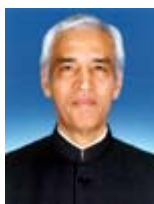


## Delhi

National capital territory (pop., 2008 est.: 17,076,000), north-central India.

### Population of Delhi – As per Census 2001

1	Total Population	
	Persons	1,38,50,507
	Male	76,07,234
	Female	62,43,273
2	SC Population	
	Persons	23,43,255
	Male	12,65,182
	Female	10,78,073
3	0-6 age population	
	Persons	20,16.849
	Male	10,79,618
	Female	9,37,231
Others		
4	Density (Per Sq. K.M.)	9340
5	Area sq. K.M.	1483
6	Sex Ratio (per 1000 Males)	821
7	Literacy Rate (%) Persons	81.67
8	Literacy Rate (%) Males	87.37
9	Literacy Rate (%) Female	74.71
10	Birth Rate (per 1000) ,2001	21.24
11	Death Rate (per 1000),2001	5.81
12	Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000),2001	23.93
13	Per Capita Income at Current Prices for the Year 2000-01(Quick Estimates)	RS.38864



**Tejendra Khanna Lt. Governor**



Sheila Dikshit Chief Minister

## Cabinet Ministers

NAME	PORTFOLIO	ADDRESS		PHONE	
		OFFICE	RESIDENCE	OFFICE	RESIDENCE
<b>Shri Arvinder Singh Lovely</b>	Education Department, Transport Department, Gurudwara Election and Gurudwara Administration	Room No. 602,6th Level A-Wing, Delhi Secretari at New Delhi-110002	89,East Azad Nagar Delhi-51	23392106 23392107	22092594
<b>Dr. Ashok Kumar Walia</b>	Finance Department, Planning Department, Urban Development Department, Land and Building Department.	Room No. 608,6th Level A-Wing, Delhi Secretari at New Delhi-110002	36, Bharati Artist Colony, New Delhi	23392103 23392104	22458989
<b>Shri Haroon Yusuf</b>	Food & Civil Supplies Department ,Industries Department.	Room No. 808,8th Level A-Wing, Delhi Secretari at New Delhi - 110002	206 Rouse Avenue New Delhi	23392126 23392127	23210786 23220203

<b>Smt. Kiran Walia</b>	Health & Family Welfare Department, Women & Child Department ,Languages	Room No. 802, 8th Level A-Wing, Delhi Secretari at New Delhi-110002		23392055 23392123	
<b>Shri Mangat Ram Singhal</b>	Social Welfare Department, Labour Department , Employment Department , Law Justice & Legislative Affairs, Elections.	Room No.708,7th Level A-Wing, Delhi Secretari at New Delhi - 110002	10,Shahipur Shalimar Bagh Delhi-52	23392116	27492415
<b>Shri Raj Kumar Chauhan</b>	Development Department, Revenue Department , Irrigation & Flood Control Department, Public Works Department, SC/ST Welfare Department	Room No.702, 7th Level A-Wing, Delhi Secretari at New Delhi - 110002	60, Behera Enclave Pashim Vihar, Delhi	23392116 23392117	25253892

Bordered by the states of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, it has an area of 573 sq mi (1,483 sq km) and comprises the cities of Delhi (popularly known as Old Delhi) and New Delhi (India's capital) and adjacent rural areas. Delhi was the capital of a Muslim dynasty from 1206 until it was invaded and sacked by Timur in 1398. It again was made the capital by the Mughal Bābur in 1526. Although the Mughal capital was relocated to Agra, Delhi was beautified by Shah Jahān beginning in 1638. Pillaged by Nādir Shah in 1739, it surrendered to the Marathas in 1771 before being taken by the British in 1803. Delhi was a centre of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. It replaced Calcutta (now Kolkata) as the capital of British India in 1911, at which time construction began on New Delhi, the section of the city that would become the seat of the central government. New Delhi was completed in 1931, and it became the capital of independent India in 1947. The area's economic and population centre, however, has remained mainly in Old Delhi. The services sector—including government—is the chief employer. The territory is also the transportation hub for north-central India.

