

Heritage Walk Area Interpretation and Experiences



Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Delhi as one of the ancient cities, with its multiple layers of built heritage and living tradition offers a unique heritage walks experience to tourists. In order to experience and visualize these multiple layers of heritage and culture, tourists and locals are taking up heritage walks of some areas which offer a kaleidoscope of deep interest and significance such as Old Delhi, Mehrauli, Hauz Khas, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Lodhi Garden and Imperial Delhi. The present study has employed extensive field survey and literature review to obtain an understanding of why people undertake heritage walks, tourist expectations and their experiences on heritage walks.

Introduction:

It is a well understood fact that conducting heritage walk is an art. Most of the tourists who are visiting any historical /cultural site/ city are very much interested in understanding cultural and historical resources through heritage walk. But heritage walk requires unique attributes such as stamina, curiosity, an eye for nature, inclination to listen and understand, endurance etc. Even mundane matters as that of comfortable clothes, shoes for the walks make a great difference. Today, it has been noticed that development of jet technology and vehicular upgradation have fundamentally changed human lives and behavior; and walking for pleasure or necessity has become casualty. All across the globe, tourism policy and tourism industry through walking, especially to create awareness and understanding about the heritage and culture has been in vogue. In India efforts to build up the tourism industry through systematic budget allocation and tourism projects are being made by the Governments at the Centre and State Level too. Gradually the concept of heritage walk has evolved as a tourism business. In recent times tourism business has received the new tourist who comes in the market with some extent of acquired knowledge, modern gadgets, modern technology and resources. Most of the tourists collect lots of information through net, website or guide books prior to participating in heritage walk. With this collected knowledge, tourists have become more demanding and are determined to elicit the best from tourism industry providers. This feature is applicable to both international as well as domestic tourism.

Objectives

This research aimed at the following:

- To identify the major heritage walk area resources at Delhi and their value.
- To understand the present condition of the concept of heritage walk
- To understand heritage walk experiences of tourists.
- To suggest some new circuits for heritage walk in Delhi.

Research Methodology

Data pertaining to heritage and historical resources of Delhi has been collected from various available reports, books, websites and magazines. The Field survey approach was used to gather data on heritage sites such as Old Delhi, New Delhi, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Delhi Ridge, Delhi University, Hindu Rao Hospital, Lodhi Garden, Humayun's Tomb, Hauz Khas, Tughlaqabad, Roshanara Garden, Bijay Mandal, Mehrauli and its surrounding etc. A questionnaire related to heritage walk for tourists was prepared to elicit tourist expectations, reasons for taking such walks and tourist experiences while on heritage walks. Interview of tourists were also conducted to obtain additional data.

Delhi's Heritage Walk Area

Delhi as one of the ancient cities, full of multiple layers of built heritage and living tradition offers a unique heritage walk experience to tourists. In order to experience and visualize Delhi's multiple layers of heritage and culture, tourists and locals are taking up heritage walk of certain areas in Delhi such as Old

Delhi, Delhi ridge, Hauz Khas, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Mehrauli, Lodhi Garden and New Delhi (Imperial Delhi). These locations are well marketed and appreciated in heritage walk circles. But it is interesting to note that certain valuable resources for conducting heritage walks not yet developed and marketed are areas such as Old Fort, Kotla Feroz Shah, Roshanara Bagh to Pir Ghaib and Jahanpanah (Bijay Mandal to Begumpuri Masjid). Old Delhi area is also known as "Shahjahanabad" as it was conceived, planned and developed by the great Mughal King "Shahjahan". This city was planned as per norms of ancient Indian City Planning, where one particular trade/craft or community is settled or concentrated in a particular locality or direction. The nomenclature of that locality is done on the basis of settled community or craft. Due to this reason, even today a tourist finds himself walking down narrow lanes which deal with a particular variety of garments or cloth, kites, traditional items like paan and supari, items for special occasions and marriages, food articles and spices, books and magazines, publishers, blacksmith, silver-smith and goldsmith workshops, metals, sanitary, wood craft, carpentry workshops and so on.

