DEMOGRAPHIA
URBAN TOURS BY RENTAL CAR

DELHI: POLITICS AND POVERTY

BASIC INFORMATION: 2001		Similar To
Urban Area Population*	15,250,000	Los Angeles, Cairo, Manila
Urban Land Area: Square Miles	525	Shenzhen, Marseille, Portland
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers	1,360	Shenzhen, Marseille, Portland
Population per Square Mile	29,000	Cairo, Manila, Karachi, Seoul-Incheon
Population per Square Kilometer	11,200	Cairo, Manila, Karachi, Seoul-Incheon
*Continuously built up area. Includes Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Noida and Gurgaon.		

16 November 2006/1 December 2007

When parts of Mumbai (Bombay)[1] begin to resemble Paris, it means you have spent too much time in Kolkata (Calcutta) and Delhi. Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai --- this is the order for an optimist visiting the three Indian megacities (urban areas over 10 million population). Kolkata, while perhaps not as dreadful as some reports, shows only the faintest sort of light.[2] The poverty is pervasive and little of the urban area is either clean or attractive. Delhi[3] is a step above that. The parts of the city planned for the national capital, while generally less than tidy, are far better than Kolkata. Indeed, the mall from the Secretariat to India Gate is as attractive as Washington's mall and more pleasing to this observer than Brasilia. However, most of Delhi is, poor, untidy, even filthy (as is nearly all of Kolkata).

The Urban Area

Delhi is an interstate urban area (urban agglomeration). The Census of India, however, limits urban agglomerations to a single state or union territory. The continuous urbanization of Delhi extends to Ghaziabad and Noida in the state of Uttar Pradesh and to Faridabad and Gurgaon in Haryana. Altogether, the Delhi urban area was home to an estimated 15,250,000 million residents in 2001, ranking 11th in the world. The urban area covers approximately 525 square miles (1,360 square kilometers) and has a population density of 29,000 per square mile (11,200 per square kilometer). With a population of more than 10 million, Delhi qualifies as one of the world's 21 megacities.

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[1] The name of Bombay was changed to Mumbai in 1997.
[2] http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-kolkata.pdf
[3] http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-delhi.pdf

Further, the Delhi urban area is growing so rapidly that it is likely to third among the 21 megacities by 2015, surpassing Mumbai as India's largest urban area. Delhi would rank behind only Tokyo-Yokohama and Jakarta.

The Urban Form

Delhi is divided in two by the Yamuna River, which has a wide bed. The main government offices are in New Delhi, which is on the west side of the river. The urbanization stretches far to the south in Faridabad, to the west to Gurgaon and to the north. The Delhi union territory also extends to the east side of the river, where it meets Ghaziabad and Noida.

The core of Delhi is the government buildings, especially the Secretariat, Parliament and India Gate. However, Delhi does not have the large, dominant commercial core typical of megacities. Connaught Place, a shopping center located in an area of planned circular streets. However, this is no Western style shopping center, having a rather dingy look. Newer, more modern shopping centers are generally found outside the core, especially in the suburbs.

The emerging commercial districts of Delhi appear to be principally in neighboring states. Perhaps the most significant is DLF city in Gurgaon. This area includes a number of new high-rise office structures and luxury condominium buildings. There is also considerable new commercial and residential high-rise development in Noida. For a time, there was a plan to build the world's tallest building in Noida, at 135 floors. Public opposition succeeded in defeating the plan.

The Government Center: India has one of the world's showpiece government centers. The British established it and the principal buildings were built before independence. The government center appears to be a cross between Washington, DC and Pretoria, South Africa. There is a long grassy mall between Raisin Hill, the Secretariats and Parliament House on the West to India Gate on the East. This mall resembles Washington's mall between the Capitol, the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The only principal difference in design is that the traffic on Washington's mall is on peripheral streets, while the traffic on Delhi's mall is in the center. Again, like in Washington, there is a reflecting pool --- in fact two of them, each on the periphery of the mall and extending most of the entire distance. In Washington, the single reflecting pool is located between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial and it is in the middle of the mall.

Finally, the North and South Secretariat buildings bear a strong resemblance to the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa. Architect Herbert Baker was involved in both projects.

Connaught Place is north of the mall. The entire government center and Connaught Place area looks as if it could have been planned by Washington's architect, L'Enfant. The streets are wide. Embassies are located in the area and there is much vegetation. However, the government center and Connaught Place could not be more unlike the rest of the urban area.

Outside the Government Center: Outside the government center and Connaught Place area, Delhi is a mass of jumbled, generally ragged looking multi-family dwellings. Construction is generally of brick or stone and the predominant building height is four to five stories. Interspersed among these buildings are a number of varieties of informal dwellings. These shantytowns tend to be rather limited in size and are made up of one-floor structures of corrugated metal, often with roofs of plastic. Tent dwellings will also be found. Additionally, there are some higher rise shantytowns made

of brick, resembling the vast high-rise informal neighborhoods of Cairo. The shantytowns, however, are not as obvious in Delhi as in Mumbai or Kolkata.

Generally, Delhi has provided a decent grid street network. Moreover, there are newer areas that appear more attractive. The new Dwarka sub-city, just north and east of Indira Gandhi International Airport contains many new condominium buildings.

Ever Present Livestock and Air Pollution

Not unlike elsewhere in India, however, livestock will be found roaming in and among the commercial buildings and in residential areas. Like Kolkata and Mumbai, the air pollution is oppressive. However, in the New Delhi government center, the air quality at the street level is amazingly good, largely having to do with the conversion of auto rickshaws and buses to compressed natural gas from diesel and gasoline.

