

Summer Palace
Unveiling Lahore Fort's Hidden Gem

Deep beneath the magnificent Sheesh Mahal, within the Lahore Fort, lies a hidden gem known as the summer palace. This exquisite piece of history, crafted by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, was designed as a retreat for the royal families. Connected to Sheesh Mahal through two openings, the summer palace can be accessed while ascending the elephant stairs of Lahore Fort.

The summer palace holds a special allure due to its ingenious ventilation systems. Constructed as a refuge from the scorching heat and humidity of summer, it also provided warmth during the freezing winters. Shah Jahan's meticulous planning ensured that the palace remained cool and comfortable, regardless of the external weather conditions.



Beyond its architectural brilliance, the summer palace harbored a secret purpose—it served as an escape route for the royal families during times of peril.

The architectural style of the palace harbored an unexpected echo system, allowing whispers to carry from one corner to another with astonishing clarity.

The palace's flooring held intriguing secrets of its own. Beneath the upper floor lay another, and between the two floors ran a sophisticated sewerage system. This system channeled the flowing waters of the River Ravi, keeping the floors pleasantly cool during the scorching summer months. The water channels were designed meticulously, ensuring they did not compromise the building's foundations.

Within the arches and chambers of the palace, original fresco work has managed to withstand the test of time. Silver, gold, and vibrant fresco paintings adorned the palace walls, adding a touch of opulence and grandeur to the already magnificent surroundings.

Barood Khana
Reviving the Forgotten Glory
of Lahore Fort
2017- 2019

The Barood Khana, constructed in 1857, was an integral part of the Alamgiri Gate and Musaman Darwaza of Lahore Fort. Initially, the area surrounding it boasted a lush garden adorned with arcades.



Upon its rediscovery, the Barood Khana revealed the toll that time and neglect had taken on its structure. The building suffered from bulging plaster, missing or dismantled brick masonry, damaged cornices, dilapidated wooden doors and ventilators, and a discolored surface marked by graffiti. The aging factor, termite infestations, and other woodworms had severely impacted the doors and windows, which had never received the attention they deserved.

Through a meticulous restoration process, the Walled City of Lahore Authority addressed the numerous threats and damages that plagued the Barood Khana. Thousands of cubic feet of debris were painstakingly removed, revealing the true beauty and historical significance of the building.

The revived structure stands as a testament to the dedication of the Walled City of Lahore Authority in safeguarding the city's historical treasures.

Akbari Hammam
A Wonder Discovered!
Conserved 2019-2021

In the heart of Lahore Fort lies a remarkable treasure, the Akbari Hammam, also known as Akbari Ghosul Khana. Once an integral part of the Jahangiri quadrangle, this hygienic oasis stood proudly as a frontpiece to the now-vanished Akbari Palace or pavilion.



Some unique features

Within the fort's embrace, an awe-inspiring collection of twenty-one distinct edifices awaits discovery. Clustered in four blocks or quadrangles, the northern half of Lahore Fort stands as a testament to the evolving history of Mughal architecture and the subsequent eras that followed. Akbar's era, represented in the fort's architecture, showcases the vibrant hues of red sandstone and masterfully crafted cut brickwork. Hindu influences from the periods of Akbar and Jahangir manifest in the form of animal figures such as lions, elephants, and peacocks, adorning the sculpted gargoyles that support the chajjas (eaves of chambers) in Jahangir's Quadrangle.



Behold the Lahore Fort, an ethereal masterpiece, standing tall and resplendent amidst the ancient walls of the city. A beacon of grandeur since time immemorial, if its stones could speak, they would weave tales that enthrall the soul with wonder and enchantment. Stories of love, passion, and daring escapades, of captivating maidens and valiant warriors, of regal queens draped in silken elegance and kings adorned in shimmering armor. Within its hallowed confines, poets penned verses that echoed through the ages, actors graced its stage, while slaves and concubines wove a tapestry of intrigue. It bore witness to soldiers and rebels, to revolutions and courtly schemes, to coronations and fateful assassinations, to treachery seeking vengeance in the shadows.

Known as the Shahi Qila, the Lahore Fort is a testament to the passage of countless centuries. Its origins can be traced back to the early 11th century, as documented by Al-Biruni in his history of Lahur. He reveals the construction of a fortress that stood proud in those ancient times. It is said that Malik Ayaz, a favored protégé of Sultan Mahmud, erected a formidable stronghold in Lahore, breathing life back into the city's walls. The fort faced destruction and devastation at the hands of the marauding Mongols in 1241, only to be rebuilt in 1398, only to be ravaged once more by a detachment of Timur's army. Rising from the ashes, it was resurrected in 1421 by Sayyid, the courageous son of Khizr Khan.

Locale



Nestled in the northwestern corner of Lahore's walled city, an enchanting marvel awaits—Lahore Fort, a testament to grandeur and history. Its dimensions, though irregular in scheme, span a vast expanse of approximately 427 meters east-west and 335 meters north-south. Encircled by a robust fortification wall, meticulously constructed with small burnt bricks, this architectural masterpiece holds secrets within.

Amidst heaps of rubble and forgotten debris, the Walled City Authority Lahore (WCLA) embarked on a daunting task of cleaning the area. To their surprise, a hidden staircase emerged, leading to a basement that unveiled the magnificent chambers of Akbar's era Hammam. The meticulous process of excavation, carried out in 2019, breathed new life into the enigmatic Akbari Hammam.

Now, lovingly preserved by the Walled City of Lahore Authority, Akbari Hammam stands as a testament to the city's rich heritage. Its doors have been opened to the public, inviting them to explore the wonders of this hidden gem.

MUSEUMS in Lahore Fort

The Lahore Fort showcases three small site museums within the area of Lahore Fort.

Mughal Gallery



It is located in Jahangir's Quadrangle. The Mughal Gallery provides with historic manuscripts, coins, miniature paintings and some specimens of Persian and Arabic calligraphy etc.

