



## Empire Architecture

Buildings of British India – Kolkata, Mumbai & Delhi

**3–14 February 2026 (MM 880)**

12 days • £8,210

Lecturer: Anthony Peers

India's leading cities, Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi, former centres of British governance.

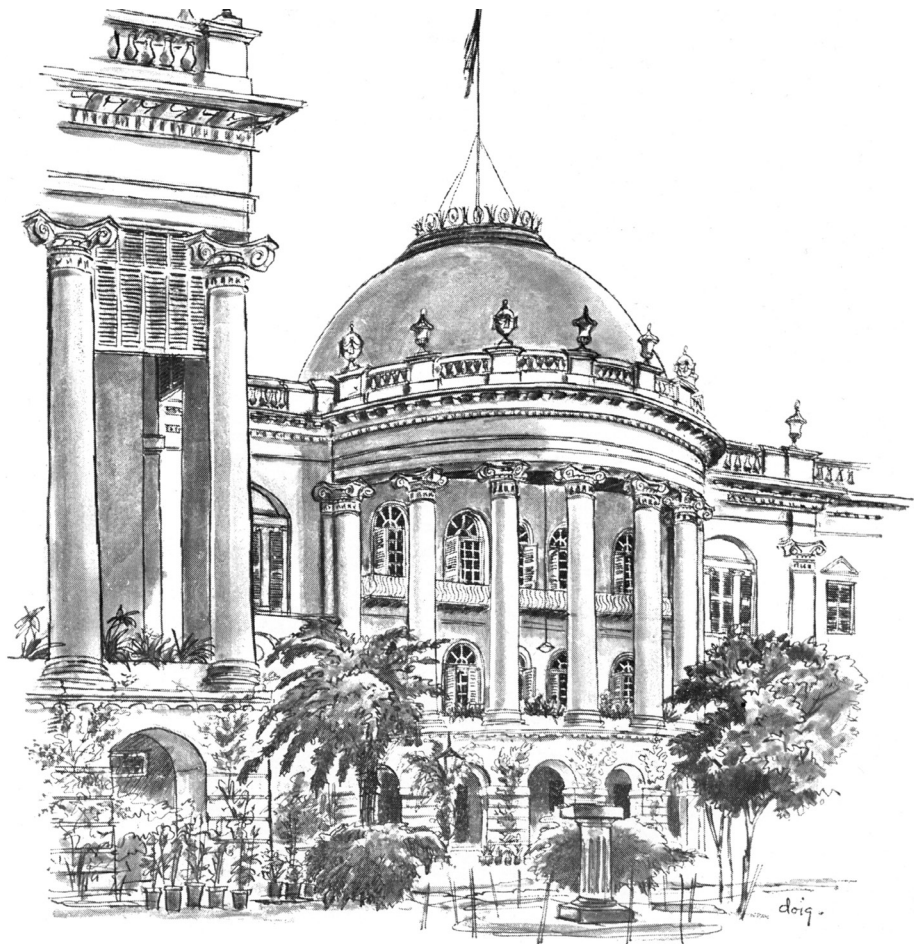
A wealth of imperial architecture from the 18th to the mid-20th centuries, as well as the magnificent Islamic monuments of Delhi.

Private visits and special access are a feature of the tour.

For the first two-and-a-half centuries of British presence in India, until the Indian Rebellion of 1857, Britain's interests in India were run not by the crown but indirectly by the East India Company. Founded in 1600, the Company was one of several such commercial European enterprises initiated to take advantage of the recently discovered sea routes. Kolkata (Calcutta), Chennai (Madras) and Mumbai (Bombay) were originally established as trading posts, but if the imperial venture had its roots in trade, its fulfilment manifested itself in bureaucracy.

At the height of the British Raj, about a thousand Anglo-Indians in the Indian Civil Service administered a population of 300 million. This tour explores British designed buildings in India, dating from the mid-17th to the mid-20th centuries. From the architecture of conquerors, wishing to 'civilise' or impose their sense of order, to the buildings of those anxious for a degree of integration, it considers evolving architectural styles and how they reflect the aspirations, activities and impact of the British in India.

Buildings which at first sight appear to have been transported bodily from Manchester, Glasgow, Bristol or London, on closer inspection reveal quirks which reflect adaptations made in response to the climate and architectural styles of the locality. Some are designed by major British architects – George Gilbert Scott, Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker among them – but most are by less familiar names. Some sent out drawings from Britain but others, like F.W. Stevens, William Emerson and Arthur Shoosmith, settled in India for years or decades, while, towards the end, local Indian architectural talent came to the fore. Then there is Indo-Saracenic architecture, a Victorian Orientalist hybrid.