At Shahjahanabad just opposite Red Fort is situated Chandni Chowk where one can see shops which are even 200 years old. Chandni Chowk is famous for clothes/ garments, foods, silver-ware, sweets and traditional as well as new items. Other famous and interesting areas are Dariba Kalan, Fatehpuri Masjid, Balemaran, Kinari Bazaar, Jama Masjid, Ajmeri Gate, Bird hospital, Khari Baoli, Matia Mahal, Gali Kababiyani, Katra Neel, Ghantewala, Turkman Gate, Lal Kuan bazaar etc. The most important street of this area is Dariba Kalan. It is famous for traditional jewellery. This is one of the oldest markets in the city. In times gone by, there was a lake around Red Fort. Dariba Kalan sprang up on the lake site, only to entertain Mughal ladies, who were all in purdah. Due to this reason the name of adjoining areas are Darya Ganj (Darya means lake in Urdu language) and Ballemaran (street of boat rowers). Kinari bazaar is famous for selling articles used in Indian weddings and Paranthewali Gali is famous for Indian fried bread (parantha) served with pickles and north Indian vegetarian dishes. Nai Sarak is situated just opposite the Town Hall. This street is famous for bookshops and clothes (sari and chunni). At the end of Nai Sarak, Chawri Bazar and Khari Baoli are situated where one finds wholesale markets of paper and hardware tools. On the eastern side of this street is Jama Masjid and the west end culminates at Ajmeri Gate. Jama Masjid area is famous for wholesale shops of firework merchants, Mughlai cuisine (biryani), ittar (traditional Indian perfume), jewelry, bakeries, clothes and much more. Bird market and bird hospital are also situated here. Khari Baoli is situated at the end of Nai Sarak and famous for the spice market which is Asia's largest. Matia Mahal and Gali Kababiyani have some very famous non-vegetarian restaurants. Here one can also taste kulfi, firni etc.

At Chawri Bazaar, Nai Sarak, Katra Neel etc tourists can enjoy vegetarian Marwari and Punjabi food. The area is also famous for traditional Indian sweets like sohan halwa, kaju burfi, pinni, motichur laddos, pista burfi, bahshi halwa; jalebis etc and tradi-

tional Indian chaats. Lal Kuan bazaar is famous for kites, manja, biscuits and Tazia.

Delhi ridge area is famous for monuments related to India's First War of Independence i.e. revolt of 1857. There are numerous buildings, monuments etc having direct association with different episodes of the rebellion. Saint James Church (South of ISBT) has remarkable features of European architecture. The construction of this church was initiated by Col. James Skinner in 1826. It was a symbol of British domination and was targeted by rebels in 1857. Hindu Rao's House (now Hindu Rao Hospital-northern end of ridge) was the residence of Mr. William Fraser, who was an agent to Governor General at Delhi. This house was the head quarter of the British forces. Similarly, Metcalf House (now under Indian Army – DRDO) was built by Thomas Metcalf in 1835 but during mutiny it was badly damaged by native villagers. The ridge area also contains many Guard Houses/ Garden Pavilions etc associated with the mutiny. Flag Staff Tower is situated just opposite to Delhi University Gate and it was the safest asylum for the Europeans, who escaped from Old Delhi on 11th May 1857. Another representative building of that period, which exists presently, is Delhi University office. It served as the Viceroy's House before the present Reshtrapati Bhavan (President House) was made. The Mutiny Memorial (on Rani Jhansi Raod) also had the Taylor's Battery which was demolished by mutineers. Other places associated with the mutiny are the Kushak-i-Sikar (Pigarib), Chauburza, Baoli, Asokan Pillar and the most important monument/ place Red Fort which was the centre of the mutiny. At Red Fort and its surrounding areas, associated monuments are Lahore Gate, Shah Burj, Barbicans, Hayat Bakhsh Garden, Moti Masjid, Burj-i-tila (Musamman Burj), Khirzi Gate (Water Gate), Bazar Fathpuri Mosque, Chhatta Sufi Masjid, Kotwali or Police Station, Commemorative Column, Gate of British Magazine, Army Barracks etc.

Another important area for Heritage walk is Lodhi Garden. This Lodhi dynasty originated from an Afghan tribe. This garden was designed in 1936 as a setting for a group of 500 year old buildings. The garden has eight important monuments which are preserved by Archaeological Survey of India, ASI. This garden also contains hundred species of trees. Another important area for heritage walks is Hauzkhass Park having nearly 12 important monuments and Mehrauli with nearly 55 monuments which are worth visiting. New Delhi Area (Imperial Delhi or Lutyens Delhi) also contains nearly 70 monuments/ buildings which can be covered in different walk circuits. Similarly Old Fort has nearly 10 monuments; Hazrat Nizamuddin and Kotla Firoz Shah have around 10 and 6 monuments of interest to tourists. Around 12 monuments at Humayun's Tomb and 10 monuments at Roshanara Bagh to Pir Ghaib offer enjoyable and interesting locations for heritage walks.