The Armory Museum



Located in Dalan-e-Sang-e-Surkh of Moti Masjid, the Armory Museum showcases the arms and armoury captured by British during the Sikh battles. It contains items like swords, daggers, arrows, spears, helmets, guns, and pistols etc

Sikh Gallery



The Sikh Gallery is located in the Haveli of Rani Jindan. It houses the Princess Bamba collection belonging to Ranjit Singh. Princess Bamba was the granddaughter of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This gallery carries a rare collection of oil paintings. It also includes some beautiful paintings by European artists. Bamba lived in England but died and buried in Lahore in 1958 A.D.



Subsequent Mughal emperors, such as Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb, further adorned the Lahore Fort with their own distinct styles. Jahangir introduced the elegance of Persian influences, infusing the fort with refined additions. Shah Jahan's reign from 1627 to 1658 epitomized an era of marble opulence and artistic refinement, adding to the fort's grandeur. The last of the great Mughals, Aurangzeb, ruled from 1658 to 1707 and left an indelible mark with the iconic Badshahi Masjid and the resplendent Alamgiri Gate, both adorning the Lahore Fort.

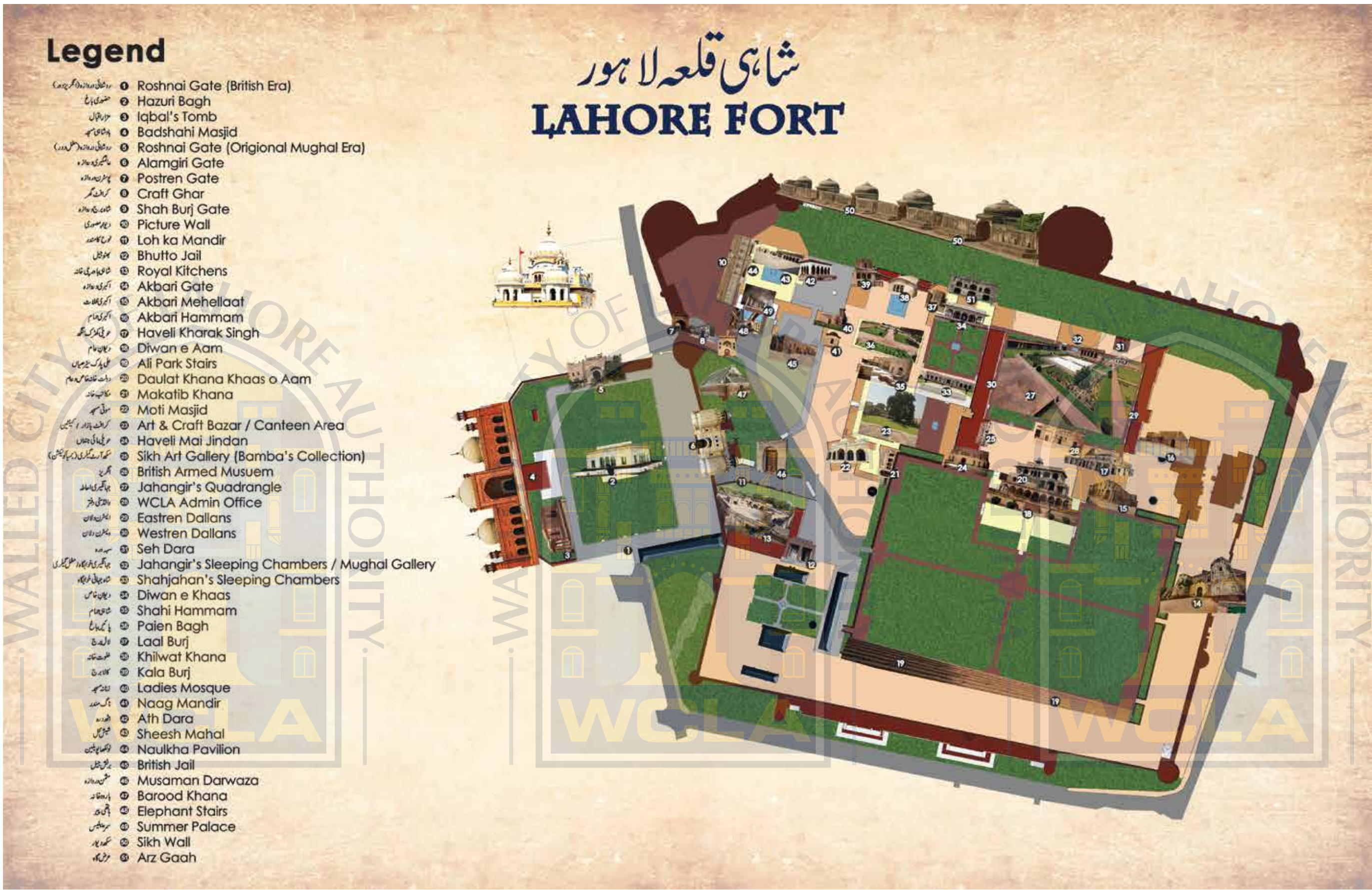
However, as the 18th century dawned, the mighty Mughal power began to wane, and Lahore faced invasions and a lack of central authority. Amidst this chaos, Ahmad Shah Durrani seized control, consolidating his authority over the Punjab and Kashmir regions by 1761.

The 1740s were marred by tumultuous times, with Lahore witnessing a succession of nine different governors between 1745 and 1756. In the midst of this power vacuum, bands of warring Sikhs emerged, gaining control over certain areas. The Sikh uprising gathered momentum until, in 1801, following the death of the twelve Sikh misls unified to form a sovereign Sikh state under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The Vibrant Saga of
Sikh Supremacy at Lahore Fort



In the wake of the crumbling Mughal dynasty within Punjab's embrace, the resolute Sikhs ascended to claim the magnificent Lahore Fort in the 18th century. The empire existed from 1739, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Lahore, to 1849, when it was defeated and conquered in the Second Anglo-Sikh War.



Visitors Guide
Entrance

The entrance to Lahore Fort for general public is through Postern Gate. Outside the gate is the booking office for entry ticket.

