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## HOW ACCESSIBLE ARE THE DELHI MONUMENTS FOR THE HANDICAPPED?

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### ABSTRACT

A brief report on the historically rich capital of Delhi with an on-ground analysis of physical inclusivity in the national monuments. The report aims to give a brief overview of the existing conditions for the handicapped and emphasizes the need for better services for the less fortunate

**KEYWORDS:** Monuments in Delhi, handicapped, wheelchair access, ramps in monuments, monuments for physically disabled

**A brief report on the historically rich capital of Delhi with an on-ground analysis of physical inclusivity in the national monuments.**

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Son of an Orthopedic surgeon, I remember how I often saw patients in my dad's clinic, confined to wheelchairs, talking about the lack of accessibility, which they felt in most places on a daily basis. I realized that there existed a clear problem, which included not only the things unfair to the less fortunate, but also the lack of motivation on their part to raise a voice. Frequently hearing about the prejudice in our society got me thinking. This sparked a motivation to compile a report that could objectively evaluate parameters to understand the extent of the problem and provide guidelines for action in this direction.

I, along with my peer Neil, decided to center the report on our history, more specifically on the unexplored monuments in Delhi. A subject of personal passion, we felt that not only was it extremely undervalued, it also had a direct bearing on the foundation of our ethos and culture. The value of the experience was immense and ignited our minds with a flame to dive deeper into the subject and create a meaningful impact.

<u>S. no.</u>	<u>Monument Name</u>	<u>Ramp</u>	<u>Lift</u>	<u>Wheelchair</u>	<u>Inclusivity score</u>
1	<u>Red Fort</u>	✓	✓	✓	9
2	<u>Qutub Minar</u>	✓	✗	✓	9
3	<u>Jantar Mantar</u>	✗	✗	✓	8
4	<u>Lotus Temple</u>	✓	✗	✓	8
5	<u>Purana Qila</u>	✓	✗	✓	7
6	<u>Lodhi Gardens</u>	NA	✗	✗	5
7	<u>Humayun's Tomb</u>	✗	✗	✗	4
8	<u>Mehrauli Archaeological Park</u>	NA	✗	✗	3
9	<u>Tughlaqabad Fort</u>	✗	✗	✗	2
10	<u>Ugrasen ki Baoli</u>	✗	✗	✗	1
11	<u>Jama Masjid</u>	✗	✗	✗	0

### 1) Red fort

The Red Fort served as the main residence of Mughal emperors for centuries, showcasing a harmonious blend of Persian, Islamic, and Indian architectural styles. The annual Independence Day celebrations held here draw thousands of visitors, adding to its cultural and patriotic significance. A symbol of India's rich heritage, the Red Fort stands as a testament to the country's glorious past and architectural brilliance. Today, the Red Fort continues to captivate tourists with its grandeur and historical charm, offering a glimpse into India's majestic past. As a symbol of national pride, it remains an enduring icon of India's cultural legacy.

This monument ranks most highly on my inclusivity list. At the entrance, I was delighted to find an e-rickshaw service to help senior citizens and others who could not endure the long walk. Further, it was extremely heartening to find a wheelchair service that was readily available to anyone who needed it. However, there were only about 2-3 wheelchairs, something which could be further worked upon.



I was met with an even bigger surprise when I learnt about the newly added elevator service for the elderly and handicapped so they would not miss out on the famous Lal Qila Museum. Even

the cafeteria was equipped with inclusive ramps that did not harm the authenticity of the palace but simply brought in a sense of sensitivity, equality and generosity.

Overall, the monument is fully inclusive and a great handicap-accessible tourist location.



## 2) Qutub Minar

The Qutub Minar is an impressive tower located in the Qutub complex of Delhi. Standing at a height of 73 meters (239 feet), it is the tallest brick minaret in the world. The construction of this remarkable monument began in the late 12th century by Qutb al-Din Aibak and was later completed by his successor Iltutmish. The Qutub Minar showcases a splendid fusion of Indo-Islamic architecture, adorned with intricate carvings and inscriptions. It holds significant historical and cultural importance, attracting numerous tourists and history enthusiasts from all over the globe.



It has a decent infrastructure for the handicapped, with a wheelchair being available upon providing proof of identity. There are ramps at many points for easy access to the historic monument. The monument contains an internal spiral staircase of 379 steps. Since ascending the tower is not permitted anymore, this doesn't need to be addressed. Overall, it is ranked well on my list.