It is the capital city and national capital territory, north-central India. The city actually consists of two “cities”: Old Delhi, in the north, and New Delhi, in the south. One of India’s largest urban agglomerations, Delhi sits astride (but primarily on the west bank of) the Yamuna River, a tributary of the Ganges (Ganga) River, about 100 miles (160 km) south of the Himalayas. The national capital territory embraces the city of Delhi and its metropolitan region, as well as the surrounding rural areas. To the east, the territory is bounded by the state of Uttar Pradesh, and to the north, west, and south, it is bounded by the state of Haryana.

Delhi is of great historical significance as an important commercial, transport, and cultural hub, as well as the political centre of India. According to legend, the city was named for Raja Dhilu, a king who reigned in the region in the 1st century bce. The names by which the city has been known—including Delhi, Dehli, Dilli, and Dhilli, among others—likely are corruptions of his name. The city became the capital of British India in 1911, and it remained the capital after the country achieved independence in 1947. Area national capital territory, 573 square miles (1,483 square km); Old Delhi, 360 square miles (932 square km); New Delhi, 169 square miles (438 square km). Pop. (2001) Old Delhi city, 9,879,172; New Delhi city, 302,363; urban agglom., 12,877,470; (2008 est.) national capital territory, 17,076,000.

### City site

Delhi has been the centre of a succession of mighty empires and powerful kingdoms. Numerous ruins scattered throughout the territory offer a constant reminder of the area’s history. Popular lore holds that the city changed its locality a total of seven times between 3000 bce and the 17th century ce, although some authorities, who take smaller towns and strongholds into account, claim it changed its site as many as 15 times. All the earlier locations of Delhi fall within a triangular area of about 70 square miles (180 square km), commonly called the Delhi Triangle. Two sides of the triangle are articulated by the rocky hills of the Aravalli Range—one to the south of the city, the other on its western edge, where it is known as the Delhi Ridge. The third side of the triangle is formed by the shifting channel of the Yamuna River. Between the river and the hills lie broad alluvial plains; the elevation of the territory ranges from about 700 to 1,000 feet (200 to 300 metres).

The ridges and hillsides of the national capital territory abound in thorny trees, such as acacias, as well as seasonal herbaceous species. The sissoo (shisham; *Dalbergia sissoo*) tree, which yields a dark brown and durable timber, is commonly found in the plains. Riverine vegetation, consisting of weeds and grass, occurs on the banks of the Yamuna. New Delhi is known for its flowering shade trees, such as the neem (*Azadirachta indica*; a drought-resistant tree with a pale yellow fruit), jaman (*Syzygium cumini*; a tree with an edible grapelike fruit), mango, pipal (*Ficus religiosa*; a fig tree), and sissoo. It also is known for its flowering plants, which include a large number of multicoloured seasonals: chrysanthemums, phlox, violas, and verbenas.

The animal life of the national capital territory, like its plant life, is quite diverse. Among carnivorous animals are leopards, hyenas, foxes, wolves, and jackals, which inhabit the ravine lands and hilly ridges. Wild boars are sometimes spotted along the banks of the Yamuna. Monkeys are found in the city, especially around some of the temples and historical ruins. Birdlife is profuse; year-round species include pigeons, sparrows, kites, parrots, partridges, bush quail, and, on the ridges, peafowl. The lakes around the city attract seasonal species. Fish are plentiful in the Yamuna, and an occasional crocodile also may be found there.

## Climate

The climate of Delhi is characterized by extreme dryness, with intensely hot summers. It is associated with a general prevalence of continental air, which moves in from the west or northwest, except during the season of the monsoon, when an easterly to southeasterly influx of oceanic air brings rain and increased humidity. The summer season lasts from mid-March to the end of June, with maximum temperatures typically reaching about 100 °F (about 37 °C) and minimum temperatures falling into the high 70s F (about 25 °C); it is characterized by frequent thunderstorms and squalls, especially in April and May. The monsoon season normally begins in July and continues until the end of September. It is during these months that Delhi receives the bulk of its rainfall—roughly 23 inches (600 mm), or nearly three-fourths of the annual average. October and November constitute a transition period from monsoon to winter conditions. The dry winter season extends from late November to mid-March. The coldest month is January, with high temperatures in the low 70s F (about 21 °C) and low temperatures in the mid-40s F (about 7 °C).