Timings

The fort is open to public all the seven days of the week

Summer

1st April to 30th September
8:30 hrs to 12:30 hrs
14:30 hrs to 17:30 hrs

Winter

1st October to 31st March
8:30 hrs to 12:30 hrs
14:30 hrs to 17:30 hrs

Akbari Gate
the Gateway of Majesty & Mirth

This regal edifice, Akbari Gate, named after the third Mughal Emperor, stands as a testament to his greatness. Akbar, with his vision and meticulousness, reconstructed the fort using burnt bricks and adorned it with breathtaking structures. In the year 1666, this remarkable gate came into being, situated on the eastern side of the Lahore Fort.



Once the primary entrance to the Lahore Fort, this gate, even now, exudes an aura of magnificence with its ancient bricks and colossal frame. Elevated above the ground, it beckons with a wide wooden door, spacious enough to accommodate the passage of an elephant; the symbol of grandeur and power. The gate proudly boasts of two majestic storeys, housing chambers that were once occupied by watchful sentinels and valiant soldiers, their presence echoing through the corridors of time. Delving further, one discovers the gate's subterranean treasure, the famed Akbari Sarai, a resplendent resting place befitting an emperor.

Akbari Gate remains an enduring symbol of magnificence and grandeur. A gateway that witnessed the passage of emperors and the ebb and flow of time, it stands tall, a silent witness to the splendor and majesty of a bygone era.

Alamgiri Gate
a Triumph of Architectural Majesty
Conserved 2019-2020

The Alamgiri Gate, a masterpiece crafted by the visionary Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir in 1673, stands proudly as the grand entrance to Lahore Fort. This architectural marvel, situated in the western direction, gazes upon the majestic Badshahi Mosque and the serene Huzoori Bagh. A monumental gateway of unmatched magnificence, it boasts a commanding vestibule flanked by two semi-circular bastions adorned with intricately fluted shafts and lotus petal bases, crowned by graceful domed pavilions.

At the heart of this majestic structure, a colossal arched entrance was ingeniously constructed to facilitate the passage of the emperor's regal caravan mounted on mighty elephants. Beyond lies a central square hall, adorned with deep arched recesses on the eastern and northern sides, while a regal staircase gracefully ascends to the upper-storey buildings. On the southern side, another archway beckons, leading deeper into the fort's interior, revealing its hidden treasures.

Museum Timing
Summer

1st April to 30th September
8:30 hrs to 12:30 hrs
14:30 hrs to 17:30 hrs

Winter

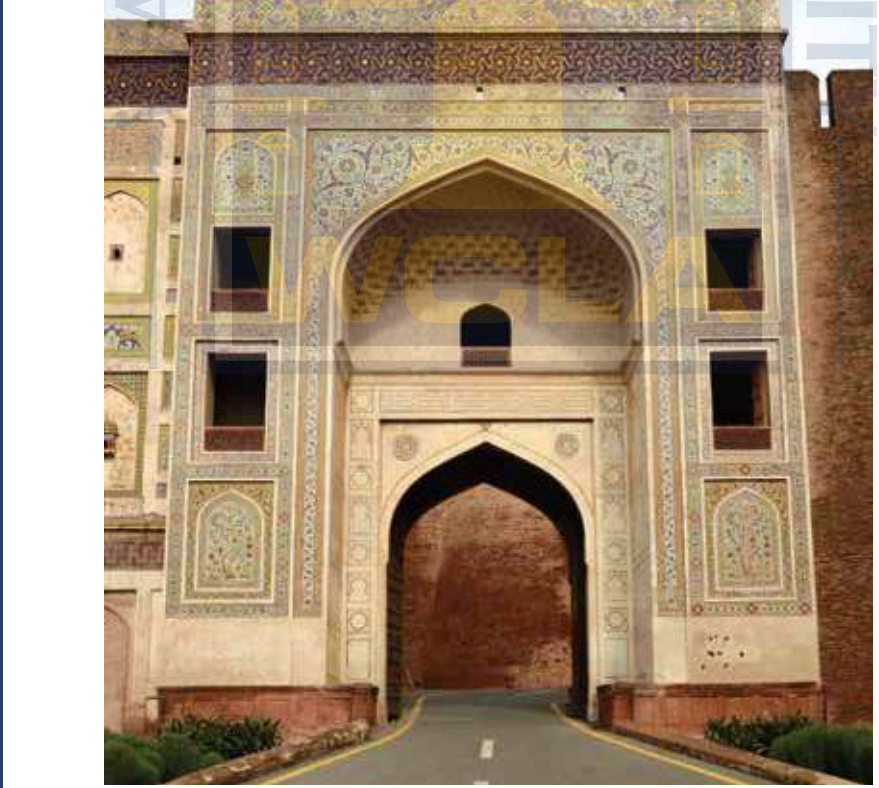
1st October to 31st March
9:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs

Walled City of Lahore Authority
54-Lawrence Road, Lahore ☎042-99204196
www.walledcitylahore.gov.pk
walledcitylahoreauthority
WCLAAuthority



Legend has it that the Alamgiri Gate bore witness to the ravages of war between the valiant Sikhs and the indomitable British forces resulting in its destruction. However, the resilient spirit of the British triumphed, and they undertook the noble task of resurrecting this symbol of grandeur, ensuring its timeless glory endures.

Shah Burj Gate
A Historic Landmark
Conservation 2019



In 1631-32, Shah Jahan constructed the impressive Shah Burj Gate, which was initially reserved for the exclusive use of the royal family and courtyards. Today, the gate is situated behind the Alamgiri Gate of Lahore Fort and the Temple of Prince Loh.

a UNESCO's
World Heritage Site
Lahore Fort
a Symbol of
Glory & Legacy

Lahore Fort
is a home of Cultural Heritage
is undoubtedly one of the
World's Most Remarkable
Historical Sites

Postern Gate, a British-era structure, and serves as an entryway to the Shish Mahal. It is believed that the emperor used the elephant stairs, which are accessible from the gate, to reach the Sheesh Mahal. This gate is a significant part of the fort and also links the world's largest picture wall to the elephant stairs. The Walled City of Lahore Authority restored and conserved this gate in 2019.