## 3) Jantar Mantar

Jantar Mantar is located in the modern city of New Delhi. "Jantar Mantar" means "instruments for measuring the harmony of the heavens". It consists of 13 architectural astronomy instruments. The site is one of five built by Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur, 1723 onwards, revising the calendar and astronomical tables. Jai Singh was born in 1688 into a royal Rajput family that ruled the regional kingdom, in an era of education that maintained a keen interest in astronomy. There is a plaque fixed on one of the structures in the Jantar Mantar observatory in New Delhi that was placed there in 1910

mistakenly dating the construction of the complex to the year 1710. Later research, though, suggests 1724 as the actual year of construction. Its height is 723 feet (220 m).



Despite not having elevated structures, the museum still offers wheelchair access. This ensures that the handicapped can easily traverse throughout the large compound without any discomfort, making it fully inclusive as well as a recommended visit for the elderly to reminisce about the wonders of the solar watch.

#### 4) Lotus temple

The Lotus Temple, also known as the Bahá'í House of Worship, is a breathtaking architectural masterpiece situated in New Delhi. Completed in 1986, it is one of the most prominent and recognized Bahá'í temples in the world. The temple's unique design resembles a blooming lotus flower, with 27 white marble petals forming the beautiful structure. It serves as a place of meditation, prayer, and reflection for people of all faiths, welcoming visitors from different backgrounds to experience its serene and inclusive ambience. The Lotus Temple stands as a symbol of unity, peace, and harmony, attracting millions of visitors each year.



This popular temple does not have a conventional entrance, with the temple itself being a 3-4 minute walk from the main entrance. The path is a flat one, with wheelchair access available upon providing identity proof. Once you traverse the path to the main structure there is an easy entry from the left. A golf cart can be provided for easy transportation due to the presence of vast expanses of open ground.



### 5) Purana Qila

The Old Fort, also known as Purana Qila, is a historic fort located in Delhi. It stands as a majestic testament to the city's rich and diverse history, dating back to the 16th century. The fort is believed to have been built by the Afghan emperor Sher Shah Suri between 1538 and 1545, although it also contains traces of much older settlements.



The fort's entry is built upon a ramp, which helps easy wheelchair access. A wheelchair is readily available upon ID proof, but the number of wheelchairs could be worked upon. Although the fort lacks certain ramps inside the monument, it is largely accessible for the handicapped.

#### **6) Lodhi Gardens**

Lodhi Gardens, nestled in the heart of Delhi, is a picturesque historical park renowned for its lush greenery and exquisite architecture. It showcases stunning tombs, monuments, and structures from the 15th century Lodhi and Sayyid dynasties, offering a peaceful oasis for visitors to relax, stroll, and immerse themselves in Delhi's captivating history.





Lodhi Gardens did not come equipped with the measures necessary to help handicapped people access this picturesque scenery. There was no wheelchair provided, however the free public access to this historic venue allows one to bring their own wheelchair to enjoy the beauty of the gardens.

### 7) Humayun's Tomb

Humayun's Tomb is a grand mausoleum located in Delhi, and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built in the mid-16th century, it is a magnificent example of Mughal architecture and served as the final resting place of the Mughal Emperor Humayun. The tomb's design is believed to have influenced the iconic Taj Mahal. The complex features beautiful gardens, water channels, and intricate marble work, making it a captivating historical and architectural landmark, drawing visitors and history enthusiasts from around the world.



This extremely popular tourist destination is not as accessible for handicapped people as the other sites on the list. The entry area is quite uneven and a difficult track for the physically disabled. Unfortunately, there is no wheelchair access provided here and the entrance can be improved for easier access for all, not just the handicapped. There are not many stairs here, but ramps can be installed easily at some points.

### 8) Mehrauli Archaeological Park

Mehrauli Archaeological Park is an ancient treasure trove in Delhi. Spanning over 200 acres, it houses a remarkable collection of historical monuments and ruins, dating back to various dynasties, including the Rajputs, Mughals, and British periods. The park offers a glimpse into Delhi's rich past and serves as a serene escape for history enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.



The park was not well equipped to handle handicapped people. It had a vast expanse of grassland area interlinked with paths. However, there was no wheelchair access for a handicapped person to explore the enormous expanse of the park. There was no need for any ramps as most of the park had flat walking paths available.

