



Exploring Delhi - 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 'Delhi'. So, without a further delay, let's start exploring the city.

The National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, referred to as Delhi, is a city and union territory in India that houses New Delhi, the nation's capital. Delhi is located on both banks of the Yamuna River, primarily to the west, or beyond its right bank. Its eastern border is with the state of Uttar Pradesh, and its western and southern boundaries are with the state of Haryana. On 1 November 1956, Delhi evolved into a union territory, and it became the NCT in 1995. As India's political hub, a major centre for commerce, transportation, and culture, Delhi is incredibly significant historically.

The region's first-century BCE ruler, Raja Dhilu, is said to be the inspiration for the city's name. Many of the names used to refer to the city, such as Delhi, Dehli, Dilli, and Dhilli, are probable misspellings of his name. It is a melting pot of languages and celebrations. In this location, marketplaces are alive with activity, grand monuments stand as guardians of history, and the smell of street food blends with the scent of jasmine. It is a city of diversity and dreams, where visionaries write their futures and artists paint their aspirations.

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

Delhi	
Official Language	Hindi
City Animal	Nilgai
City Bird	House Sparrow
City Tree	Gulmohar
City Flower	Alfalafa
Parliamentary Constituency	Lok Sabha : 7 seats Rajya Sabha : 3 seats
Chief Minister	Arvind Kejriwal
Chief Secretary of Delhi	Shri Naresh Kumar



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[Image Source: Stanza Living]

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

History of Delhi

With a history spanning more than 5,000 years, Delhi is one of the oldest cities in the world to have been continuously inhabited. Over the years, the city has been ruled by a wide variety of dynasties and empires, each of which has left a distinctive impact on the city's architecture, culture, and food.

Ancient and Early Mediaeval Period:

In the ancient and early mediaeval times, Delhi's history was like a captivating story with seven remarkable cities. Imagine, around 400 BCE, there was Indraprastha, beautifully perched on a knoll by the Yamuna river. Yes, Delhi was initially known as "Indraprastha" in ancient times, as mentioned in Hindu mythology and the Indian epic, the Mahabharata. Fast forward to the 14th century CE, you've got Purana Qila, a fort from the Delhi sultanate, likely on the same spot. As we dig deeper, traces of the Mauryan Empire (around 300 BCE) emerge. A stone inscription by Emperor Ashoka was even found in 1966. Then, there's Lal Kot, built in 1052 CE by Tomara Rajput King Anang Pal, and later conquered and renamed by the Chauhan Rajputs in the 12th century.

Mediaeval Period:

In 1192, Prithviraj Chauhan faced defeat by Muhammad Ghori at the second battle of Tarain. Qutb-ud-din Aibak took charge of India's territories after Ghori's return to Ghor. When Ghori died in 1206, Qutb-ud-din established the Delhi Sultanate and began the Qutb Minar and Quwwat-al-Islam mosque. The 72.5m Qutb Minar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was completed by Sultan Iltutmish in the 13th century. For 300 years, Turkic and Afghan dynasties ruled Delhi, building forts and nurturing Sufism. In 1526, Babur of the Mughal dynasty marked the end of the Delhi Sultanate after defeating the Lodi dynasty.

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[Image Source: Britannica]

Late Mediaeval and Early Modern Period:

In 1526, Babur, hailing from Uzbekistan, founded the Mughal Empire after defeating the last Lodhi sultan in the First Battle of Panipat. The Mughals ruled Delhi for over 3 centuries, except for 1540-1556 when Sher Shah Suri and Hemu held sway. Shah Jahan created Shahjahanabad, the seventh Delhi, in 1638. But after Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Maratha Empire rose, sacking Delhi in 1737 and again in 1757, while Nader Shah looted it in 1739. This weakened the Mughals, eventually paving the way for British rule.

Colonial Period:

In 1803, British East India Company triumphed over Marathas at the Battle of Delhi. Then, during the 1857 Indian Rebellion, Delhi fell after the Siege of Delhi. In 1858, British rule took direct control, making it a Punjab province. In 1911, the capital shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. The year 1931 witnessed New Delhi getting inaugurated, becoming India's capital in 1947 after independence. The British-built part is now known as Lutyens' Delhi.