Musaman Gate
The Jasmine Tower of Lahore Fort
Conservation 2017-18

Musaman Gate, also known as Musaman Burj or Samman Burj, derived its name from being referred to as the 'Jasmine Tower' in historical accounts. This gate stood taller than the other entrances of Lahore Fort and was constructed around 1632 by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as an entrance into the fort.

Initially, Musaman Gate held significant prominence as one of the main gates of Lahore Fort. Unfortunately, the passage of time led to its abandonment and deterioration, the passage of time led to its abandonment and deterioration, the passage of time led to the gate crumbling, and some steps disappeared altogether.

According to old maps and references to Lahore Fort, the Alamgiri Gate, Royal Kitchen, and Musaman Gate were connected to the Shah Burj through a garden. However, during the British colonial period, significant changes were made. A vast road, resembling a ramp, was constructed, separating these areas and transforming the fort into what we now know as the British Era fort.



In 2019, the Walled City of Lahore Authority undertook the conservation of Musaman Gate, aiming to preserve its historical significance. Adjacent to Musaman Gate, one can find the Alamgiri Gate of Lahore Fort and the Temple of Prince Loh.



Makاتب Khana (Fort's Secretariat) Conservation 2019 -21



The Makatib Khana, situated right next to the Moti Masjid, is a compact enclosed courtyard. Its name, Makatib Khana, translates to a clerks' room or a secretariat. Historical records indicate that this space was used by clerks (muhabiris) to record entries into the fort. In 2021, the Walled City of Lahore Authority undertook conservation efforts to preserve the Makatib Khana. Today, it serves as a venue for various cultural activities.

Diwan-e-Aam Hall of Forty Pillars

In 1631-3, Shah Jahan issued an order to build the Hall of Forty Pillars, which was completed within three years under the supervision of Asaf Khan, the brother of Nur Jahan, the empress of Shah Jahan's father, Jahangir. This magnificent structure was erected in front of the Jharoka of Daulat Khana-e-Khas, a building constructed by Akbar that occupied the central position on the northern side.



The Diwan-e-Aam, however, met its demise when Sher Singh, the son of Raja Ranjit Singh, bombarded the Lahore Fort with light guns during the succession crisis, opposing Chand Kour, the widow of Kharak Singh, the elder son of Ranjit Singh. Following the British occupation of the fort in 1849 A.D., they rebuilt the Diwan-e-Aam. Notably, the marble work in the state balcony in this area is believed to be the oldest existing structure within the Lahore Fort.



Paien Bagh A Serene Haven for Royal Women

Nestled to the north of the Royal Bath, Paien Bagh emerges as a picturesque sanctuary created exclusively for the royal ladies during the glorious reign of Shah Jahan. Step into this enchanting garden and be transported to a world where nature's beauty intertwines with the elegance of Mughal architecture.



The air is perfumed with the sweet fragrance of flowers that bloom in every season, creating a sensory symphony that delights the senses. Amongst the lush greenery, cypress trees stand tall, lending an air of grace and majesty to the surroundings. Fruit trees, bearing the promise of bountiful harvests, add a touch of vibrancy and abundance to the landscape.

In the heart of Paien Bagh lies a spacious platform, meticulously crafted with cut brickwork, serving as the focal point of this exquisite oasis. To either side of the platform, two squares unfold, each divided into four small grassy plots.

Ath Dara The Majestic Pavilion of Elegance

Standing proudly outside the Sheesh Mahal, like a guardian of splendor, is the elevated pavilion known as Ath Dara.

Ath Dara, meaning "Buildings with Eight Openings" serves as a magnificent court where the Maharaja held his regal proceedings. Positioned adjacent to the Sheesh Mahal quadrangle, it shares a common wall with the grand edifice. The Maharaja, in his desire to expand his chambers, added another floor to the Sheesh Mahal, transforming it into his private sanctuary while maintaining the court outside.

Daulat Khan-e-Khas-o-Aam The Enchanted Halls

Hidden within the depths of the Diwan-e-Aam lies a treasure known as Daulat Khana-e-Khas-o-Aam, the Hall of Public and Private Audience, originally built by the illustrious Emperor Akbar. Within its walls, a world of opulence and grandeur unfolds, adorned with mesmerizing stucco tracery, delicately crafted in intricate geometric and floral designs. Once bathed in the lustrous glow of gilded embellishments, remnants of gold still shimmer in scattered traces, whispering tales of past magnificence.

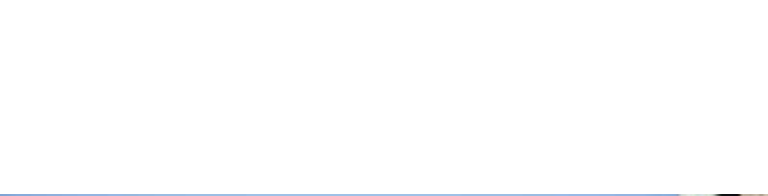


As one ventures deeper into this labyrinth of architectural marvels, exquisite marble arches, gracefully adorned with delicate cusps, beckon with their timeless beauty. The main chamber's dado, resplendent in white marble slabs, boasts borderlines of black and yellow stones, intricately arranged in zigzag patterns, creating an enchanting visual symphony. These very chambers, now hushed and serene, once echoed with the whispers of Mughal emperors, for they were the private sanctuaries of none other than Emperor Akbar himself.

Jahangir's Quadrangle Where time & Artistry Converge

In the heart of the Lahore Fort, a majestic Quadrangle emerges, its story intertwined with the reigns of Akbar and his son Jahangir. The Quadrangle's construction began under Akbar's visionary gaze, but it was Jahangir who breathed life into its walls in 1617-18, investing a staggering sum of Seven Hundred Thousands of rupees. Its architectural features pay homage to the Dharmic traditions, reflecting Akbar's vision of religious tolerance.