### 9) Tughlaqabad Fort

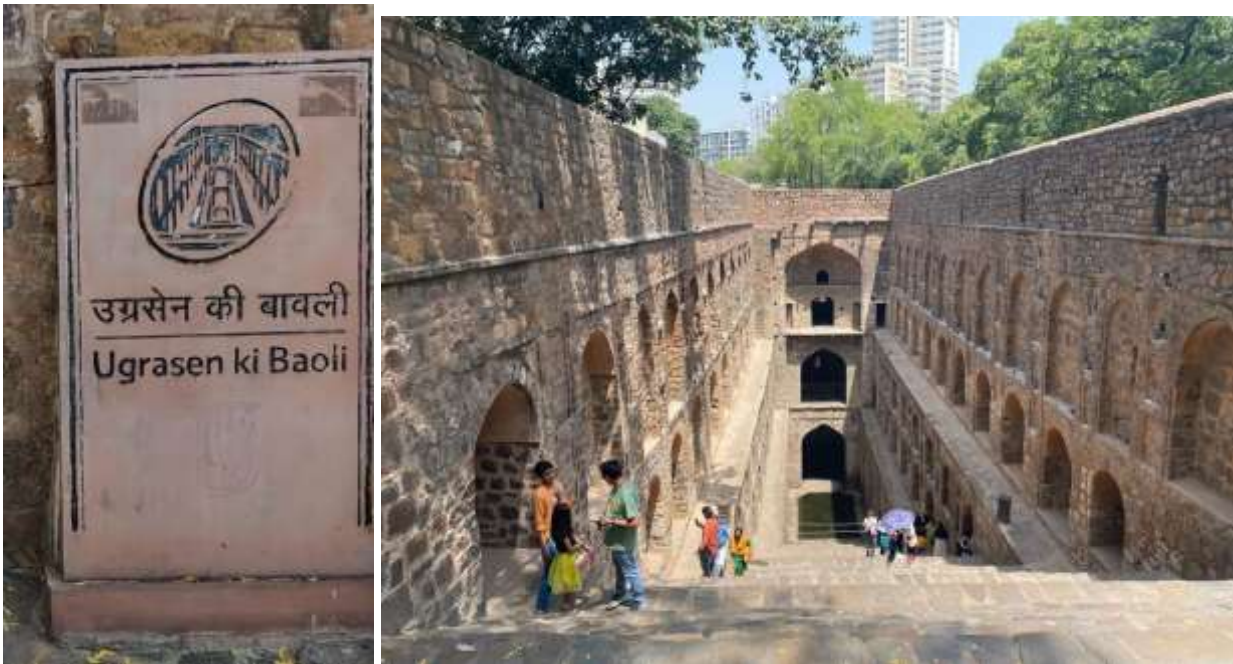
Tughlaqabad Fort is an imposing medieval fortress in Delhi. Built by the ambitious Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in the 14th century, the fort's massive stone walls and grand ruins stand as a testament to its once majestic glory. The unique octagonal shape and strategic location make it a fascinating destination for history enthusiasts and architecture lovers seeking a glimpse into Delhi's storied past.



emphasizes the availability of services for the handicapped and aims While the fort has been impeccable in preserving itself since the time it was made, being disable friendly is unfortunately not a point of focus. The entrance to the fort is through a long stairway, uncomfortable for elders too. While the fort does provide a historical atmosphere due to its ancient construction, there is little scope for viewership due to difficult access. An installation of a lift could immensely increase footfall to the serene location.

#### 10) Ugrasen Ki Baoli

Ugrasen Ki Baoli is a historic stepwell in Delhi. With its intricate design of steps leading to a deep well, the baoli served as a water reservoir and gathering place during ancient times. Today, it stands as an architectural wonder, captivating visitors with its beauty and historical significance.



It is not handicap-friendly, which is understandable as the inclusion of these services would deter the beauty of its timelessness. This is because the monument is built somewhat like a descending staircase, which makes the inclusion of a ramp nearly impossible.

### 11) Jama Masjid

Jama Masjid, located in Old Delhi, is one of India's largest and most revered mosques. Built in the 17th century by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, its grandeur lies in its vast courtyard, intricate domes, and towering minarets. As a symbol of architectural brilliance and religious significance, Jama Masjid continues to attract worshippers and tourists from around the world.



This was one particular place that fared quite poorly in our survey. The entry to the monument is severely crowded by the busy market of Chandni Chowk, which is both chaotic and claustrophobic. Regarding access for the handicapped inside the monument, it appears that entering the monument from the main gate in a wheelchair is practically next to impossible.

Better crowd management and a disability friendly mindset is very much the need of the hour.



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