proximity to the Vindhya range, part of the central Indian landscape.

- Agra has predominantly alluvial soil due to its proximity to the Yamuna River. This soil type is fertile and suitable for agriculture.
- The region's vegetation includes a mix of deciduous and thorn forests.
- You can find trees like neem, babul, and acacia. Agra is also known for its lush gardens and parks, featuring various ornamental plants and flowers, such as roses, marigolds, and bougainvillea, enhancing its horticultural beauty.



[Source: World Elevation Map Finder]

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Agra boasts a plethora of iconic landmarks, with the dazzling Taj Mahal standing at the forefront. This architectural masterpiece, built in the 17th century, took 22,000 labourers 22 years to complete. Agra Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is another gem, spanning 94 acres. The city also houses the exquisite Fatehpur Sikri, a deserted Mughal city located 40 km southwest. Don't miss the Mehtab Bagh, a symmetrical garden complex offering stunning Taj Mahal views. Agra's rich history and grandeur are vividly portrayed by these landmarks, making it a must-visit destination.

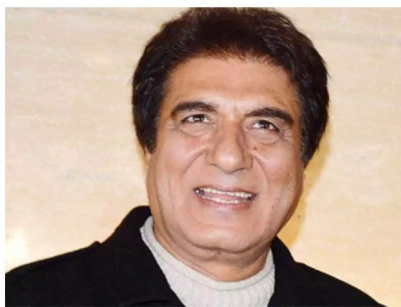
Now let's move on to the **political aspects of Agra**.

Political Aspects of Agra

Agra, a city steeped in history and architectural magnificence, also plays a significant role in the political landscape of Uttar Pradesh.

- The Agra district is divided into two Lok Sabha constituencies: Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Agra, with its immense voter base, is represented by SP Singh Baghel, a member of the Bhartiya Janata Party, in the Indian Parliament.
- In the realm of the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly), Agra holds sway with nine constituencies.
- These elected representatives have a vital role in shaping the state's policies and legislation.
- Moreover, the city was poised to transform with the potential establishment of a police Commissionerate ahead of the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly elections.
- The civic administration of Agra falls under the jurisdiction of the Agra Municipal Corporation, which manages public services and infrastructure.
- The mayor and municipal councillors, elected for five-year terms, work diligently to address the city's diverse needs.

Agra's political dynamics and representation reflect the city's prominence and influence in the state of Uttar Pradesh, making it a crucial hub in the Indian political landscape.



[Source: The Economic Times]

Now let's discuss the culture of Agra.

Culture of Agra



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Agra, with its rich cultural heritage, stands as a testament to the fusion of tradition and modernity, offering a unique and enchanting experience to all who visit.

- **Language:** The linguistic tapestry of Agra is woven with Hindi being the predominant language, while Urdu also holds cultural significance. English is widely understood due to the city's tourism prominence.
- **People:** Agra's population, around 1.6 million, is a diverse mix of cultures, with people from various backgrounds coexisting harmoniously.
- **Attire:** Traditional attire is cherished, with women often seen in vibrant sarees, and men in kurta-pyjamas or sherwanis during special occasions.
- **Cuisine:** Agra's cuisine is a tribute to its Mughal heritage, featuring rich Mughlai dishes infused with spices, meat, and dried fruits. Petha, a sweet made from ash gourd, and dalmoth, a spicy lentil snack, are local specialties.
- **Handicrafts:** The city is famous for its exquisite marble inlay work, leather goods, and Zari embroidery.
- **Temples:** Agra is not just about Mughal monuments; it also boasts ancient temples like the Balkeshwar Temple and Mankameshwar Temple.
- **Literature:** The city has nurtured poets and authors, contributing to India's literary heritage.
- **Festival:** The Taj Mahotsav, held annually, celebrates culture and craftsmanship, attracting both Indian and foreign tourists.
- **Music and Dance:** Agra reverberates with classical music and dance forms, with Kathak dance being an integral part of its artistic heritage.

The city's vibrant and diverse culture, a blend of historical influences and modern traditions, adds an enchanting layer to its rich heritage.



[Source: The Indian Down Under]

Now let's talk about the next aspect i.e. the **Environment in Agra**.

Environment in Agra

Nestled on the banks of the Yamuna River, Agra city presents a fascinating blend of history and ecology.