As you enter the Quadrangle, rows of enchanting dalans, adorned with red sandstone facades, embrace you from the east and west. These porticos, reminiscent of Hindu art, boast intricately carved columns and elaborate brackets, depicting exquisite animal figurines. And there, at the center of the northern side, lies Jahangir's sacred sleeping chamber, now transformed into the Mughal Museum/Gallery, a testament to the rich heritage it holds. However, the facade that greets you is a modern reconstruction from the British period, a blend of the past and present.



It is worth noting that Ath Dara stands proudly in the very place where the original entrance of the Sheesh Mahal once stood. Its presence serves as a reminder of the transformation and evolution that the fort has undergone, and the remarkable vision of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Sheesh Mahal The Mirror Palace

Situated in the north-west corner of the fort, the Sheesh Mahal emanates an otherworldly ambience. Its construction is intertwined with a unique love story. The Palace of Mirrors was commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan and overseen by Asaf Khan in 1631-32 A.D. It is believed that Shah Jahan intended it as a gift for his beloved queen, Mumtaz Mahal, during her stay in Lahore. Tragically, before she could set foot in the palace, she passed away, compelling Shah Jahan to commission the construction of the Taj Mahal in India.



The Sheesh Mahal is renowned for its exquisite features, including intricate craftsmanship and stunning materials. It showcases Gilt work, where pure gold is delicately placed. Pietra dura work, which involves the inlay of semi-precious stones into white marble. Marble perforated screens and Aiena Kari, a convex glass mosaic work, complemented by Monabat Kari, stucco tracery.

The palace's beauty is enhanced by the diverse marble stone slabs (such as Sang-e-Musa, Sang-e-Abr, and Sang-e-Badal) that adorn the spacious courtyard in front of it. In the center of the Mahal, there is a shallow water basin featuring four jet fountains. The basin is connected to other structures through four water channels, one on each side.

At present, the Sheesh Mahal has been illuminated with small lights and electronic candles by the Walled City of Lahore Authority and any one going to history by night tour of Lahore fort can see the glittering Sheesh Mahal.



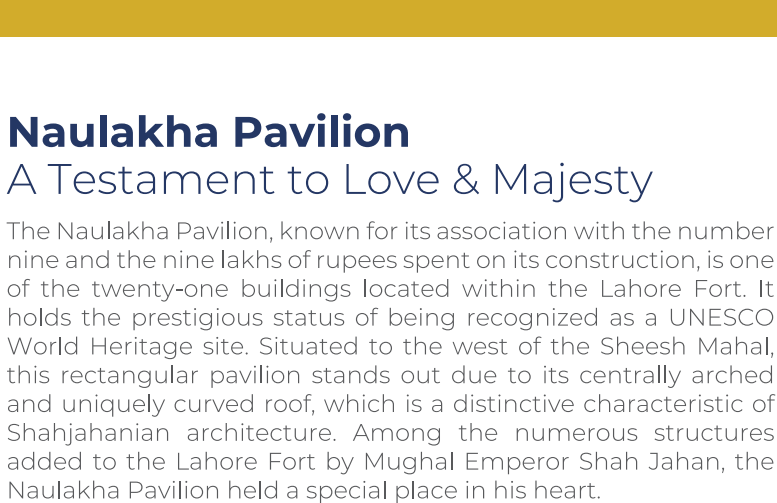
Within this Quadrangle, a wondrous garden flourishes, adorned with a square marble Mahtabi, a platform where musicians once played their melodies, and dancing girls graced its stage. And at its heart, a spacious tank takes center stage, exuding tranquility and grace. A magnificent square marble platform, known as mahatabi, houses a cistern with a mesmerizing marble fountain, while numerous fountains dance along the water's surface. Standing proudly in the middle of the north side, the court's main building, 'Bari Khawabgah,' once served as Jahangir's personal sleeping chamber, but during the Sikh period, it transformed into Ranjit Singh's harem.

Shah Jahan's Quadrangle A Mesmerizing Tapestry of Marble and Elegance

Step into the enchanting realm of Shah Jahan's Quadrangle, where the very air seems to shimmer with the ethereal beauty of white marble. This architectural masterpiece captivates both under the golden rays of the sun and the gentle glow of moonlight, casting a spell that transcends time.



On the eastern side of Lal Burj, within Shah Jahan's Quadrangle, stands the Diwan-e-Khas, the Hall of Private Audience. It was here that the Emperor convened private gatherings and conducted state affairs with regal grace. The structure itself is a testament to timeless beauty, a square pavilion adorned in pristine white marble. The parapet, once adorned with intricate



The Naulakha Pavilion is renowned for its remarkable marble and stone inlay work, showcasing intricate designs crafted with precision. Delicate floral and geometric patterns, formed using agate, jade, goldstone, lapis lazuli, and other precious stones, adorn the marble surfaces. A prime example of this craftsmanship is found in a niche, where a tiny floral pattern measuring only two and a quarter by one-and-three quarters inches boasts an astonishing 102 pieces of inlaid gems. Such artistic and intricate work is a rarity in contemporary architecture, highlighting the skill and taste of the artisans and builders.



Constructed in 1663 under the command of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, the Naulakha Pavilion was intended to serve as a summer retreat for his beloved wife, Arjumand Banu Begum, better known as Mumtaz Mahal.

In 1981, the Lahore Fort was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, recognizing its historical and cultural significance. Naulakha Pavilion was conserved by WCLA and AKTC in 2022.

pietra dura work, bore witness to the theft and plunder of precious stones during the British occupation.

Opposite the Diwan-e-Khas, a row of five chambers unfolds, serving as the sleeping quarters of Shah Jahan. Aligned in perfect symmetry, these chambers showcase carved marble screens, adorned with intricate inlaid white marble and delicate frescoes.

Lal Burj A Timeless Retreat

Amidst the grandeur of Shah Jahan's Quadrangle, nestled in the northwest corner, lies a hidden gem known as Lal Burj. This octagonal summer pavilion, built between 1617 and 1631 A.D., exudes an air of mystique and charm. As you approach its mesmerizing exterior, adorned with intricate tile mosaics and delicate filigree work, you can't help but be captivated by its beauty.