Partition and Post Independence Period:

During India's partition, 500,000 Hindu and Sikh refugees fled to Delhi, while 300,000 Muslims left for Pakistan. About 40% of Delhi's population is Punjabi Hindus. Migration from across India has boosted Delhi's population, surpassing birth rates. In 1956, Delhi became a Union Territory, later named National Capital Territory in 1991 with limited legislative powers. In 1984, it witnessed anti-Sikh violence after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

Here is a timeline of some key events in Delhi's history:

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- **4000 BCE:** The ancient city of Indraprastha emerges on the banks of the Yamuna River.
- **300 BCE:** Mauryan Emperor Ashoka's inscription discovered near Srinivaspuri.
- **1052 CE:** Tomara Rajput King Anang Pal builds Lal Kot.
- **12th Century:** Chauhan Rajputs rename Lal Kot to Qila Rai Pithora.
- **1192:** Prithviraj Chauhan defeated by Muhammad Ghori in the Second Battle of Tarain.
- **1206:** Qutb-ud-din Aibak founded the Delhi Sultanate.
- **13th Century:** Construction of the iconic Qutb Minar.
- **1526:** Babur established the Mughal Empire after defeating the Lodi dynasty.
- **1858:** Delhi comes under British rule.
- **1911:** Delhi becomes the capital of British-held territories in India.
- **1931:** Inauguration of New Delhi.
- **1947:** Delhi becomes the capital of independent India.



[Imsahe Source: BBC]

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

Geographical Aspects of Delhi

Delhi, located at 28.61°N 77.23°E in Northern India, boasts a unique geography. The National Capital Territory of Delhi spans 1,483 square kilometres, with 783 square kilometres designated rural and 700 square kilometres urban, making it India's largest city by area. Surrounded by Haryana to the north, west, and south, and Uttar Pradesh to the east, it's defined by the Yamuna flood plains and the imposing Delhi ridge.

Delhi's natural wetlands, including the Yamuna flood plains, house over 500 ponds. Despite some ecological challenges, these ponds host an astonishing variety of bird species, making Delhi a global hotspot for pond-dwelling birds.

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Geographical Features:

Here are a few geographical features of Delhi City in points, these points provide a comprehensive overview of Delhi's geographical characteristics, highlighting its key points.

Elevation: The city's elevation varies, with the Delhi Ridge, a dominant geographical feature, reaching a height of 318 metres (1,043 feet).

River: The sacred Yamuna River flows through Delhi, impacting its geography and providing fertile alluvial soil.

Riverside Flood Plains: The Yamuna flood plains, prone to recurrent floods, offer essential agricultural land.

Wetlands and Ponds: Delhi is home to over 500 ponds, supporting a rich diversity of bird species, making it a global hub for pond-dwelling birds.

Seismic Zone: Delhi is classified in seismic zone-IV, indicating its susceptibility to significant earthquakes.

Delhi Ridge: This geographical feature originates from the Aravalli Range, encircling the west, northeast, and northwest parts of the city, reaching a height of 318 metres (1,043 feet).

These geographical facets combine to create the unique landscape and environmental characteristics of Delhi.

Demographic Snapshot:

Delhi's demographic features reflect its status as one of the most populous and diverse cities in India. Here are the demographic features of Delhi:

Population: Delhi, a vibrant metropolis, boasts a diverse population of over 31 million people.

Urban density: It's one of the most densely populated cities globally, with more than 11,000 people per square kilometre.

Gender Ratio: The gender ratio in Delhi is approximately 866 females per 1,000 males.

Income Disparities: It exhibits stark income disparities, with affluent neighbourhoods alongside areas with lower socioeconomic status.

Physiographic Aspects:

These aspects collectively contribute to the unique and sometimes challenging physiographic conditions of Delhi.

Climate: Delhi experiences a diverse climate. It has a hot semi-arid climate with extremely hot summers and cool winters. The average summer temperature can reach 40-45°C (104-113°F), while winters can drop to 5-10°C (41-50°F).