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- **Urban biodiversity:** Agra is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, despite being a large urban area. The city has over 500 species of plants, including trees, shrubs, herbs, and climbers. Some of the most common trees in Agra include neem, mango, peepal, and banyan. The city is also home to a variety of flowers, such as roses, jasmine, and marigolds.
- **Green Cover:** Agra has a green cover of over 20%. The city has a number of parks and gardens, which provide a habitat for wildlife and help to improve air quality. Some of the most popular parks in Agra include Mehtab Bagh, Itmad-Ud-Daulah's Tomb, and Ram Bagh.
- **Flora and Fauna:** Agra's fauna includes over 200 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Some of the most common birds in Agra include pigeons, crows, sparrows, and kites. The flora of Agra City is diverse and includes a variety of trees, shrubs, herbs, and flowers. Some of the common trees found in the city include neem, peepal, mango, and tamarind. Shrubs such as rose, hibiscus, and jasmine is also common.
- **Environmental Challenge:** Agra City faces a number of environmental challenges, including air pollution, water pollution, and solid waste management. Air pollution is a major problem in the city, with levels of particulate matter (PM) and sulfur dioxide exceeding national standards. Water pollution is also a problem, with the Yamuna River being heavily polluted. Solid waste management is another challenge, with the city generating a large amount of waste that is not properly disposed of.

The environment of Agra City is complex and faces a number of challenges. However, the city also has a rich natural environment with a variety of flora and fauna. The city needs to take steps to address its environmental challenges and protect its natural environment.



[Source: Wildlife SOS]

Let's talk about the **economic aspects of the city Agra**.

Economy of Agra

Agra's economy is diverse, with a strong focus on tourism, agriculture, and various industries.



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- Around 40% of its population depends on agriculture, while others work in leather and footwear businesses, iron foundries, and more.
- In 2019, Agra attracted over 9.5 million tourists, contributing significantly to its economy.
- The city boasts Asia's largest spa, Kaya Kalp, and several notable hotels, including the Taj Hotel and Convention Centre.
- Sanjay Place serves as the city's trade centre, housing major and medium-scale industries such as electrical goods and leather products.
- Agra is renowned for its leather goods, handicrafts, embroidery work, and stone carving.
- The city's GDP in 2018-19 was approximately 40,210 crores, making it the third-ranking city in Uttar Pradesh.
- Agra also made progress in cleanliness and smart city initiatives. In Swachh Survekshan 2020, it ranked 16th nationwide and second in the state, marking significant improvement. It also topped the Smart City Rankings for progress made in various projects.
- However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on Agra's economy, particularly on sectors like tourism, iron foundries, and leather shoe production, resulting in an estimated loss of around ₹22 billion.

Despite challenges, Agra remains a vital economic centre in Uttar Pradesh.

Now let's delve into a few Interesting Facts about Agra.

Some Interesting Facts about Agra

Agra is a city rich in history and culture, and it has its share of fascinating facts:

- **Largest Sundial:** Agra is home to the world's largest sundial, located at the Jantar Mantar observatory. This ancient astronomical instrument can tell time with incredible precision.
- **Taj Mahal's Changing Colour:** The Taj Mahal appears to change colour throughout the day, from pinkish in the morning, milky white during the day, and golden in the moonlight.
- **Agra Fort's Secret Escape:** The Agra Fort features a hidden escape route known as the "Mizzen", which could be used by the royal family during times of danger.
- **City of Three UNESCO Sites:** Agra boasts three UNESCO World Heritage Sites - the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, and Fatehpur Sikri, making it a treasure trove of historical landmarks.

These facts reveal the unique and captivating aspects of Agra, making it a city that's not just historically significant but also full of surprises.



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[Source: Global gallvanting]

In conclusion, Agra stands as a timeless gem on the banks of the Yamuna River, where the echoes of history, the vibrancy of culture, and the challenges of the modern world blend seamlessly. It's a city where the resplendent Taj Mahal, a marvel etched in white marble, coexists with the bustling markets and the rich aroma of Mughlai cuisine.

Agra's journey through time, from the grandeur of the Mughal era to its present-day economic dynamism, reflects its resilience and unwavering spirit. This city, with its intricate tapestry of history, culture, and environment, invites travellers to explore its wonders, ensuring that Agra remains etched in their hearts forever.