The interior walls are adorned with vibrant color paintings, showcasing the artistic prowess of the bygone era. The central basin, surrounded by channels and their fountains, once created a serene atmosphere within the pavilion. Though the cement concrete floor that now covers them is a relic of the British period, one can imagine the original flooring to have been crafted from luxurious marble, further enhancing the pavilion's opulence.

As you ascend the staircase in the northeast corner, a remarkable sight awaits you: A piece of the original honeycombed cornice adorns the walls, a testament to the lavishness with which Lal Burj was once embellished. Intricate gilding and exquisite paintwork showcase the attention to detail that graced every corner of this magnificent pavilion. It serves as a glimpse into the past, reminding us of the grandeur that once permeated its walls.

Kala Burj

Where time paints its stories

Nestled within the majestic Khilwat Khana, standing proudly at the northwest corner, lies the enigmatic Kala Burj. This summer pavilion, shrouded in history and adorned with architectural marvels, whispers tales of a bygone era. Each brick, each stroke of paint, carries with it the weight of time, weaving a tapestry of stories waiting to be unraveled.

Similar in many respects to its counterpart, the Lal Burj, Kala Burj exudes an aura of mystery and grandeur. Its very name, bestowed upon it in a later period, hints at the shadows that have danced upon its walls and the secrets it has safeguarded. As you ascend its storied floors, each layer tells a tale of different epochs.



Moti Masjid The Serene Pearl Mosque Conserved 2019-2021

Nestled within the Lahore Fort, the Moti Masjid, also known as the Pearl Mosque, is a small yet captivating place of worship. It is believed by many that the mosque holds mystical energies, with whispers of spirits and ghouls inhabiting its sacred space. Visitors from around the world flock to this revered site every week, driven by a strong belief that their wishes will be granted if they offer Nawafil (optional prayers) within the Moti Masjid. During the Ase prayers, the mosque becomes packed with worshippers, making it a challenge to find a spot inside.



Commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1645, the Moti Masjid shares historical ties with the Dolat Khana Khaas-o-Aam of Shah Jahan. It is one of two mosques built by Shah Jahan in pristine marble, with the second one located in the Agra Fort and a similar type constructed by Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi's Red Fort. These mosques earned the moniker 'Pearl Mosque' due to their resplendent appearance, adorned with white marble.

The mosque is exclusively constructed from Sang-e-Marmar, the renowned white marble sourced from Makrana, Rajasthan, India. To this day, the marble of the Moti Masjid radiates a nearly luminescence, showcasing its unique splendor and beauty.

Hathi Paer The Majestic Elephant Stairs

Known as Hathi Paer, or Elephant Stairs, this remarkable architectural marvel was crafted by the hands of artisans in 1631-32 A.D. Its purpose was to provide a regal pathway for elephants, carrying the esteemed Royalty to and from the palace.

Stretching from the imposing Hathi Pol Gate to the weathered entrance of the outer courtyard of Sheesh Mahal, Hathi Paer reveals itself with grace and grandeur. Its low and broad steps, extending for a length of 216 feet and measuring 18"-8 in width, beckon visitors to ascend their storied path. Constructed entirely of small country bricks coated in lime plaster, the staircase stands as a testament to the architectural prowess of the time.

Flanking the staircase on either side, high paneled walls once adorned the scene, their surfaces adorned with imitation brick-work in vibrant red, white, and green hues. The western



Step inside, and you are transported into a world frozen in time. The interior plaster, applied during the British era, conceals the vibrant Mughal and Sikh decorations that once adorned the walls. The paintings, once vibrant with color and life, now lie hidden beneath a cloak of plaster. But if you listen closely, the whispers of those forgotten masterpieces can still be heard, echoing through the halls.

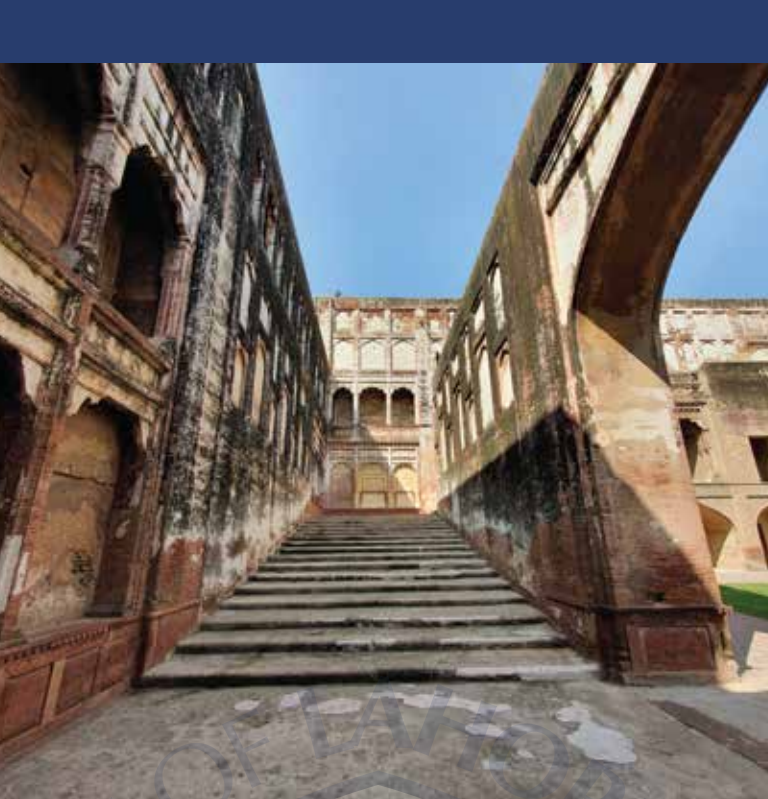
Khilwat Khana A Sanctuary of Sovereignty

Step into the echoes of a regal past as you enter the exquisite realm of Khilwat Khana, a testament to the grandeur and solitude of Emperor Shah Jahan's private abode. Built with meticulous precision in 1633 A.D., this architectural marvel was also known as Ghul Khana, a place of purification and serenity.