Rainfall: Delhi's annual rainfall is relatively low, averaging around 617 millimetres (24 inches) per year. The majority of rainfall occurs during the monsoon season from July to September.



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Air Quality Index: The AQI can reach hazardous levels. For example, in 2020, Delhi recorded an AQI of over 500, indicating severe pollution.

Winter Smog: Delhi is known for its winter smog, which is a combination of fog and high levels of air pollution. Visibility can drop significantly during this period.

Soil and Vegetation:

The soil and vegetation of Delhi city are fascinating, and they play an important role in the city's ecosystem. Here are some interesting facts about Delhi's soil and vegetation in points:

- Delhi has alluvial soils formed by the deposition of sediments from the Yamuna River and its tributaries.
- The soil is sandy loam in texture, with moderate fertility and is alkaline in nature, with a pH of 7.5 to 8.5.
- It is poor in organic matter due to intensive agriculture and deforestation.
- The natural vegetation of Delhi is tropical thorn forest, but most of it has been cleared for agriculture and development.
- The remaining vegetation is found in the Ridge Forest, which is a protected area.
- Common trees in Delhi include neem, peepal, jamun, banyan, and mango.
- Common shrubs and herbs include lantana, dhak, and ber.
- The Ridge Forest is home to over 400 species of plants and 200 species of birds.
- The Delhi government has launched a number of initiatives to increase tree cover in the city, such as the "Plant a Tree for Delhi" campaign.

Delhi boasts iconic landmarks like the majestic Red Fort, an architectural marvel from the Mughal era. Humayun's Tomb, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a stunning garden tomb, while India Gate stands as a tribute to fallen soldiers. Qutub Minar, a towering masterpiece, and Lotus Temple, a symbol of unity, are must-see wonders.



[Image Source: delhitourism.gov.in]

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

Political Aspects of Delhi

Politically, Delhi is the most important city in India. It is the home to the Parliament of India, the President of India, and the Prime Minister of India. It is also the headquarters of all major political parties in India.

- Delhi is a union territory, which means that it is directly governed by the central government of India.
- Delhi has its own elected government, headed by a Chief Minister. However, the powers of the Delhi government are limited compared to other states of India.
- It is home to the world's largest democracy. The city has over 11 million voters who participate in regular elections.
- Civic administration falls under the Municipal Corporation governed by the Panchayati Raj Act.
- AAP, led by Arvind Kejriwal, secured a significant victory in 2015 and 2020, winning 62 out of 70 seats in the Legislative Assembly.



Chief Minister of Delhi: Mr. Arvind Kejriwal

[Image Source: Hindustan Times]

Culture of Delhi

Delhi's culture reflects its rich history and diverse influences. From Punjabi flavours in language, attire, and cuisine due to the 1947 partition migration to recent migrations from across India, it's a vibrant melting pot. The city boasts 1,200 heritage buildings and 175 national heritage monuments recognized by the Archaeological Survey of India. Iconic sites like the Red Fort, Qutub Minar, and Humayun's Tomb, along with modern wonders like Lotus Temple, coexist harmoniously. Chandni Chowk's 17th-century market dazzles with jewellery and Zari sarees, showcasing Delhi's artistic flair in Zardozi and Meenakari crafts.

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- **Language:** Delhi is a linguistic mosaic, with Hindi being the dominant language, but you'll also hear Punjabi, Urdu, and English spoken widely.
- **Literature:** The city has a rich literary heritage, with famous authors like Mirza Ghalib and Khushwant Singh calling it home.
- **Religion:** Delhi is a melting pot of religions, with Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity coexisting harmoniously.
- **People:** Diverse and dynamic, Delhiites are known for their resilience and warmth, making the city a welcoming place.
- **Attire:** Traditional clothing like saris and turbans mix with modern fashion trends, creating a unique fusion of styles.
- **Cuisine:** Delhi's street food scene is legendary, offering delights like chaat, kebabs, and buttery parathas.
- **Festivals:** Diwali, Eid, Holi, and Christmas are celebrated with great enthusiasm, lighting up the city in a colourful display of traditions.
- **Handicrafts:** Zardozi embroidery, Meenakari jewellery, and intricate woodwork showcase Delhi's craftsmanship.
- **Dance:** Traditional forms like Kathak and Bhangra coexist with contemporary dance styles, reflecting the city's eclectic nature.
- **Music:** Delhi's music scene spans classical ragas, Sufi qawwalis, and modern Bollywood beats, catering to diverse tastes.