Elusive Vision

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh evisions an India that is the "workshop of the world." A visit to the nation's capital, Delhi[4] suggests that there are serious impediments. No one can dispute the progress made by India in recent years, particularly in information technology. At the same time, there are few places in the world where more pervasive poverty can be witnessed. However, here, in the state or union territory with the nation's highest incomes per capita, there are ominous signs that public policy itself is a major barrier.

The Reality: Abolishing Businesses

In a nation with a gross domestic product per capita barely one-tenth that of the European Union and one-half that of China, the national capital has undertaken steps to close down thousands of businesses based on urban planning goals. What India or Delhi does not need is fewer businesses. The issue is commercial establishments in residential areas. At this point, how the urban area functions economically is far more important than how it strikes the urban planner's eye.

All of this appears to be in the interests of "proper" urban planning. Like the urban planning doctrines that are destroying economic wealth and opportunity in the West, Delhi's policies promise less economic growth. It is bad enough when urban planning policies drive 10 percent of households out of home ownership, as appears to be the case in affluent New Zealand. However, it is even worse when a poor nation seeks to limit purposefully limit economic activity, necessarily aggravating poverty.

The Reality: Shameless Transport Policy

In recent years, Delhi has opened a Metro system. Approximately 35 miles is now in operation, with three lines. The two east-west lines are largely elevated, while the shorter, connecting line is underground (subway).

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[4] Delhi Union Territory, the federal district (similar to DC in the United States and DF in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico).

As is the case with all new rail systems, the Delhi metro system opened to praise and hosannas. To read the mass transit press, it would not be hard to imagine that the Metro had transformed Delhi. In fact, it is hard to imagine a more shameless public policy.

The Metro was to have carried more than 2 million passengers per day, but carries less than 500,000. This is not actually such a bad showing, compared to Kolkata (Calcutta), which carries only 10 percent of its projected ridership.

But that is not the most significant difficulty. Professor Dinesh Mohan of the Indian Institute of Technology calculates an annual subsidy per passenger of 35,000 Rupees (Rs).[5] This is approximately 50 percent more than the per capita income of the average Indian. This makes the car financing scale urban rail subsidies of the West look like a bargain.

Even worse, the outrage is being intensified by a significant Metro expansion. The Metro responded to Mohan, claiming that the ridership projections had not been met because the bus feeder system had not been provided (Delhi's railmasters borrowed that excuse from various US failures). Further, they indicated that Metro was achieving a "24 percent" return on investment, using arbitrary (non-market) calculations that simply cannot be reconciled with the economic reality of either Metro or the nation of India.

Beyond the shameless economics is the hopelessness of materially improving urban transport with such extravagant strategies as Metros, especially in low-income world urban areas. To provide Metro service within walking distance of all the Delhi urban area would require a system with more than 2,000 stations. Today there are less than 60 stations and there will never be a number of stations approaching the 2,000.

Finally, Delhi's Metro stations are among the most unattractive and obtrusive imaginable, as is illustrated in the photographs that follow.

Competing Needs Substandard Housing

It is not as if Delhi and India does not have other financial needs. The state of the nation's middle-income housing is generally poor. Millions of people reside in shantytowns and informal dwellings often with garbage bag plastic roofs and walls. Others live in the equivalent of tents, or worse. However, they are not so unlucky as the large number of people who live in the streets.

None of this is to deny the progress that India has made. India has provided the world with some of the finest economists, mathematicians and scientists. The environment is becoming so much better that many of India's most talented people now stay rather than emigrate, especially in the information technology field. Indeed, some are returning to take advantage of the opportunities that are opening.

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[5] http://www.business-standard.com/opinionanalysis/storypage.php?tab=r&autono=260942&subLeft=2&leftnm=4.

However, an urban area and a nation with the depth of human needs as India does its people a disservice when it provides publicly funded extravagance for the few.

Detached Housing

The Indian megacities have single family detached housing, but it must be searched for. It is largely the province of the rich and may be in less than good repair. The contrast with Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, which has a similar income level to the Indian megacities could not be more stark. In Jakarta, three are many new, attractive detached housing developments throughout the suburbs. Not so in Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai.

The Food

One of the great delights of India is the food, especially if one likes spicy food. The biggest problem is understanding what is on the menu. There are restaurants where one can choose a great variety of food cooked behind a counter resembling a Western fast food restaurant. There are also many stands selling hot food on streets and so long as it is cooked well, there should be no difficulty. Of course, the water should be avoided, except bottled.

Newspapers

India, like Great Britain, is a Nirvana of daily newspapers. There are the local daily newspapers, but there are also significant national newspapers, such as *The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, the Hindu* and the *Indian Express.* This panoply of journals makes it easy to spend too much time each morning in the hotel reading the morning news.
Luxury in Filth

Luxury in Filth

One of the most striking features of India's urban areas is, frankly, the filth. This is evident throughout. But it is perhaps most surprising on middle market and luxury high-rise condominium buildings. There are many buildings of not very great age that are covered, in large measure, by dirt on the outside. It is as if no attention is given to the commonly owned space of these buildings. Shaashi Thoroor, in his classic book on India since independence (*India: From Midnight to the Millennium*) details this phenomenon, saying that middle and upper income Indians maintain spotless private spaces (apartments and condominiums) in these buildings, surrounded by filth, not only on the outside but also in interior common spaces.