As you explore Khilwat Khana, it becomes apparent that it was divided into two distinct sections, each serving a unique purpose. The front or southern portion, known as Pain Bagh, was a ladies' garden, a lush oasis where the delicate whispers of nature danced in harmony. Here, the Mughal empresses sought solace amidst verdant beauty, finding respite from the bustling court and indulging in moments of tranquility.



Venturing further, you traverse the threshold into the private and personal residence of Emperor Shah Jahan, a secluded haven hidden from prying eyes. The Mughal emperors, in their wisdom, chose not to reside within the Harem proper but in a separate court adjacent to it. Khilwat Khana was their sanctuary, a sanctuary that still bears the remnants of its former glory.



wall, in particular, housed niches in both the lower and upper stories, where Khwaja Saras (Eunuchs) and Nagib (Announcers) would stand.

The upper gallery, known as Ghulam Gardish, served as a vantage point for the servants, allowing them to observe and attend to their duties with diligence.

The echoes of the past resonate through the air, guiding your steps and whispering tales of glory and resilience. As you stand amidst the remnants of Hathi Paer, surrounded by the vestiges of a bygone era, honor the spirits of the past and marvel at the timeless beauty of this magnificent staircase.

World's Largest Mural (Picture Wall) A Grand Mural of History

The Picture Wall, renowned as the world's largest mural, stands as a testament to the artistic grandeur of the Mughal period. Originally adorned with exquisite glazed tiles, faience mosaics, ornate tilework, delicate filigree, and vibrant frescoes, this monumental masterpiece was crafted during the reign of Emperor Jahangir in 1624 AD and completed under Emperor Shah Jahan's rule in 1632 AD. Stretching an impressive 1450 feet long and 50 feet high (450 meters long and 17 meters high), the Picture Wall greets visitors as they enter the Lahore Fort, captivating them with its captivating mosaic compositions.



As you tread upon the grounds of Khilwat Khana, it becomes apparent that much of its former glory has faded into the annals of history. The remnants of the court, once resplendent with life, now bear witness to the passage of time, as only the foundations remain, silent sentinels of a bygone era, hinting at the grandeur that once enveloped this private sanctuary.

The surrounding structures, now lost to the ages, whispered secrets of rooms that housed guards and served multifarious purposes. The court's connection to a network of basement chambers, known as Tah-Khanas, and a solitary cold chamber, the Sard Khana, speaks to the intricate planning and security considerations that were paramount to the imperial residence.

Khilwat Khana, the epitome of regal solitude, embodied the essence of Emperor Shah Jahan's private realm.

Hammam-e-Shahi A Majestic Oasis of Luxury

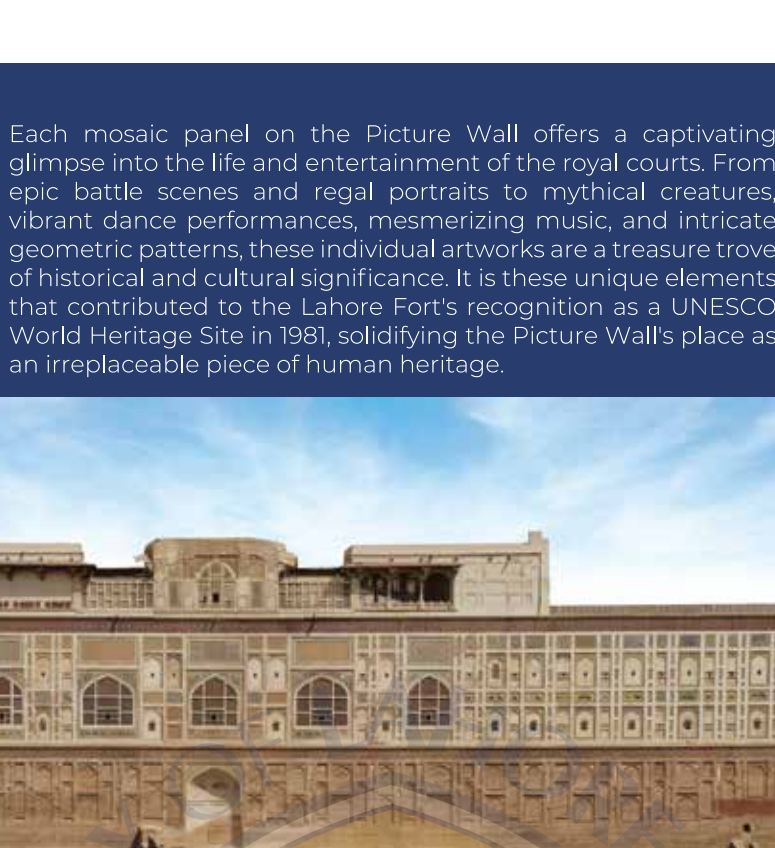
Behold the grandeur of Hammam-e-Shahi, the Royal Bath, a testament to Shah Jahan's opulence and architectural finesse. Built in approximately 1633 A.D., this magnificent structure stands adjacent to Shah Jahan's Khawabgah, the Sleeping Rooms of the Emperor, on the western side. Drawing inspiration from Turkish design, the Royal Bath exudes an air of regality, boasting a layout reminiscent of its Turkish counterparts.



Step into the Jama Khana, the Dressing and Undressing Room, where courtiers prepared themselves for the indulgent bathing experience that awaited. The bath was equipped with the luxury of warm and hot water, providing a truly pampering escape for those fortunate enough to partake. Traces of the exquisite tessellated marble flooring can still be seen in the southwestern corner, a reminder of the meticulous craftsmanship that graced every inch of this sanctuary. Marvel at the terracotta pipes ingeniously embedded within the walls, a remarkable feat of engineering that once supplied water to this architectural marvel.

A small water tank, adorned with variegated marble, adds a touch of elegance to the scene, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the tranquil ambience. Four single baths once adorned the corners of the Royal Bath, offering private sanctuaries for those seeking respite and relaxation.

Each mosaic panel on the Picture Wall offers a captivating glimpse into the life and entertainment of the royal courts. From epic battle scenes and regal portraits to mythical creatures, vibrant dance performances, mesmerizing music, and intricate geometric patterns, these individual artworks are a treasure trove of historical and cultural significance. It is these unique elements that contributed to the Lahore Fort's recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981, solidifying the Picture Wall's place as an irreplaceable piece of human heritage.