## City layout

The city plan of Delhi is a mixture of old and new road patterns. The street network of Old Delhi reflects the defense needs of an earlier era, with a few transverse streets leading from one major gate to another. Occasionally a street from a subsidiary gate leads directly to the main axes, but most Old Delhi streets tend to be irregular in direction, length, and width. Narrow and winding paths, culs-de-sac, alleys, and byways form an intricate matrix that renders much of Old Delhi accessible only to pedestrian traffic. Conversely, the Civil Lines (residential areas originally built by the British for senior officers) in the north and New Delhi in the south embody an element of relative openness, characterized by green grass, trees, and a sense of order.

When the decision was made in 1911 to transfer the capital of British India from Calcutta (now Kolkata) to Delhi, a planning committee was formed, and a site 3 miles (5 km) south of the existing city of Delhi, around Raisina Hill, was chosen for the new administrative centre. A well-drained, healthy area between the Delhi Ridge and the Yamuna River, it provided ample room for expansion. Raisina Hill, commanding a view of the entire area, stood about 50 feet (15 metres) above the plain, but the top 20 feet (6 metres) were blasted off to make a level plateau for the major government buildings and to fill in depressions. With this low acropolis as the focus, the plan for New Delhi was laid out.

The New Delhi plan was characterized by wide avenues, with trees in double rows on either side, that connected various points of interest and provided vistas of the surrounding area. The most prominent feature of the plan, aside from its diagonal road pattern, was the Rajpath, a broad central avenue that in present-day New Delhi stretches westward from the National Stadium, through the All India War Memorial arch (popularly called the India Gate), to the Central Secretariat buildings and the Presidential House (Rashtrapati Bhavan). This is the main east-west axis; it divides New Delhi into two parts, with a large shopping and business district, Connaught Place, in the north and extensive residential areas in the south.

## Land use

The pattern of land use in Delhi was influenced considerably by the implementation (albeit partial) of the Delhi Development Authority's 20-year (1962–81) master plan. Broadly, public and semipublic land

use was concentrated in the Central Secretariat area of New Delhi and in the Old Secretariat area in the Civil Lines, with subsidiary centres developing in the Indraprastha Estate (an office complex) in the east and in Ramakrishnapuram (an office-cum-residence complex) in the south. A large number of small manufacturing establishments have entrenched themselves in almost every part of Old Delhi, but the main industrial areas have gravitated toward Najafgarh Road in the west and the large planned Okhla Industrial Estate in the south. Land for commercial use is found mainly in the Chandni Chowk and Khari Baoli areas, both in the north; in the Sadar Bazar of Old Delhi; in the Ajmal Khan Road area of Karol Bagh in western Delhi; around Connaught Place in New Delhi; and in the areas of Lajpat Nagar and Srojini Nagar in the south. A number of district and local shopping centres have developed in other localities.

### **Traditional regions**

There is a clear distinction in Delhi between areas where local influences are foremost and areas where colonial and cosmopolitan aesthetics predominate. In Old Delhi, gates or doorways open onto one-, two-, or three-story residences and courtyards or onto katra (one-room tenements facing a courtyard or other enclosure that has access to the street only by a single opening or gate). The prevalence of courtyards has helped to cultivate a strong sense of mohalla (“neighbourhood”) in the area. Also typical of Old Delhi are urban village enclaves, such as Kotla Mubarakpur, where houses and streets retain their rural character. The Civil Lines area is characterized by old one-story bungalows inhabited by those in the upper-income bracket. In New Delhi, the government housing areas are grouped by income. Significant parts of the city are densely packed with substandard, often dilapidated housing, inhabited mostly by construction workers, sweepers, factory labourers, and other low-income groups.

### **People**

In the demographic history of Delhi, a turning point was the year 1947, when thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees from predominantly Muslim Pakistan entered the city in the wake of India’s independence. Since that time the population has grown steadily, with an ongoing heavy flow of immigrants, most arriving from other Indian states or from adjacent countries.

Immigrant (or other foreign) communities often are found in the newer housing developments. Chanakyapuri (more commonly known as the Diplomatic Enclave), for instance, is the site of many foreign embassies. Concentrations of specific ethnic communities have formed in such areas as Chittaranjan Park and Karol Bagh; the former is a predominantly Bengali subdivision and the latter largely a Punjabi one. Such areas have been diversifying since the late 20th century, however.

