

## Taj Mahal

*Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Art & Culture*

### Why in News?

*Shrouded in a heavy blanket of fog, the Taj Mahal seemed to disappear as dense mist engulfed Agra, drastically reducing visibility across the city and contributing to the 'very poor' air quality levels.*

- **Location** - The Taj Mahal is a **ivory-white marble mausoleum** situated on the **right bank of the Yamuna River** in Agra, India.
- It was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in 1983.
- **Built by** -Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal.
- **Construction** - Its construction was started in 1632 AD and completed in 1648 AD, and the entire complex, including a mosque, guesthouse, and gardens, was finished around 1653 AD.
- **Architecture & Layout** - It is regarded as the **pinnacle of Mughal architecture**, blending **Islamic, Persian, and Indian styles**.
- It is an **octagonal tomb chamber** with memorials of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan.
- It features perfect symmetry, and its beauty lies in the rhythmic play of solids & voids, concave & convex forms, light & shadow.
- **Main architect** -Artisans were employed on the project across India, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and Europe & **Ustad-Ahmad Lahori** was the main architect of the Taj Mahal.
- **Colour harmony** - The colour combination of lush green scape, reddish pathway and blue sky over it showcases the monument in ever-changing tints and moods.
- **5 Complex elements** - Main gateway, garden, mosque, jawab (mirror building), mausoleum with 4 minarets.
- **Mausoleum** - Resting on a 23-ft high plinth and the real graves lie in the lower crypt.
- **Domes** - Central dome (large bulbous central dome) rises to 240 ft, surrounded by four smaller domes and four identical facades, each with a central arch (108 ft high).
- **Minarets** - Four elegant towers at plinth corners, enhancing symmetry.
- **Mosque & Jawab** - Built of red sandstone with marble domes, providing contrast to the white marble mausoleum.
- **Garden Layout** - **Timurid-Persian style** quadripartite garden (**charbagh**), nearly 17 hectares, divided by walkways.
- **Decorative Features** -
  - It uses White Makrana marble, red Sikri sandstone with inlay of precious & semi-precious stones;

- **Pietra dura** - Inlay of semiprecious stones (lapis lazuli, jade, crystal, turquoise, amethyst) in floral/geometric designs;
  - Arabesque calligraphy (Quranic verses);
  - High and low relief carvings; and
  - Extensive jali (lattice screen) works.
- **Protection** - It is managed by the Archaeological Survey of India, protected under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958)*.

To know about India's Journey of Heritage Preservation, click [here](#)

## References

1. [Deccan Chronicle | Dense fog Engulfs Agra, Taj Mahal Fades from View](#)
2. [UNESCO | Taj Mahal](#)