Kolkata, Government House (Raj Bhavan), after a drawing by Desmond Doig c. 1960.

Nearly 80 years after Independence, the physical evidence of the British presence survives. Kolkata with its wealth of classical buildings remains 'the city of palaces', Mumbai is acknowledged to have the finest collection of Gothic Revival buildings in the world. Finally, Lutyens and Baker's hugely ambitious New Delhi is the ultimate culmination of British architectural endeavour. From the outset the British had looked with envy and a growing sense of inadequacy at the architecture of the Mughals. With seeming effortlessness, these Muslims from the west had given life to a fitting, new and hugely alluring style for the buildings of their empire. Only a couple of decades before Britain's imperial ties were severed, Lutyens succeeded where the Mughals had themselves succeeded, in creating a singular, distinctive and fitting empire style.

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Kolkata (Calcutta).** Rooms are available at the hotel from 2.00pm on 2nd February, allowing for an early check-in today. The tour begins with a lecture and lunch in the hotel restaurant at c. 12.00 noon. Established as an East India Company trading post in 1690, Kolkata was to flourish after Clive's 1757 victory at Plassey. From the 1770s till 1911 it served as the capital of British India. An afternoon walk taking in the buildings in the vicinity of Dalhousie Square: St John's Church, with the tomb of Job Charnock the city's founder, the Town Hall, Writers' Building, General Post Office and High Court. First of three nights in Kolkata.

**Day 2: Kolkata.** St Paul's Cathedral was one of India's first buildings constructed in the Gothic

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Revival style. It contains many handsome memorials and a superb Burne-Jones window. The marble clad Edwardian Baroque Victoria Memorial was built to the designs of William Emerson, under the watchful eye of Lord Curzon. Designed by Charles Wyatt and completed in 1804, Government House (now known as the Raj Bhavan), is the grandest of Kolkata's palaces. The Indian Museum was established in 1814 by the Asiatic Society; its present home opened in 1878 and was the work of Walter Granville, architect of the Post Office and the High Court. It contains India's most important collection of sculpture.

**Day 3: Kolkata.** Board the MV *Paramhansa* and sail along the fertile banks of the mighty Hooghly River, where Hindus, Muslims, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish and French all founded settlements. We visit the city of Barrackpore, site of the first cantonment of the East India Company, and the former Danish colony of Serampore. Known for its 18th-century church, Serampore came under British rule in 1845. Lunch is spent on board before returning to Kolkata in the evening.

**Day 4: Kolkata, Mumbai.** South Park Street Cemetery is a beautiful as well as poignant burial ground in which so many of Kolkata's early British residents lie in or under uncommonly handsome classical monuments. Fly to Mumbai in the afternoon (IndiGo). First of four nights in Mumbai.

**Day 5: Mumbai.** Our hotel, a celebrated Edwardian pile, one of the most famous in India, faces the Gateway of India, an Orientalised triumphal arch marking the spot where George V and Queen Mary landed in 1911. St Thomas's Cathedral, is typical of so many Anglican churches in India: a Classical building adapted to the climate and filled with poignant monuments to British merchants, soldiers and administrators who never returned home. The Gothic Revival Afghan Memorial Church is also a melancholy reminder of the first of Britain's several disastrous interventions in Afghanistan and Sind. The Prince of Wales Museum, an Edwardian building in the Indo-Saracenic style, houses a collection of both European and Indian paintings.

**Day 6: Mumbai.** Visit Mani Bhavan, the house which was used as Gandhi's political headquarters in Mumbai from 1917 until 1934 and from which he launched his campaign of civil disobedience against British rule. In the afternoon we visit the Dr Bhau Daji Lad

Museum, founded in 1855 as the Victorian and Albert Museum.

**Day 7: Mumbai.** Walk around the Victorian heart of Mumbai, seeing the major civic Gothic Revival buildings including the Secretariat, the High Court and the University. The University Library and Convocation Hall, erected from designs sent out by Sir Gilbert Scott, are two of the city's more remarkable buildings. Others include Watson's Hotel, a mid-Victorian structure of prefabricated cast-iron, and the 'Tropical Gothic' Victoria Terminus railway station which has a high-quality new museum.