The religious composition of Delhi’s population is also varied. The great majority of the residents are Hindu. Adherents of Islam constitute the largest minority, followed by smaller numbers of Sikhs, Jains, Christians, and Buddhists.

### **Economy**

The service sector is the most important part of Delhi’s economy, and it is the city’s largest employer. Manufacturing has remained significant, after a surge in the 1980s. Agriculture once contributed significantly to the economy of the national capital territory, but now it is of little importance.

The bulk of Delhi's working population is engaged in trade, finance, public administration, professional services, and various community, personal, and social services. Indeed, for many centuries Old Delhi has been a dominant trading and commercial centre in northern India. Since the 1990s New Delhi has emerged as an important node in the international corporate and financial network.

### **Manufacturing**

Mechanized industry arrived in Delhi early in the 20th century and focused on cotton ginning, spinning, and weaving; flour grinding and packaging; and sugarcane and oil pressing. More recently, electronics and engineering goods, automobile parts, precision instruments, machinery, and electrical appliances have moved to the centre of the city's manufacturing activities, although the production of apparel, sports-related products, and leather goods is also important.

Delhi long has been renowned for its handmade artistic works, such as ivory carvings and paintings, engravings, sculpture of various sorts, miniature paintings, jewelry, gold and silver brocades and embroidery, and metalwork. Such items remain a small but significant segment of Delhi's manufacturing sector.

### **Finance and other services**

Delhi's position as the national capital and as a major industrial city has supported its function as a banking, wholesale-trade, and distribution centre. The city is the headquarters of the Reserve Bank of India and of the regional offices of the State Bank of India and other banking institutions. Many foreign banks offering both retail and corporate services also have branches in the city. Delhi is a divisional headquarters for the insurance business and is the home of the Delhi Stock Exchange. The city has long acted as a major distribution centre for much of northern India, with a large proportion of the trade conducted from within the Old Delhi area, where most of the markets are concentrated. In addition to its financial and trade services, Delhi hosts a thriving tourism industry, which has grown rapidly since the late 20th century.

### **Transportation**

The geographic position of Delhi on the great plain of India, where the Deccan plateau and the Thar Desert approach the Himalayas to produce a narrow corridor, ensures that all land routes from northwestern India to the eastern plain must pass through it, thus making it a pivotal centre in the subcontinent's transportation network. A number of national highways converge on Delhi, and several railway lines also meet there, linking the city with all parts of the country. Delhi is an important air terminus in northern India for both international and domestic services. Indira Gandhi International Airport, located in the southwestern part of the city, handles international flights. One of its terminals, which was once known as the Palam Airport, lies about 2 miles (3 km) from the international facility and is a hub of the domestic airway system.

The traffic-circulation pattern of Delhi was originally designed for a smaller population, and, with Delhi's explosive growth, the system quickly became overburdened. Improvements to the road system—such as adding overpasses and underpasses and widening major thoroughfares—have alleviated the worst traffic congestion, but the sheer volume of traffic—which includes slow-moving vehicles such as bullock carts, pedicabs, and bicycles—makes road travel in Delhi difficult. Although they are improving, mass-

transportation facilities remain inadequate, with the principal means of public transport consisting of an ever-increasing fleet of buses. Long-distance commuting within the city is facilitated by chartered buses during rush hours, as well as by a rapid transit system, the first phase of which was completed in November 2006. Several bridges built in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have helped to ease the flow of traffic over the Yamuna River.

## **Government**

Delhi was a British province headed by a chief commissioner until 1947, when India attained its independence. It became a centrally administered state in 1952, but in 1956 its status was changed to that of a union territory under the central government. A unified corporation for both urban and rural areas was established in 1958, and Delhi was designated the national capital territory in 1991. A lieutenant governor, appointed by the president of India, is the chief administrator of the national capital territory; he is assisted by a chief minister, who also is appointed.

