

DELHI 2012



SIGHTS AND SOUNDS From the arty corridors of NGMA to the quaint *baolis* of Hauz Khas, rediscover the capital this last leg of winter through these – new and ongoing – walks and tours

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Did you know that Old Delhi, known for its non-vegetarian delicacies, is also big on vegetarian Bania cuisine? Or that Sufi saints were the original caretakers of Nizamuddin before the Archaeological Survey of India in 1907? Or that the late actor Madhubala came from Chandni Chowk's Chawri Bazaar? Step into any of the expert-led walks/tours in the capital and you find yourself looking at the city in a whole new light. Whether it's art tours kicking off in Delhi's museums and galleries, helping children know their Ravi Varma from their Amrita Sher-gil, heritage sites being 'dug' and re-looked at, varied cuisines getting sampled in their nuances... discovering a city just got more fun and enlightening.

"Both locals and tourists now want a more 'immersive' understanding. They want to experience a city like Delhi for what it is," says Deepa Krishnan, who left her banking job few years ago to set up Delhi Magic (DM), a company that organises guided tours in Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur etc. DM is known for its Delhi Metro Tour, where visitors are shown around Old and New Delhi using eco-friendly transport including the metro, ending with a meal at Haldiram's. The guides are underprivileged youth who are trained for the job. "The idea is to take tourists out of their air-conditioned cocoon and get them to see the city through the eyes of non-tourism professionals," explains Krishnan.

For those interested in getting to know their city through art, Flow India (FI), set up by museum learning experts from UK, recently launched family programmes where children and adults are taken on guided trails of art and heritage in the city. "Delhi has tremendous cultural and heritage resources. It's an exciting place right now and people are equally keen to discover their city," says Katherine Rose, founding director. Currently, FI organises these tours in National Gallery of Modern Art, National Museum and Crafts Museum. The groups are generally small says Rose, 15 at the most and pre-booking is required.

The challenge for tour veterans is to figure newer ways to tell the same stories. Academic-activist Sohail Hashmi, an expert on Delhi who started heritage walks almost a decade back, says he now begins his walks with a traditional Delhi



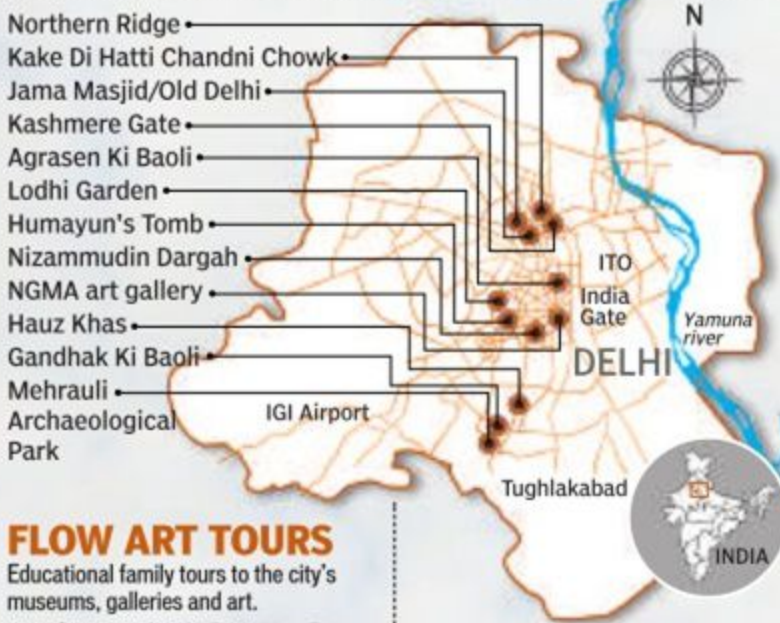
Delhi Heritage Walks' Kanika Singh is a PhD student who conducts several walks in and around Delhi

breakfast while another ends with it. Kanika Singh, a PhD student who has been conducting these walks for more than two years now under Delhi Heritage Walks, says they look for previously unexplored sites. "While sites such as Kashmere Gate, Chandni Chowk, Hauz Khas are our regular routes, we try and find a new area every month. This Sunday we're going to the ridge near Delhi University," she says. Curator Himanshu Verma launched 1100 Walks (named after Delhi's pin-code) for January-February this year. They've already explored the flower markets, lost baolis (step-wells) and bitooras (cowdung store-houses) and will now go on a nurseries and Old Delhi food walk in the coming weeks. "We're toying with the idea of night walks," he says.

Then there are those who call these walks a "technical art form". Navina Jafa, a heritage consultant with the Delhi government calls herself a 'study guide' and has been conducting walks for over two decades now. She's coming out with a book on the art of heritage walks in June 2012. "It's important to weave sociological, historical and contemporary contexts with human nuances. With globalisation, local cultures are changing. For example, I must be able to talk about the Qutab Minar along with the metro line near it and not just place it as a historical monument," she says.

the weekend fix guide

Get the lowdown on Delhi's hotspots



FLOW ART TOURS

Educational family tours to the city's museums, galleries and art.

Coming up: Jan 31-Bring Your Baby Art Tour at NGMA, Feb 4-Mysteries of Ancient India at National Museum, Feb 26 - Sunday At The Gallery: conversations at NGMA.

Contact: 8800754921, info@flowindia.com

DELHI MAGIC

Guided tour of bazaar and cuisine trails for independent travellers. Check out their Delhi By Metro tour covering both New and Old Delhi, done by underprivileged students as well as the Story Of Chai – an intro to tea in India including a visit to local tea-shops.

Contact: 09867707414, deepa@delhimagic.com

DELHI HERITAGE WALKS

Exploring Delhi's heritage and neighbourhoods.

Coming up: Jan 29 - Landmarks of 1857: Northern Ridge, Feb 5 - Hauz Khas, Feb 12 - Chandni Chowk, Feb 19 - 1857 heritage walk at Kashmiri Gate.

Contact: 9212534868, info@delhiheritagewalks.com

1100 WALKS

Conceptual walks exploring lesser known parts of Delhi such as water bodies and flower markets.

Coming up: Jan 28 - Hauz Khas, Jan 29 - food walk in Old Delhi, Feb 4 and 5 - Rose Garden and nurseries.

Contact: 41764054, himanshu@reearthindia.com



PHOTO: KARAN THAPA/1100 WALKS



SPECIAL WALKS

Historians/academicians undertake walks and detailed tours for a fee. Get in touch with Sohail Hashmi (sohailhashmi@gmail.com, 9818690910) and Dr Navina Jafa (navina.jafa@gmail.com, 9810150152).

Coming up: Jan 29 - journalist Sunil Raman leads a walk through Tughlaq city of Jahanpanah, contact habitatworld@oldworldhospitality.com, 43663333

OTHER TOURS/WALKS

Organisations such as INTACH regularly conduct heritage walks. Check www.intach.org for updates. Cycle of non-violence tour organised by the Nehru Memorial Museum and

Library covers monuments related to Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. NGOs such as Salaam Balak Trust (salaamwalk@yahoo.com) and Jamghat (www.jamghat.in) conduct experiential city walks to sensitise people about street-life.



Sohail Hashmi with a group of people on a tour of Jama Masjid in Old Delhi earlier this week. RAJ K RAJ/HT PHOTO

