



LOCATION INFORMATION

An Emperor's Tribute to His Beloved

The Taj Mahal — The New 7 Wonders of the World

Agra, 200 kilometres from Delhi, was the seat of the Mughal dynasty from the 15th century. Shah Jahan the erstwhile emperor, in 1612 married a nubile beauty Arjuman, and renamed her lovingly Mumtaz Mahal literally meaning 'ornate crown of the place'. Mumtaz Mahal was two years younger to Shah Jahan and in their married life of 18 years she bore him 14 children. At her last pregnancy Mumtaz Mahal passed away during childbirth in 1631. The bereaved emperor was shattered and withdrew himself from active governance of his kingdom. Mumtaz Mahal had died at Berhampur in Orissa and was buried at the banks of river Tapti. After the emperor recomposed himself he asked his son Suja to exhume his mother's body and rebury her at Agra.

Not contented with a conventional burial tomb for his wife Shah Jahan decided to create an edifice in memory of his beloved wife that the world will ever marvel at. He invited the most renowned architects, artisans and construction experts from world over and expressed his desire for the creation of the one of its kind mausoleum for his wife at the banks of river Yamuna at Agra where the empress was finally buried. Finally, after years of hundreds of designs created for this memorable edifice, an artist from Persia named Isfan Diya Rumi produced the design that Sahajehan was eventually satisfied with.

And the construction of a marvellous memoriam began which took 22 years to complete with the labour of 20,000 workers and skilled creators. It was originally named

'Rouza-e-Mumtaz Mahal' [Mausoleum of Mamtaj Mahal], eventually came to be short-named as the Taj Mahal. The four arches of the central tomb have inscriptions from the sermons of the holy Quran. The perspective design employs a

gradual enlargement of the scriptures towards the top, so that any one reading it standing on the platform 100 feet below will still find the letters the same sizes at the top, as the ones at his eye level. This unique mathematical work was etched in the hands of Amanat Khan Miraji of Kandahar. The cost of the edifice when completed in 1653 stood at Rupees 30 million.

At the entrance, the visitor will read on the plaque these details on the Taj Mahal:

"The Taj Mahal was built between 1631 and 1653 by Emperor Shah Jahan (1627 – 1658) as the tomb for his wife Arjuman better known as Mumtaz Mahal, born in 1592, the daughter of Asaf Khan, she married Shah Jahan in 1612 and died in 1631. After his death the Emperor was buried by her side."



This grandeur was built over a 20 metre deep foundation of wells, wooden logs, sandstone and mortar filling that has stood through 350 years. The Taj has three gates and four Minarets each 140 feet high placed at the four ends of the main platform.

The minarets also employ a unique design in that they will always fall outwards should it encounter collapse in a disaster. The main gate displays on its top 22 small domes in two rows that account for the number of years it took Taj to be built. The main platform is approached through a wonderfully laid out garden and water channels with fountains. Garden planners from Kashmir, the place famous for its beautiful Mughal gardens, created the garden complex. The mausoleum also has a prayer mosque and a guesthouse for royal visitors on either side of the main structure set at equal distance and built symmetrically.

The emperor in his old age during house arrest by his son Aurangzeb, with failing vision would take the help of the reflection from the crystals

embedded in the pillars of the fort's balcony facing the edifice to look at his beloved wife's memoriam – The Taj, two kilometres away.

Taj is indeed the epitome of the greatest tribute of a royalty to his beloved. But Shah Jahan's deepest feeling for Mumtaj Mahal was expressed in his own words —

“The felon who seeks shelter in this mausoleum will find his misdeed annulled ... the sinner will be forgiven for his sin. Sighs will have no bounds at this tomb, that's the eventual embodiment of HIS creation.”

Millions of people from round the world have seen the beautiful edifice that is regarded to be the most wonderful thing on the planet created 350 years ago. A traveller has recorded “if it is assumed that there is nothing else worth seeing in India, even then a visit to the magnificent Taj would always compensate for the effort of coming here.”

For the curious let us put on record that the ancient Indian civilization and its culture has many wonders hidden in every fold of this great land that has remained the centre of attention for the world for many many centuries.



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