Nested in different layers of administrative and planning regions, Delhi consists of both the urban agglomeration and more than 200 villages distributed mostly across the Delhi and Mehrauli tehsils (subdistricts) of the territory. At the macro level, Delhi is part of the National Capital Region (NCR), a planning region carved out in 1971 by the Town and Country Planning Organisation to guide future growth around Delhi. The NCR comprises not only Delhi but also the bordering tehsils in the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

At the micro level is the national capital territory itself, which consists of three administrative bodies known locally as statutory towns—the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), and the Cantonment Board—that are in some ways distinguished by function and in other ways by the geographic area over which they have authority. The MCD, which is an elected body, performs municipal and discretionary welfare functions, a foremost focus of which has been the elimination of substandard housing (either through destruction or improvement). The NDMC, which is an appointed body, is essentially responsible for New Delhi and its adjoining areas. The Cantonment Board consists of both elected members and appointed ex officio members; among its principal responsibilities are water and public-utilities management, public health and sanitation, birth and death registration, and elementary education.

## **Municipal services**

Delhi's water and electricity are provided by various public and private companies. The Delhi Jal Board distributes treated drinkable water. Electricity is supplied largely by local coal-burning thermal stations, although several gas-fired plants, built in the national capital territory in the early 21st century, also generate a significant amount of power. A portion of Delhi's energy is tapped from sources outside the national capital territory.

The jurisdiction of the Delhi Fire Service extends over both the urban and rural areas of the national capital territory. The Delhi Police force is headed by a commissioner who oversees the operation of several districts, each of which is administered by a superintendent of police. Scattered across these districts are well over 100 police stations, which are responsible for regular patrol in their respective areas.



## Health

Overall health standards in Delhi exceed the national average, but the accessibility of health care facilities varies widely. Much of the city's health care is provided by a large number of allopathic and homeopathic clinics, as well as by dispensaries of various indigenous medical treatments (most of which are based on herbs and minerals). Hospitals in Delhi are numerous; many of the larger facilities are administered by the national government or by the national capital territory.

## Education

The growth of the school system in the national capital territory generally has kept pace with the expansion of the city's population. Primary-level education is nearly universal, and a large proportion of students also attend secondary school. The national boards for secondary education are located in Delhi.

There are many institutions of higher education in the national capital territory, the most prominent of which include the Jamia Millia Islamia (1920); the University of Delhi (1922), which has many affiliated colleges and research institutions; and Jawaharlal Nehru University (1969). Among the major colleges for professional and other studies are the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (1956), the National School of Drama (1959), the Indian Institute of Technology (1959), and the Indian Institute of Mass Communications (1965). One of the largest distance-learning universities in India, Indira Gandhi National Open University (1985), is also located in Delhi. In addition to these major institutions, an array of vocational schools offer a wide variety of courses.

## Cultural life

Delhi's cultural life exhibits a unique blend of the traditional and cosmopolitan styles. The city is dotted with numerous museums, historic forts and monuments, libraries, auditoriums, botanical gardens, and places of worship. Complementing such traditional institutions are the ever-changing urban commercial and leisure centres, with their privately held contemporary art galleries, cinema multiplexes, bowling alleys and other sports venues, and restaurants serving a variety of Indian and international cuisines.

Also reflecting Delhi's cultural and stylistic diversity are its numerous fairs and festivals. These include an annual film festival as well as many sorts of trade and book fairs. The various religious groups in Delhi contribute to an ongoing succession of religious festivals and celebrations.

## Architecture

A varied history has left behind a rich architectural heritage in Delhi. The oldest buildings in the city belong to the early Muslim period; they are not homogenous in construction or in ornamentation, however. The influence of Hindu Rajput craftsmen is visible in the naturalistic motifs, the serpentine tendrils, and even the curves of the alphabets of Qur'ānic inscriptions. Some artists, poets, and architects from Central Asia brought with them the Seljuq (Turkish) tradition of architecture, characterized by a lotus-bud fringe on the underside of arches, ornamental reliefs, and bricks laid endwise and lengthwise in alternating courses in the masonry face.

By the time of the Khaljīs (1290–1320), a specific method and idiom, called the Pashtun style, had been established in Islamic architecture. Among the typical features of this style are red sandstone surfaces with white marble inlays, arches in the shape of a pointed horseshoe, windows fitted with perforated screens, and intricate and abundant decoration with arabesques and inspirational texts. Examples of early Pashtun architecture in Delhi include the Quwat-ul-Islam mosque; the Qutb Minar, which, with its surrounding monuments, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site; the tomb of Iltutmish; and the Ala'i Gate. Later Pashtun styles are represented by the tombs of the Sayyid (1414–51) and Lodī kings (1451–1526); these tombs exhibit either a low octagonal shape or a higher square edifice, the facade of which is broken by a horizontal decorative band and a series of panels that suggest a much larger structure.