Heritage Walk: Tourist Experiences

As stated earlier research questionnaire related to heritage walks were prepared to elicit the experiences of tourists who under took heritage walks. Questionnaires were filled up by tourists who participated in heritage walks organized by different operators at different areas of Delhi. Interviews were also conducted to obtain first hand information. The questionnaire covered the profile of the tourist, his/ her heritage walk preferences, expectation of tourist during walk, route of walk satisfaction, timing of walk, quality of interpretation, cost effectiveness, value for money, etc. The questionnaire also explores his /her recommendations. The analysis of data obtained on questionnaires and interview generated the following findings:

- Heritage walk tourists are highly educated, and rich in awareness. Most of them are Post Graduates/ Under Graduates. A few are PhD's also.
- In terms of profession most heritage walk tourists are from business field and private sector. Students are also enthusiastic about heritage walk.
- Backpackers are not inclined towards such type of walk. Heritage walk tourists are up-up budget and up-budget. In fact the backpackers prefer to explore on their own rather than taking paid heritage walks.

- Tourists prefer heritage walks for getting better understanding and experience of the heritage area. Besides, it gives the feel of local culture. Although the walk is cheaper in comparison to other forms of tourism, this is not a major consideration. (INTACH is charging Rs. 100/- for regular walk and Delhi Heritage Walk is charging Rs.400/- for such type of walk. The private operators charge much more).
- Better understanding of the given region and experiencing local culture are the major expectations of the tourists during heritage walk. While some tourists look forward to get more time for commentary and interpretation by walk leader or guide, others seek personal attention by the guide. This shows the importance of heritage guide/walk leader.
- The survey shows that tourists' expectations are fulfilled by the heritage walk. This is the main reason for mouth to mouth publicity of heritage walk and this trend has attracted more heritage walk providers in to the business.
- Delhi is full of heritage and culture. In certain areas resources are scattered everywhere. It is reported that the routes followed by heritage walk providers and guides are satisfying the heritage walk tourist.
- Heritage walk is a specialized walk. Every walk provider and guide cannot run successful business. In heritage walk interpretation of heritage, culture, environment, surroundings and religious practices are required. Due to this reason only a few specialized walk providers are in the field and they are able to satisfy the tourist. But if a tourist is very knowledgeable in history, culture and tradition he or she is more demanding in interpretation.
- The survey proved that Delhi's heritage walks experience is satisfying cost wise and the tourist is able to get value for the money spent on such walk.
- The survey proved that the heritage walkers are satisfied and ready to recommend these walks to others.
- The survey shows that there are 50% chances of a repeat walk. This matter is important and the walk providers will have to think in this direction. The same route with same interpretation and features cannot sustain in competitive market. Some new interpretation, value, activity and alternative routes are to be designed and developed.
- Although the tourists reflected enthusiasm and satisfaction, they recommended diversification of walk, more time to experience the walk, and better logistical support like drinkable water, soft drinks etc.

These findings can be useful for further rejuvenating various aspects of heritage walk by filling in the gaps to ensure value addition.

Conclusion:

Few people know and understand the meaning of a heritage walk. For many countries and society "heritage" is a very sensitive word. In the name of heritage and culture lot of politics is done and in most cases politics plays a negative role in interpretation of heritage. Hence, it is the need of the hour to find ways and means for proper and authentic heritage interpretation. In this direction heritage walk as means of heritage interpretation is a tool in the hands of travel and tourism professionals/ industry which should be utilized constructively. Heritage walk creates awareness about cultural values; it gives meaning of identity to a society, sensitizes the conservation and preservation aspect of resources and finally helps in marketing of heritage and cultural value. It is a fact that Delhi as one of the ancient cities, full of built heritage layers and living traditions can offer a unique heritage walks experience to the tourist. In order to experience the same the need is to conduct survey of heritage walk resources and as per market demand develops the same.

It is understood that heritage walk tourists are highly educated, well aware and full of information gathered from modern developed technology. Heritage walk tourists want to get better understanding and new experiences of the heritage area. They want to feel local culture and want to experience social value systems. Better understanding and experience of local cultural /heritage values are the major expectations of the heritage tourist during heritage walk. The fulfillment of this expectation is

the responsibility of heritage walk leader/ guide and is a specialized task. Everybody cannot run a business of this kind. Hence the job requires certain degree of professionalism which enriches communication of proper meaning through interpretation of heritage, culture, environment, surrounding and religions/cultural practices.

The study clearly reveals the need to professionalize heritage walk in its entirety. In the absence of this, there will be a dearth of heritage walk providers in the market. On the other hand, building up the appropriate resources will not only enhance the quality of these walks but will also expand the scope so that all circuits are covered comprehensively and methodically.

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