Mystical India
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HISTORIES

India is a large country, with more than a dozen official languages, and a multiplicity of cultures. There are several good surveys on the history of India, more generally, South Asia. A few of them are listed here.

One of the most famous histories of the subcontinent was written by the Cambridge-educated first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru. It is written in the fashion of statesmen writing national histories.

Thapar, Romila and Percival Spear. A History of India. Penguin, 1966-
One of the most enduring textbooks for the study of Indian civilization and history has been the two volume set by Romila Thapar and Percival Spear. This work has been in print continuously since 1966.

This well-received history continues to be updated and used in the classroom.

TRAVEL

There is no dearth of popular travel guide, most of which are particularly suited to Penn’s itinerary for what is known as the tourist triangle, comprised of Jaipur, Delhi, and Agra.

The guide includes cutaways, floor plans, and reconstructions of sights such as Humayun's Tomb, the Rajput Fort-Palace and the Taj Mahal. Also included are street-by-street maps of cities and towns, travel tips and local information religious beliefs and practices, wildlife, temples, bazaars, museums. In the DK fashion, this guide includes hundreds of full-color photographs, hand-drawn illustrations, and custom maps.

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Ward, Philip. Rajasthan, Agra, Delhi: A Travel Guide. Oleander Press, 2013. First published in 1989, this title is intended both for first-time visitors and experienced travelers to India. It provides a thoughtful companion to India’s preeminent attractions, exploring the intricacies of art, architecture and everyday life in modern north-west India.

Brown, Lindsey. Lonely Planet Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra (Regional Travel Guide). Lonely Planet, 2011. This guide is the result of 15 weeks of research and includes 48 maps including a pull-out city map and 3D plans of renowned sites.

For cities and regions, the following readings provide interesting introductions to urban clusters and cultures.

**Delhi**

William Dalrymple’s memoirs provide a quick introduction to all of Delhi’s cities, past and present:  

Rajasthan can be experienced virtually through multiple coffee-table books such as:  
**George Michell and Antonio Martinelli. Palaces of Rajasthan. India Books House, 2004.**

**Jaipur**

Giles Tillotson’s **Jaipur Nama: Tales from the Pink City. Penguin, 2006** is a wonderful little book with historical vignettes of the pink city of Jaipur.

**Ranthambore**

There are a variety of books by lead conservation activists such as **Valmik Thapar** (whose books include: **Battling for Survival: India's Wilderness over Two Centuries; The Last Tiger: Struggling For Survival; Ranthambhore: 10 Days in the Tiger Fortress; Land of the Tiger: A Natural History of the Indian Subcontinent**; and his most recent, **Tigers in the Emerald Forest: Ranthambhore after the Monsoon**), but the thrillers about tigers in India are by a colonial-era hunter and later conservationist, Jim Corbett, who wrote a series of books, the titles of which start as ‘Man-Eaters of ….’ Newer books by and about **Jim Corbett** include, **The Oxford India Illustrated Corbett (2004)** and **The Second Oxford India Illustrated Corbett** (2006). Earlier works include **Jim Corbett’s India Stories** (1978), **The Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayrag** (1964), **Man-eaters of India** (1957), and **The Temple Tigers and More Man-eaters of Kumaon** (1954).

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Taj Mahal and Agra

The wealth of literature about the Taj Mahal is overwhelming, but an excellent essay by Wayne Begley, explaining an alternative meaning of the Taj can be found in the *Art Bulletin* of March 1979 (vol. 61 no. 1). Otherwise, a good stock guide to the Taj (of which there are plenty) can be supplemented with Amina Okada’s heavily illustrated *Taj Mahal* (Abbeville Press, 1993). Most guides to the Taj Mahal will have notes and a small piece on the Agra fort.

Khajuraho

It is not unusual that the same author produces a scholarly monograph on a site, as well as a popular guide book. Such is the case for Khajuraho.


Varanasi

A good book on Varanasi is Diana Eck’s classic work, *Banaras, City of Light*. Columbia University Press, 1999, in which she looks at the city in the context of history, spiritual and natural world, economics and quality of life, as well as the entirety of India.

All the books noted above are available at libraries and most new and used online book dealers.