The first important piece of Mughal architecture in Delhi was Humāyūn's tomb, which was the precursor of the Taj Mahal (in Agra). It introduced high arches and double domes to Indian architecture. Some of the finest representatives of later Mughal architecture are found within the Red Fort (Lal Qila). The fort's massive red sandstone walls, which stand 75 feet (23 metres) high, enclose a complex of palaces and entertainment halls, projecting balconies, baths and indoor canals, and geometrical gardens, as well as an ornate mosque. Among the most famous structures of the complex are the Hall of Public Audience (Diwan-i-Am), which has 60 red sandstone pillars supporting a flat roof, and the smaller Hall of Private Audience (Diwan-i-Khas), with a pavilion of white marble. The Jama Masjid is a fine example of a true Mughal mosque, in part because it has minarets, where its precursors did not. Both Humāyūn's tomb and the Red Fort complex are UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The architectural styles of the British period combined British colonial and Mughal elements. Structures ranged from the grand—as represented by the Presidential House (Rashtrapati Bhavan) and the Parliament and Secretariat buildings—to the utilitarian, as seen in the bungalows and institutional buildings. Since independence India has aimed to develop its own architectural language in a synthesis between Western and local styles. In Delhi examples of such architecture can be seen in the Supreme Court building, the Vigyan Bhavan (a conference centre), the Crafts Museum, offices of the various ministries, and the institutional buildings near Connaught Place. Since the late 20th century, a number of Indian and foreign architects have added buildings to the city's landscape that may be considered postmodern (mixing many elements of diverse origin) in style. Notable among these are the National Institute of Immunology, the headquarters of the Life Insurance Corporation of India, the building of the Embassy of Belgium, and the Indian Bahā'ī Temple.

### **Cultural institutions**

Delhi is home to a number of important museums and busy cultural centres. The National Museum of India, the National Gallery of Modern Arts, and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts are all dedicated to the preservation, documentation, and dissemination of the country's artistic heritage. The Crafts Museum showcases Indian carving, metalwork, painting, and other crafts; the institution regularly hosts events at which local craftspeople demonstrate their art and sell their wares. The Siri Fort Auditorium is an important centre for major cultural events. The Pragati Maidan, a world-class trade and cultural centre, is another prominent landmark where events and exhibitions of international scale are held throughout the year. Dilli Haat is a popular bazaar that offers a diverse range of handicrafts and cuisines from the various states.

Aside from its museums, auditoriums, and other cultural centres, Delhi is a city of gardens and fountains, among the most notable of which are the Roshan Ara Gardens and the meticulously planned

Mughal Gardens. Many park and garden areas have grown up around historical monuments, such as the Lodī Gardens (around the Lodī Tombs) and the Firoz Shah Kotla Grounds (around Ashoka's Pillar). Along the Yamuna riverfront, memorials set in flowering gardens have been built for various 20th-century national leaders. Among these are Raj Ghat (honouring Mahatma Gandhi), Shanti Vana (honouring Jawaharlal Nehru), and Vijay Ghat (honouring Lal Bahadur Shastri).

### **Sports and recreation**

The national capital territory has well-developed sporting facilities, including a number of stadiums that were built when Delhi hosted the Asian Games in 1982. Several sports complexes are located within the city, while world-class golf courses are situated on its periphery. Among the major outdoor natural recreation areas are the Delhi Ridge and the Yamuna riverfront.

### **Media and publishing**

Delhi is an important centre for publishing, the press, and other mass communications. Doordarshan, the country's national television network, and All India Radio are both headquartered there. Major daily newspapers issued from Delhi include The Times of India and the Hindustan Times.

### **History**

The earliest reference to a settlement in the Delhi area is found in the Mahabharata, an epic narrative about two groups of warring cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, both descendants of the prince Bharata. According to the narrative, a city called Indraprastha ("City of the God Indra"), built about 1400 bce, was the capital of the Pandavas. Although nothing remains of Indraprastha, legend holds it to have been a thriving city. The first reference to the place-name Delhi seems to have been made in the 1st century bce, when Raja Dhilu built a city near the site of the future Qutb Minar tower (in present-day southwestern Delhi) and named it for himself.