Note on Hotels in India

Hotels in the three megacities of India are outrageously expensive --- perhaps two to three times what would be expected for the same quality in China, Indonesia or Thailand.

We stayed at a purportedly "5-star" hotel in **Kolkata**, the **Hindustan International** near the Maidan. Our impression was that it might have been a 5-star hotel at one time, but a long time ago. Worse, the hotel more than doubled the price that had been agreed for a

sightseeing driver, and attempted to collect more than $100 for *toll-free* telephone calls. The basic, local per call charge was more than $3.00 (Rs 150). *Our recommendation is to avoid the Hindustan International Hotel in Kolkata..*

We decided to try lower rated hotels (2-star and 3-star) in Delhi and Mumbai, reasoning that we could always move to a more costly hotel if unacceptable. The results were quite pleasing. In **Delhi**, we stayed at the **Clark International Hotel** near Connaught Place. The service was at least as good as at the Hindustan International. Drivers were provided at the agreed price, which was considerably less than the rate agreed in Kolkata (much less the higher price actually charged). In **Mumbai**, we stayed at the **Midland Hotel** in Santa Cruz (near the airport). The service was also at least as good as at the Hindustan International and drivers were provided at prices well below the agreed price in Kolkata (much less the higher price actually charged). The price of a telephone call was Rs. 4 per minute, meaning that one would need to talk for more than 35 minutes on the phone at the Midland Hotel to be charged as much as the Hindustan International charges simply for connection. Both hotels were completely safe.

The lower driver rates in Delhi and Mumbai are all the more surprising, given that it is obvious that Kolkata is far poorer than the other two and should have *lower* not *higher* rates. The hotels with a lower star rating (2-star or 3-star) are recommended, though it is useful to examine reviews, which are on the hotel booking service internet sites. In all three places, there was also the advantage of being located in the midst of local street life, which is indicated by pictures on the respective rental car tours. While one must be careful in any crowded environment, there appeared to be no safety problem, day or night.
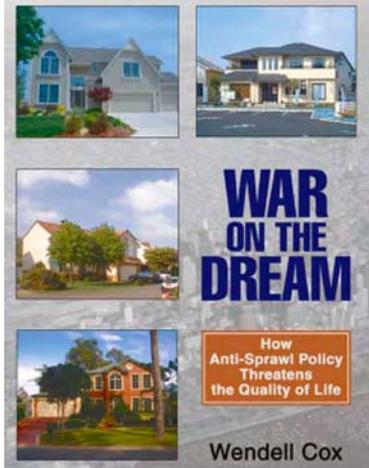
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Urban Tours by Rental Car: About the Series

Urban Tours by Rental Car offers perspectives on urban development obtained by automobile tours through urban areas. Rental cars are not the favored method for visiting cities, especially those outside one's own country. Instead, tourists and urban planners favor packaged tours or local public transport systems. Both are splendid ways for seeing the city as it used to be --- the very reason for most tourist visits. The historical core areas contain monuments, prime government and religious edifices and quaint neighborhoods that are often centuries old. This is particularly important to tourists from the newer urban areas of the American, Canadian or Australian West, where history extends not far before World War II. It is further understandable that few tourists travel thousands of miles to see the newer suburban areas that look very much like home. But most tourists do not profess to be students of the urban area.

For the urban planner interested in understanding the whole urban area, it is not enough to study the core alone, regardless of its architectural attractiveness, romanticism, history or affirmation of an individually preferred life style. No one, regardless of the depth of their education can develop reliable conceptions from an unrepresentative sample, and urban cores are the very essence of unrepresentative samples. Both public transport and packaged tours miss the larger part --- the expanse of sprawling residential and business development that rings virtually all major urban areas. They may be of little interest to many urban planners, but they should be.

Stripping away regional architectural facades, one might as well be in the suburbs of Phoenix, Portland, Perth or Paris. Here, the automobile is king, because no public transport system has been developed that can effectively serve destinations outside the core (at least at a price any society can afford). While public transport market shares are higher in European suburban areas than in the New World, much of the difference is attributable to lower incomes and less automobile access. Indeed, public transport's principal weakness, lack of automobile competitiveness, is itself a contributing factor to the rising motorization occurring from the suburbs of Copenhagen and Nagoya to the suburbs of Lagos and Mumbai. To oversimplify this phenomenon as being a "love affair with the automobile" is the equivalent of saying that Singaporeans or Brazilians have a love affair with air conditioning. Human beings prefer comfort to discomfort and they prefer free time to time over which they have no control.

It is no wonder that tourists return to the United States thinking that all Paris looks like the second arrondissement (less than one percent does) and that urban planners think all of Milan looks like the architectural treasures that surround the Cathedral. In fact, the sprawling suburbs of Europe, Japan, Canada and Connecticut resemble one another in many ways. For any seeking to study the urban area in its entirety --- not just the favored haunts of core-dwelling elites --- there is no alternative to "getting behind the wheel." Thus, *Urban Tours by Rental Car*