**Day 8: Mumbai, New Delhi.** In the morning we experience a rather older India with a visit by boat to the famous caves on Elephanta Island, with their rock-cut architectural forms and sculptures dating from the 5th to the 8th centuries. Late-afternoon flight to New Delhi (IndiGo). First of four nights in New Delhi.

**Day 9: Old Delhi.** A day devoted to the magnificent Islamic architecture of Delhi. Delhi is a very ancient city but its principal architectural glories date from the 17th century when it was the capital of the Mughal emperors. Shah Jahan began the Red Fort and its palace in 1639 (the British nearly demolished them after 1857) with its open *diwans* (audience chambers) and the Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque) of white marble. The huge Jami Masjid (Friday Mosque) with its two noble minarets is one of India's very finest Islamic buildings.

**Day 10: Delhi.** Some of the fiercest fighting during the Indian Rebellion of 1857 took place in the area north of Old Delhi; we see the Flagstaff Tower and the Mutiny Memorial. It was here that the move of the capital from Kolkata to Delhi was announced at the 1911 Coronation Durbar; we then see the temporary Viceregal Lodge, built for occupation by the viceroys until the new palace Lutyens designed for them was ready. Located inside the Kashmir Gate of Old Delhi, scene of desperate fighting in 1857, is the distinctive St James's or Skinner's Church, built in the 1830s to the designs of a cavalry officer, Colonel James Skinner.

**Day 11: New Delhi.** The day is dedicated to New Delhi. Launched as a project in 1911 and inaugurated 20 years later. The magnificent group of government buildings at the heart of the low-density plan include the Secretariat and Parliament, both built to the designs of Sir Herbert Baker. The splendour of these is eclipsed by the Viceroy's House (now

residence of the President, the Rashtrapati Bhavan) in which Sir Edwin Lutyens integrated Mughal, Hindu and Buddhist elements into his monumental Classical concept. Also by Lutyens, Hyderabad House is one of the palaces built for native princes. Another such palace, Jaipur House, close to the All India Arch, is now the National Gallery of Modern Art. Among the buildings designed by Lutyens' disciples are the Anglican cathedral by Henry Medd and the Garrison Church by Arthur Shoosmith, a 20th-century monument of rare distinction.

**Day 12: New Delhi.** The tour ends this morning. Transfers are arranged to Delhi airport for your onward journey.

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## Lecturer

**Anthony Peers.** Educated as an architectural historian and trained in building conservation, Anthony works as a consultant providing guidance to those planning the repair, alteration and extension of historic buildings. He has worked with English Heritage's Listing Division and with the British Council and the DTI in Mumbai, where he set up and ran a UNESCO award-winning scheme to repair George Gilbert Scott's University buildings. This project also trained local architects and craftsmen in traditional repair techniques and conservation philosophy. His history reports and conservation guidance has served to inform works at sites such as The Workhouse, Southwell; Aston Hall, Birmingham; The Royal Institution, London; Winchester Cathedral and Birmingham Town Hall.

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## Practicalities

**Price – per person. Two sharing:** £8,210.  
**Single occupancy:** £10,180.

**Included:** arrival and departure airport car transfers; domestic flights with IndiGo Kolkata to Mumbai (Airbus 321) and Mumbai to New Delhi (Airbus 321); travel by private air-conditioned coach; accommodation in the hotels as described below; breakfasts, 9 lunches and 7 dinners with wine or beer, water, tea and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guides.

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**Not included:** flights from London to Kolkata, and Delhi to London are not included in the price of the tour. We will send the recommended flight options when they come into range (by March 2025) and ask that you make your own flight reservation.

**Visas:** required for most foreign nationals, and not included in the tour price. We will advise all participants of the process.

**Accommodation. Taj Bengal, Kolkata** (tajhotels.com): a modern 5-star hotel located just south of central Kolkata. **Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai** (tajhotels.com): a centrally located iconic landmark. **The Imperial Hotel, New Delhi** (theimperialindia.com): 5-star hotel designed by F.B. Blomfield, a member of Lutyens' team.

**How strenuous?** This tour involves a lot of walking and standing so a good level of fitness is essential. Unless you enjoy entirely unimpaired mobility, cope with everyday walking and stair-climbing without difficulty and are reliably sure-footed, this tour is not for you. Uneven ground and irregular paving are standard. Unruly traffic and the busy streets of Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi also require vigilance. Average distance by coach per day: 17 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.

**Combine this tour with:** *Kingdoms of Southern India*, 17–30 January 2026.