In summary, Delhi's culture is a vibrant tapestry of languages, traditions, and flavours that come together to create a truly captivating and dynamic cityscape.



[Image Source: National Geographic]

Now let's talk about the **environment in Delhi**.

Environment in Delhi

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Delhi's environment is a fascinating blend of urban biodiversity and natural oases.

Urban Biodiversity: The city boasts diverse wildlife, with over 400 bird species and 80 butterfly species spotted in the urban landscape.

Green Cover: Delhi has around 20% green cover, including parks like Lodhi Garden and Nehru Park, providing vital lung space for its inhabitants.

Lakes and Water Bodies: Despite challenges, Delhi has several lakes, with Okhla Bird Sanctuary and Sultanpur National Park being vital wetland habitats.

Flora and Fauna: Delhi houses over 1,500 species of plants and is home to animals like jackals, porcupines, and even leopards in the Aravalli Hills.

Challenges: While pollution remains a concern, Delhi's environment showcases resilience and a commitment to preserving its natural treasures.



[Image Source: Britannica]

Economy of Delhi

Delhi, the bustling hub of northern India, stands as a financial juggernaut. As of 2016, its economic prowess was estimated between a staggering 370 billion dollar to 400 billion dollar (PPP metro GDP), making it India's most productive or second-most productive metropolitan area. The nominal GSDP of Delhi's National Capital Territory in 2016–17 reached ₹6,224 billion (US 78 billion dollar), marking a 13% growth compared to the previous year.

Delhi's economic landscape is diverse:

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- **Tertiary Sector Dominance:** The tertiary sector reigns supreme, contributing 70.95% to Delhi's gross SDP.
- **Workforce Growth:** The city's workforce makes up 32.82% of its population, surging by 52.52% between 1991 and 2001.
- **Low Unemployment:** Unemployment dropped significantly from 12.57% in 1999–2000 to a mere 4.63% in 2003.
- **Employment Sectors:** In 2018, 594,000 people worked in the government and quasi-government sectors, while the private sector employed 273,000.
- **Key Service Industries:** Information technology, telecommunications, hotels, banking, media, and tourism drive the economy.
- **Thriving Retail:** Delhi boasts one of India's fastest-growing retail industries.
- **Manufacturing Hub:** The city houses 129,000 industrial units and employed 1,440,000 workers in the manufacturing sector in 2001.
- **Foreign Investment Magnet:** Delhi's consumer market and skilled labour force attract substantial foreign investments.
- **HDI:** Delhi ranks fifth among the Indian states and union territories in the human development index and has the second-highest GDP per capita in India (after Goa).



[Image Source: Economic Times]

Delhi stands as a vibrant economic powerhouse, with impressive growth figures and a diverse economic landscape.

Interesting Facts about Delhi



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- Delhi is the second most bird-rich capital in the world. After Nairobi in Kenya, Delhi is home to a large number of bird species, including many migratory birds.
- The Red Fort was originally white, but it turned red due to the weathering of the red sandstone used in its construction.
- The Qutub Minar is the tallest brick minaret in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Delhi is home to the world's largest spice market, Khari Baoli.
- Delhi is the only city in the world to have been destroyed and rebuilt seven times. This is due to its strategic location and the fact that it has been a major centre of trade and commerce for centuries.
- Delhi is home to the largest number of mosques in India. There are over 3,000 mosques in the city, including some of the most iconic mosques in the world, such as the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid.



[Image Source: Wikipedia]

Delhi, a city steeped in history, embraces the future with open arms. From ancient empires to modern skyscrapers, it's a timeless tapestry of culture and diversity. With a vibrant culture, rich biodiversity, and a thriving economy, Delhi stands as a symbol of India's dynamism and resilience.