In 2018, the Aga Khan Culture Service Pakistan and the Walled City of Lahore Authority undertook the conservation of the western facade of the Picture Wall, which stretches approximately 240 feet in length and stands an average of 50 feet tall.



The Royal Kitchens A Historic Area Inside the Fort Restored! (2017-19)

The Royal Kitchens were originally built during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan. They served as the hub where a wide variety of food, beverages, sweets, and appetizers were prepared. The diligent helpers would then transport the delicacies to the private chambers of the king, queen, princes, princesses, and other esteemed courtiers. However, during the Sikh occupation of Lahore Fort, the Royal Kitchens, like many other buildings, suffered damage. They were repurposed as a food storage room and stables for horses and other animals. In 1849, when the British took control of the fort, the kitchens were transformed into interrogation cells and jails. The open verandas were sealed with bricks, and new structures such as iron doors and beams were added. An additional storey was constructed, serving as offices for policemen. The British period also witnessed the installation of electricity supply lines, sewage systems, and water drains.

Ladies Mosque Unveiling the Secrets of Masjid e Khurd

There is another mosque in Lahore Fort other than the Moti Masjid, known as the Ladies Mosque. Reserved exclusively for women seeking solace and connection with the divine, this hidden gem also goes by the endearing names of Masjid e Khurd or Mosque of Sagacity. Nestled in the northwestern corner of Lahore Royal Fort, it stands as an integral structure within Emperor Shah Jahan's grand quadrangle.

Chronologically speaking, it is believed that the Ladies Mosque came to life around 1633 A.D., coinciding with the construction of Emperor Shah Jahan's quadrangle. In those early days, the secluded chambers of the mosque served as a sacred sanctuary for the 'royal' ladies of the harem, where they offered their supplications and prayers. However, with the emergence of the opulent Pearl Mosque in 1645, the Ladies Mosque gradually fell into disuse, becoming an occasional place of worship. The regal splendor of the Pearl Mosque overshadowed its humble counterpart, boasting grandeur, serenity, and magnificence.

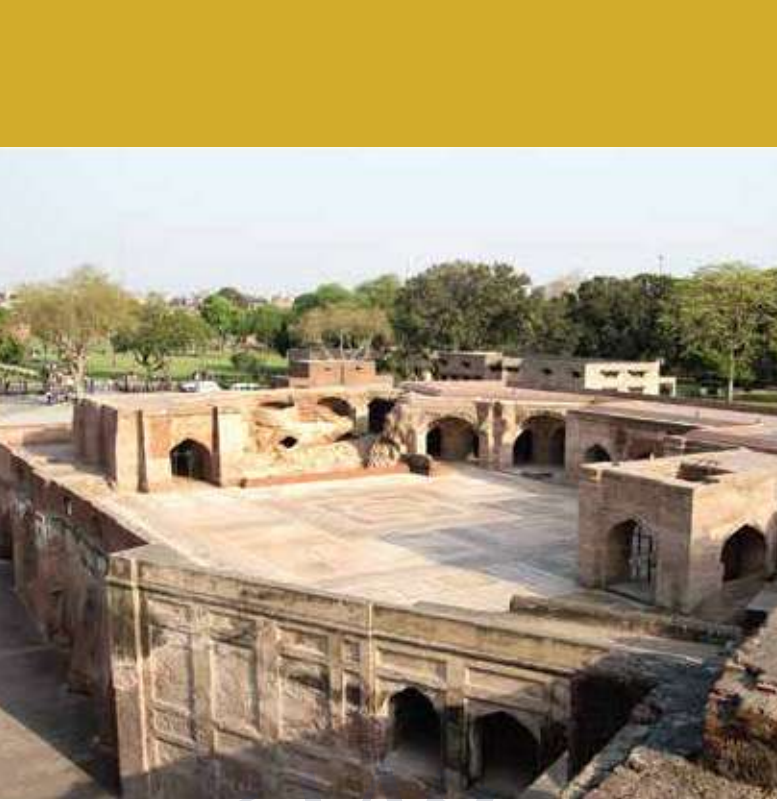


In 2022, the Walled City of Lahore Authority undertook the task of conserving this precious mosque.

Gurdwara A Sanctuary of Devotion

Nestled just outside Ath Dara and in close proximity to the serene Paiein Bagh, stands a place of spiritual solace, a testament to faith and devotion. This sacred sanctuary is none other than the Sikh Gurdwara, a cherished space constructed during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

With its doors open wide, the Gurdwara welcomes all who seek solace and enlightenment. It was erected with great reverence for Maharani Chand Kaur, the esteemed wife of Maharaja Kharak Singh. Within its walls, the religious scripture of Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib, finds its revered place. Each day, as the sun gently rises, the divine light of the Guru Granth Sahib is illuminated in a sacred ritual known as Prakash.



Following the partition, the fate of the Royal Kitchens took a further downturn. It is said that they were used as interrogation cells by the Police Department until the late 1990s, after which they were handed over to the Archaeology Department.

In 2019, the conservation of the Royal Kitchens was completed by the Walled City of Lahore Authority.

The Temple of Prince Loh Unveiling Lahore's Timeless Connection

Nestled within the magnificent Alam-giri Gate of Lahore Fort, stands a chamber steeped in intrigue—the Temple of Prince Loh, also affectionately known as Lava Mandir. Amongst the various interconnected chambers near the gate, historians and researchers have speculated that this humble room might have served

as the sacred dwelling or even the birthplace of Prince Loh himself. As you venture through Lahore Fort with a knowledgeable guide, the secrets of this hidden gem will be unveiled, allowing you to delve deep into its fascinating history.

Prince Loh shares an indelible bond with Lahore. Legend, steeped in the oral traditions of yore, whispers that Lahore, once known as Lavapuri (the Sanskrit 'City of Lava'), was founded by none other than Prince Lava, the valiant offspring of Sita and Rama.