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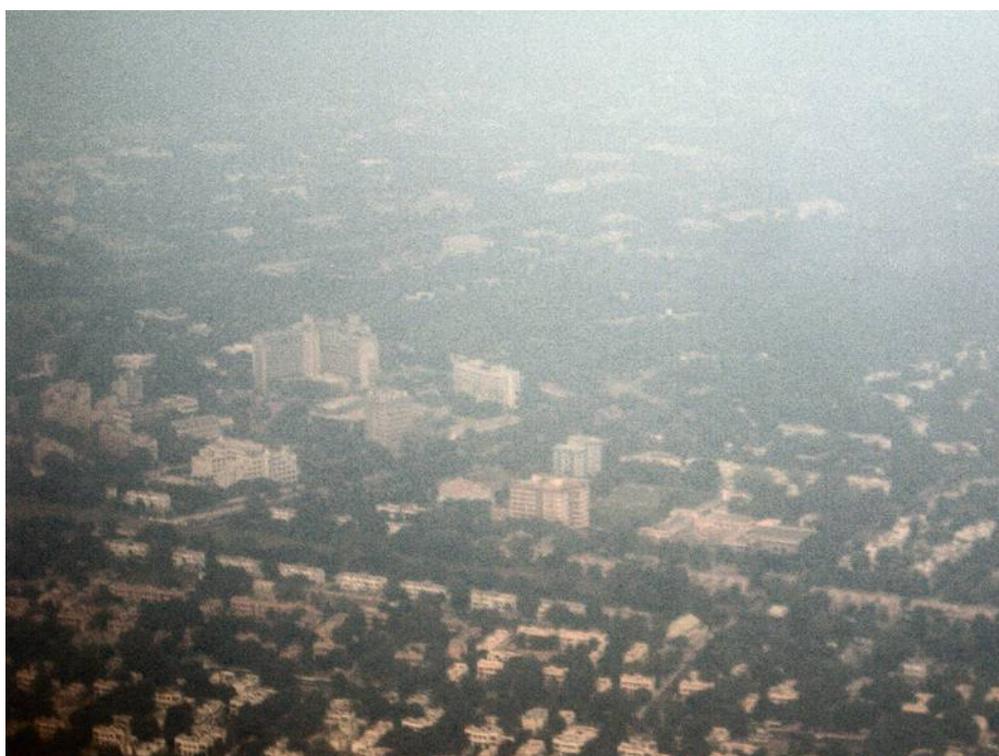
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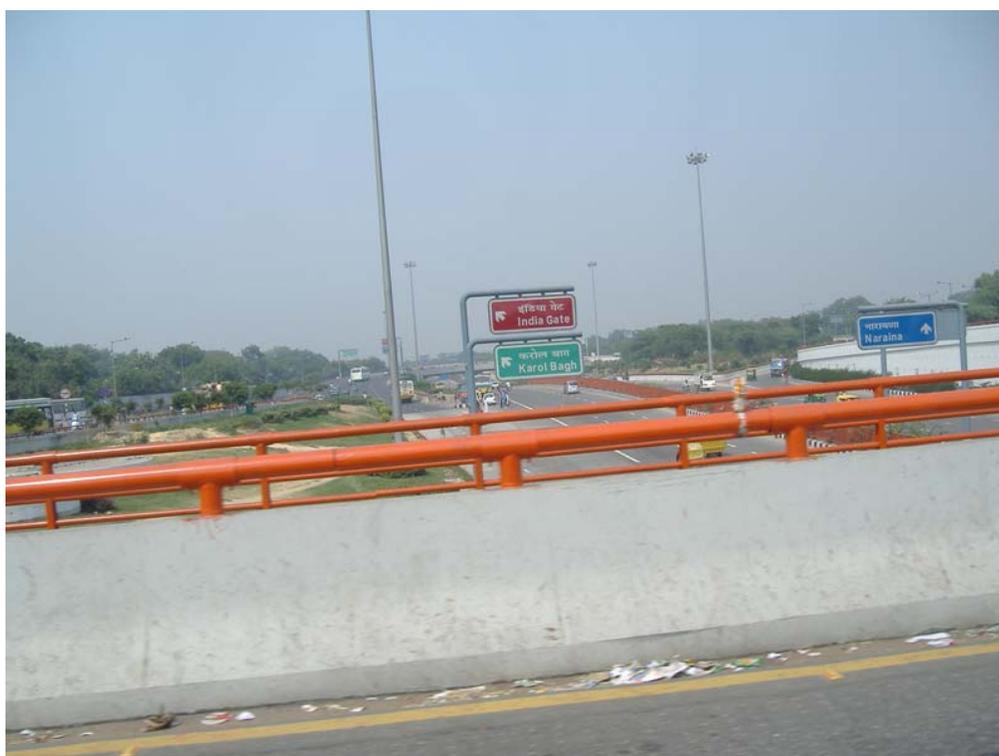
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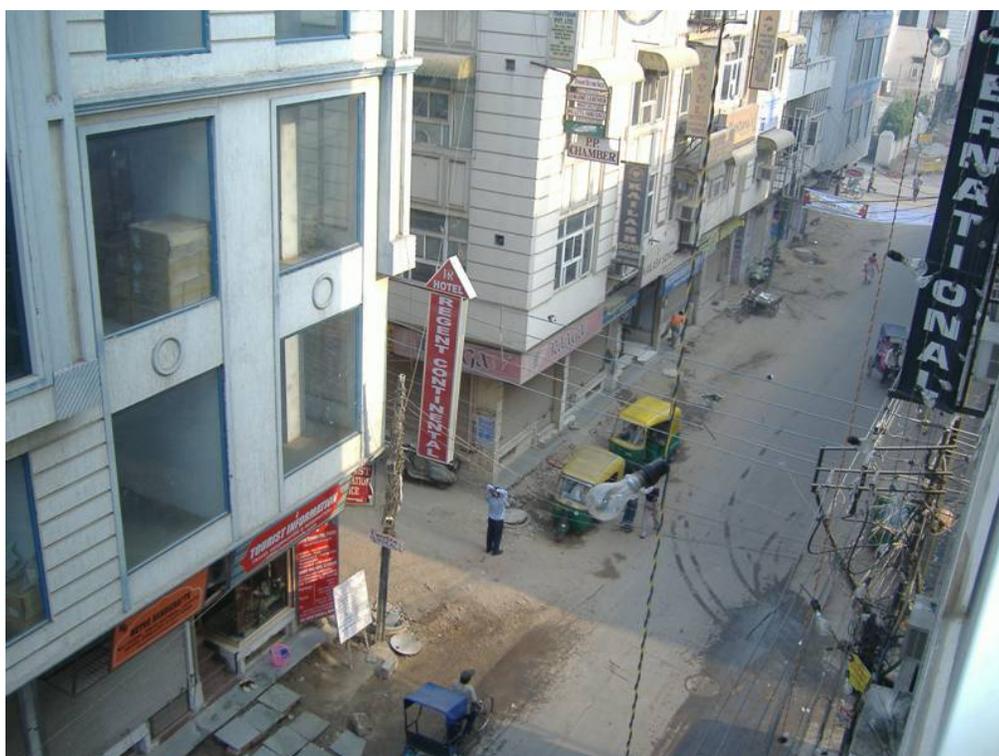