The next notable city to emerge in the area now known as the Delhi Triangle was Anangpur (Anandpur), established as a royal resort in about 1020 ce by Anangapala of the Tomara dynasty. Anangapala later moved Anangpur some 6 miles (10 km) westward to a walled citadel called Lal Kot. The Tomara kings occupied Lal Kot for about a century. In 1164 Prithviraj III (Rai Pithora) extended the citadel by building massive ramparts around it; the city then became known as Qila Rai Pithora. In the late 12th century Prithviraj III was defeated, and the city passed into Muslim hands. Quṭb al-Dīn Aiybak, builder of the famous tower Qutb Minar (completed in the early 13th century), made Lal Kot the seat of his empire.

The Khaljī dynasty came to power in the Delhi area in the last decade of the 13th century. During the reign of the Khaljīs, the suburbs were ravaged by Mongol plunderers. As a defense against subsequent attacks by the Mongols, 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī (reigned 1296–1316) built a new circular fortified city at Siri, a short distance northeast of the Qutb Minar, that was designated as the Khaljī capital. Siri was the first completely new city to be built by the Muslim conquerors in India.

The region passed into the hands of the Tughluq dynasty in 1321. A new capital was built by Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq (1320–25) at Tughlakabad, but it had to be abandoned in favour of the old site near the Qutb Minar because of a scarcity of water. Ghiyāth's successor, Muḥammad ibn Tughluq, extended the city farther northeast and built new fortifications around it. He then suddenly moved the capital to

Deogiri (which he renamed Daulatabad), in the Deccan plateau to the south, in order to supervise territories that he had recently annexed there. Muḥammad ibn Tughluq's successor, Firūz Shah Tughluq, abandoned the Daulatabad site and in 1354 moved his capital farther north, near the ancient site of Indraprastha. The capital he founded, Firuzabad, was situated in what is now the Firoz Shah Kotla area of contemporary Delhi.

After the invasion and sack of the Delhi area by Timur (Tamerlane) at the end of the 14th century, the Sayyid (c. 1414–51) and the Lodī (1451–1526) dynasties, which followed the Tughluqs, confined themselves within the precincts of Firuzabad. Bābur, the first Mughal ruler, arrived in 1526 and made his base at Agra to the southeast (in what is now the state of Uttar Pradesh). His son Humāyūn ascended the throne in 1530 and in 1533 founded a new city, Din Panah, on the bank of the Yamuna River. Shēr Shah, who overthrew Humāyūn in 1540, razed Din Panah to the ground and built his new capital, the Sher Shahi, now known as Purana Qila fort, in southeastern Delhi.

The next two Mughal emperors, Akbar (reigned 1556–1605) and Jahāngīr (reigned 1605–27), preferred to rule India from Agra. In 1639, however, Shah Jahān, Akbar's grandson, instructed his engineers, architects, and astrologers to choose a location with a mild climate somewhere between Agra and Lahore (now in Pakistan). The choice was on the western bank of the Yamuna, just north of Purana Qila. Shah Jahān started the construction of the new capital, focusing on his fort, Urdu-i-Mualla, today called Lal Qila, or the Red Fort. The structure was completed in eight years, and on April 19, 1648, Shah Jahān entered his fort and his new capital, Shahjahanabad, from its riverfront gate. Shahjahanabad today is Old Delhi. The greater part of Old Delhi is still confined within the space of Shah Jahān's walls, and several gates built during his rule—the Kashmiri Gate, the Delhi Gate, the Turkman Gate, and the Ajmeri Gate—still stand.

With the fall of the Mughal Empire during the mid-18th century, Delhi faced raids by the Marathas (a people of peninsular India), invasion by Nāder Shah of Persia, and a brief spell of Maratha rule before the British arrived in 1803. Under British rule the city flourished—except during the Indian Mutiny in 1857, when the mutineers seized the city for several months, after which British power was restored and Mughal rule ended. In 1911 the British determined to shift the capital of India from Calcutta (Kolkata) to Delhi, and a three-member committee was formed to plan the construction of the new administrative centre. The key architect on the committee was Sir Edwin Lutyens; it was he who gave shape to the city. The British moved to the partially built New Delhi in 1912, and construction was completed in 1931.