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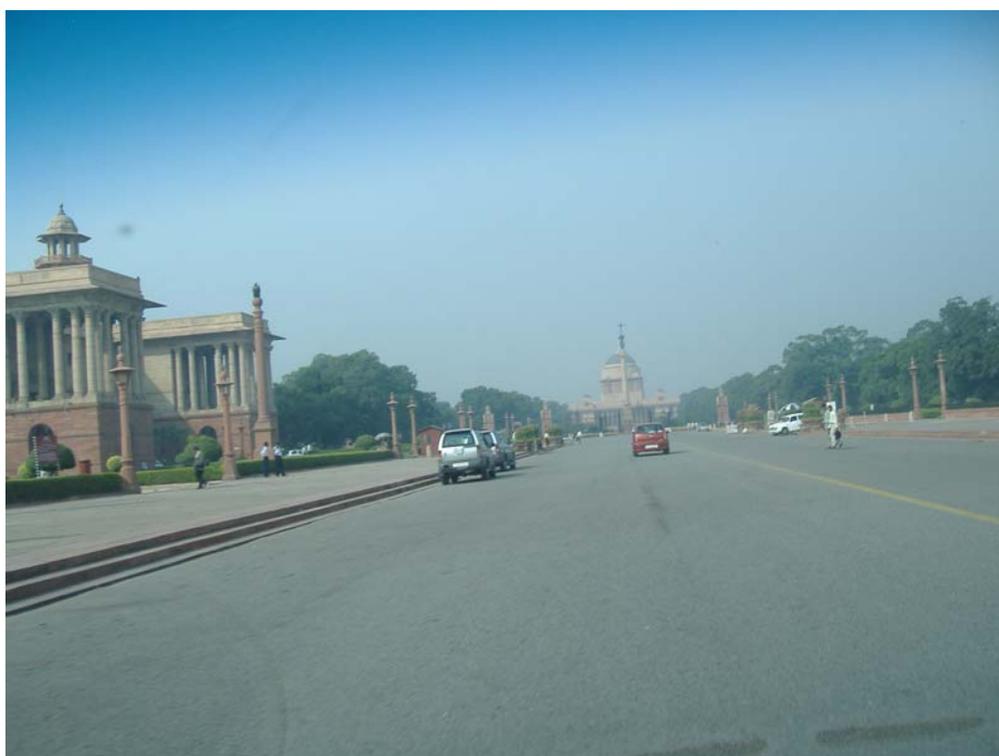
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Landing in Delhi
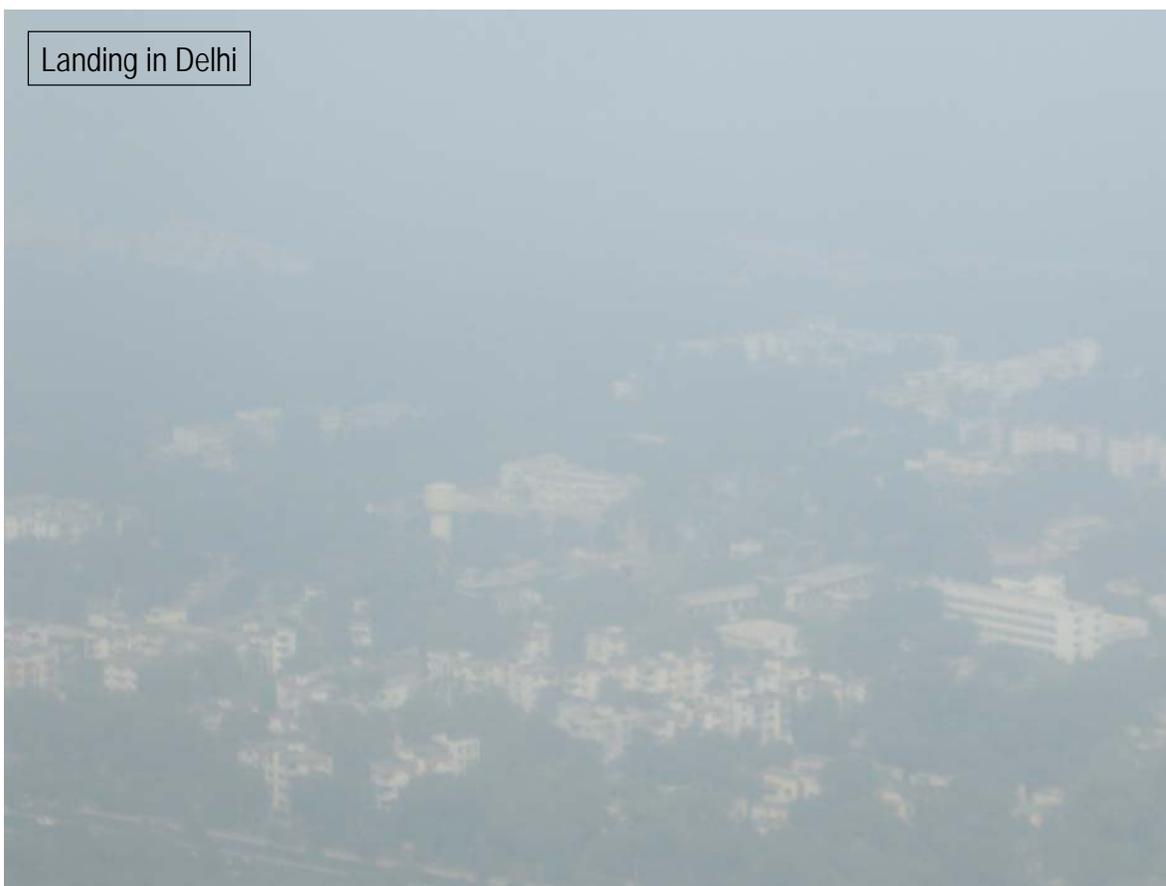
Delhi: West

Delhi Metro

Aap Ka
Shahar
Aap Tak

P-53

Delhi: Central

Delhi: Central
Auto Rickshaw

Delhi: Central

Connaught Place

Connaught Place

Connaught Place

Delhi: Central

Delhi: Central

Delhi: Central


Secretariat (South)

Secretariat (North)

Parliament House

Raisina Hill Government Building
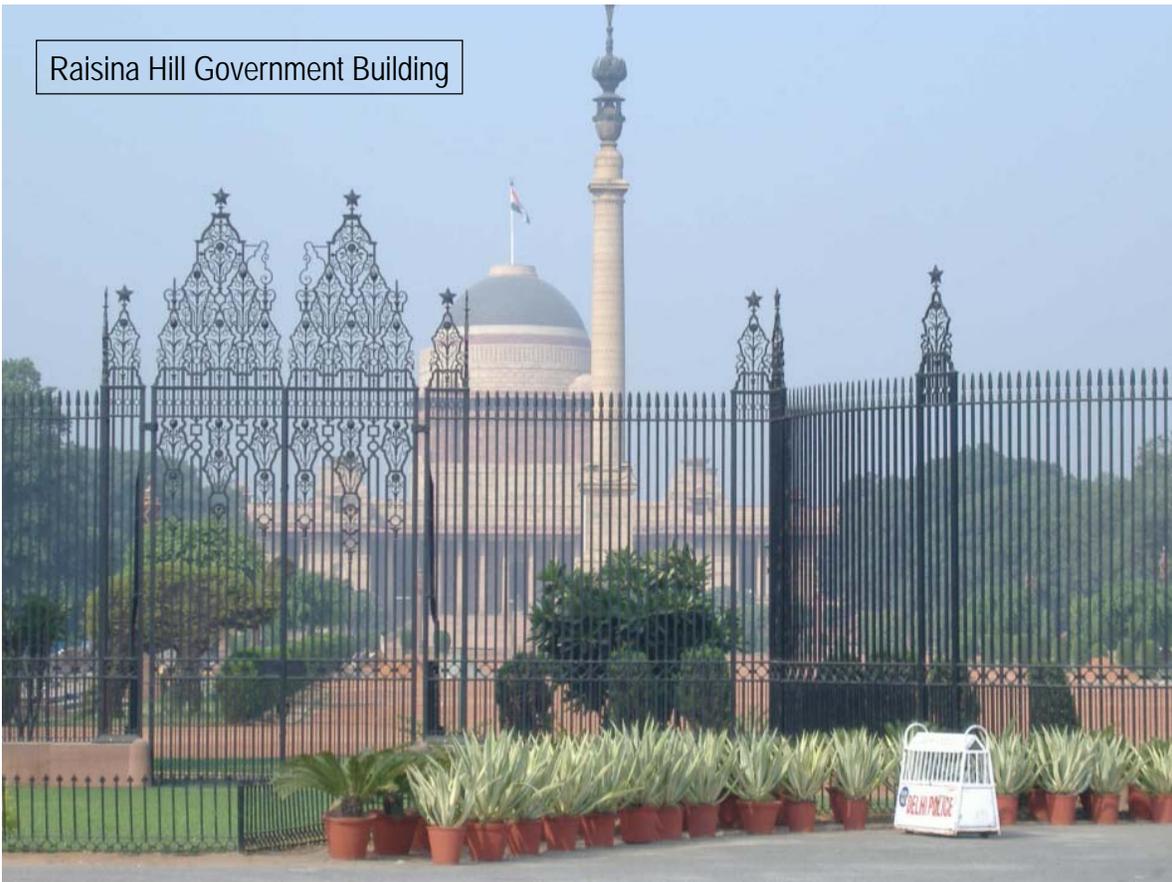
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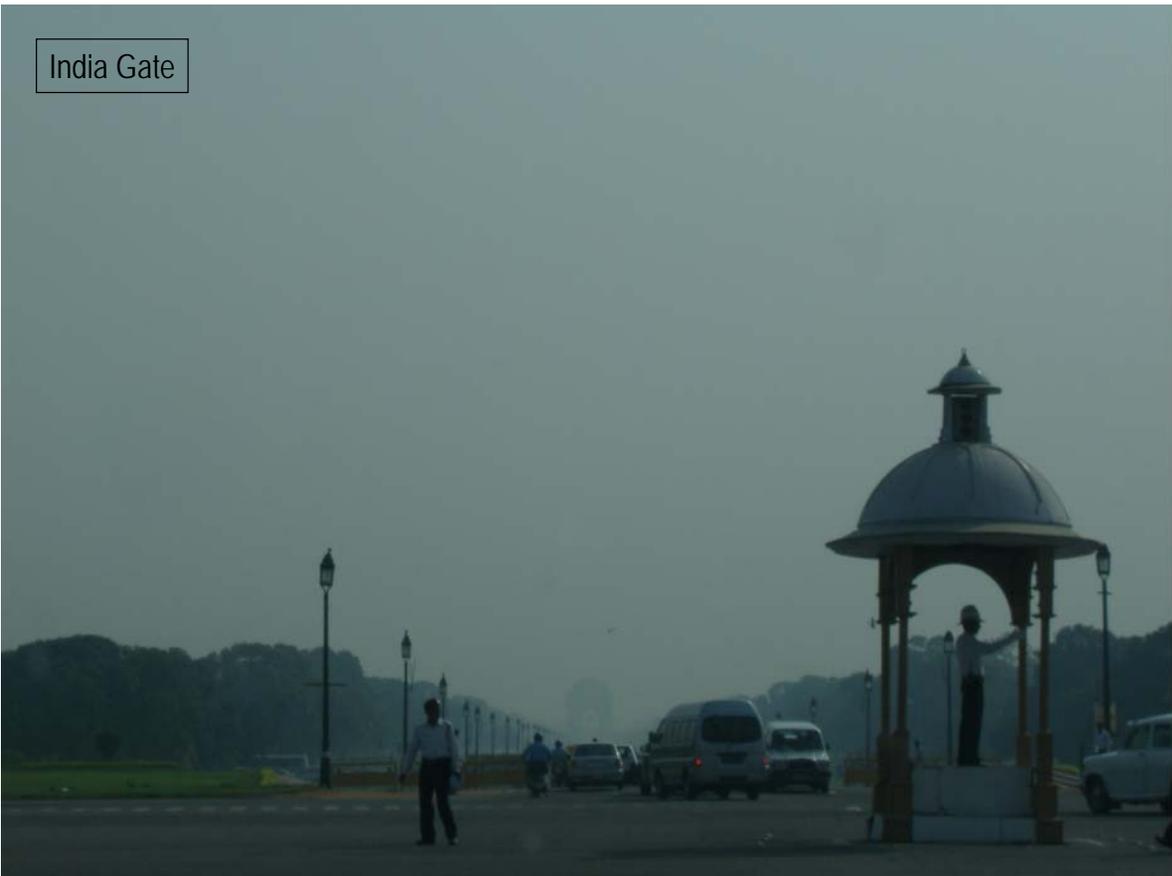
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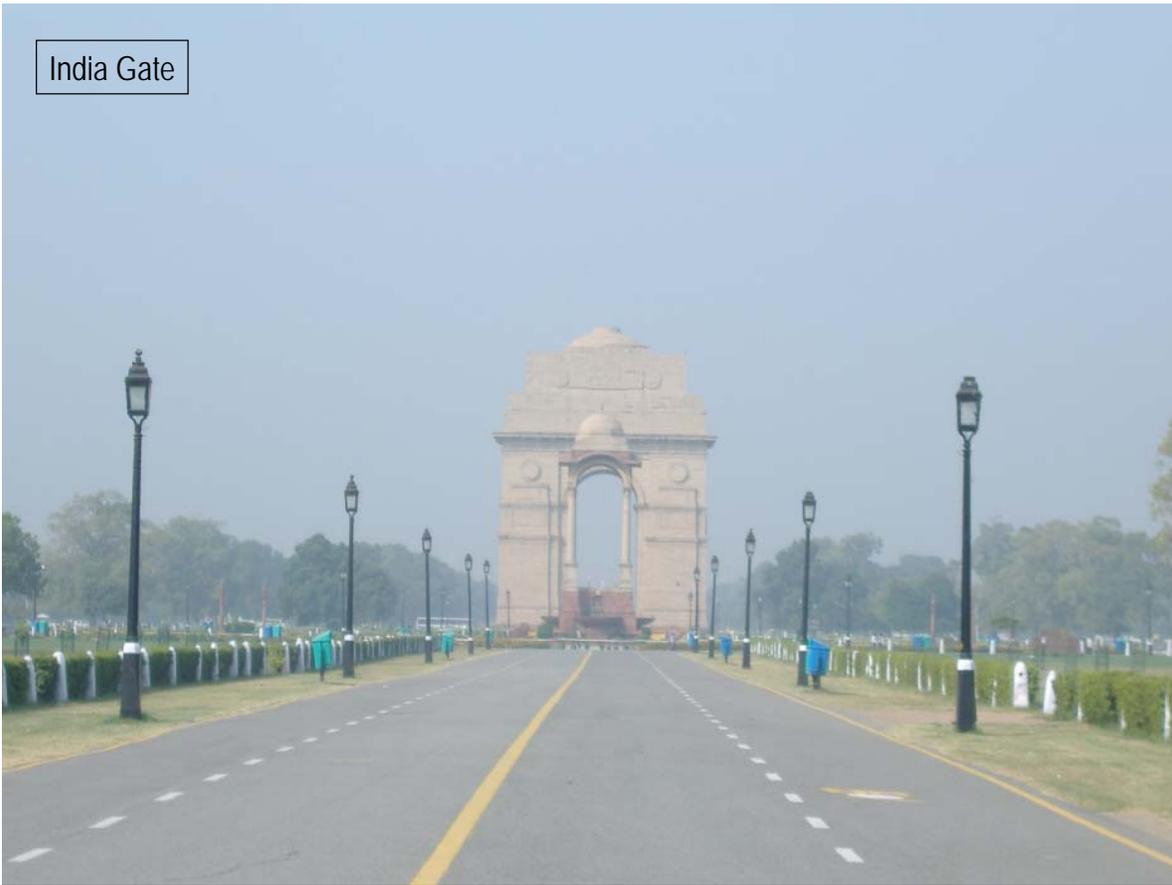
Delhi: South

Delhi: South

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Faridabad: Southern Suburb

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Noida: Eastern Suburb
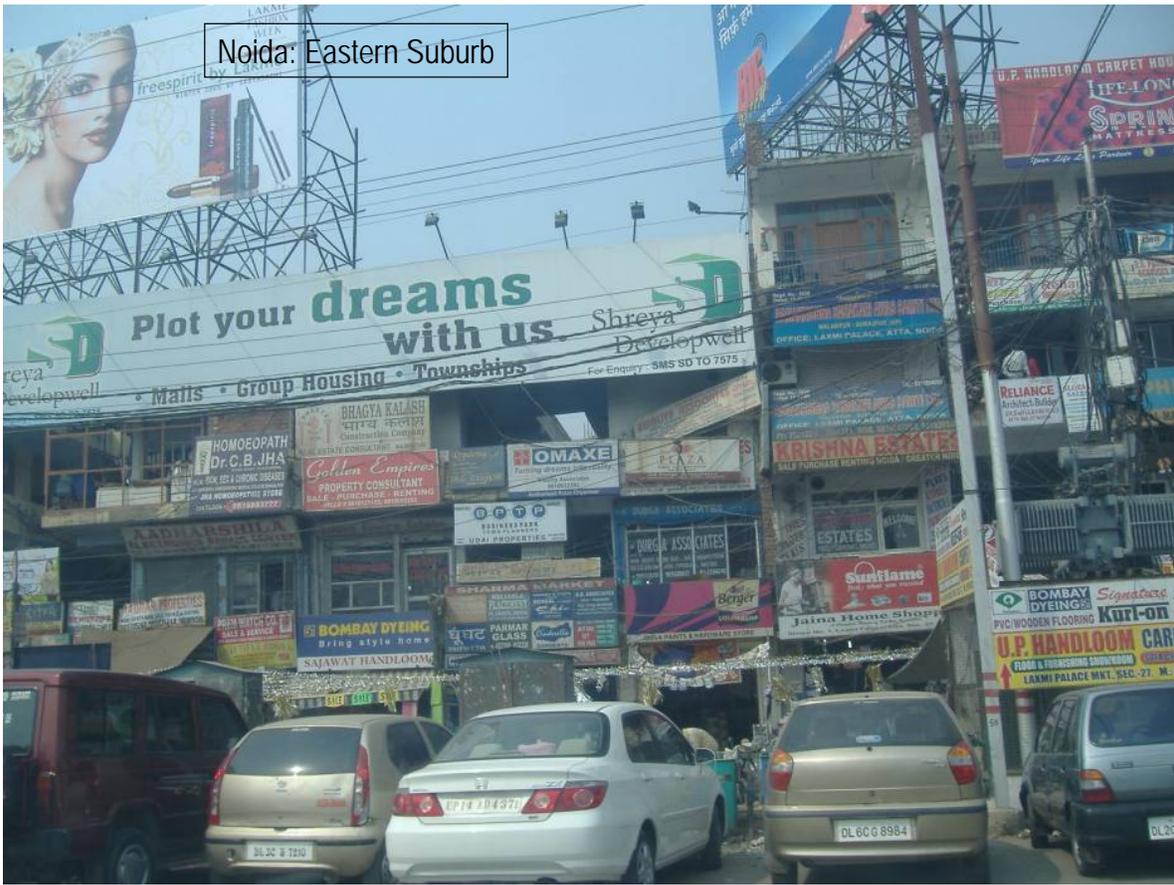
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Ghaziabad: Eastern Suburb

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Ghaziabad: Eastern Suburb

Ghaziabad: Eastern Suburb

Jaipur Highway (Delhi to Gurgaon)

Jaipur Highway (Delhi to Gurgaon)

Jaipur Highway Expansion (Gurgaon)

Delhi: Ring Road

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Park & Ride

Delhi: Northwest

Old Delhi

Old Delhi

Old Delhi

Dwarka Sub City

Delhi: West

Delhi: West

City Square Shopping Centre

Metro Station

Delhi

Gurgaon

Gurgaon