

The Magnificent Taj Mahal eludes 'Persons with Disabilities'
- based on personal experience of C. Mahesh, 30th Dec 2006

If you are a wheelchair/ crutch user or experience difficulty in walking be prepared for bureaucratic and architectural barriers that could come between you and the magnificent 'Taj Mahal' at Agra, India.

All vehicles (i.e if you are not from the influential group) are stopped a kilometer and a half away from the main entrance of the Taj Mahal. It is important to carry your own wheelchair and a physically strong escort who could push/ lift will definitely enhance your probability of a successful visit.



Picture 1: Main Entrance to the Taj Mahal after you have purchased the tickets

From the main entrance there are 2 ramps that lead you to main complex.



Picture 2: One of the two ramps at the entrance

After entering the complex through these two ramps one is very happy as you can see the Taj Mahal from a distance and soon after - your happiness ends.

Hold your breath the next ramp you have to navigate is at an inclination of approximately 45 Degree that spans a height of 6-8 feet. It is impossible to even walk on this ramp without a slip.



Picture 3: The 3rd ramp from the entrance – could be better called a ‘slide’



Picture 4: Another view of the 3rd ramp from the entrance – the spoil sport

A similar steep ramp (slide) awaits you at the washrooms (toilets) which I did not dare to explore.

The ramps looks old (guesstimate 2-3 years ago) and definitely these ramps have not been put up recently.

I am sure many of the persons who have difficulty in walking would have stayed back and watched the 'Taj Mahal' from a distance of 300 meters and gone back quite disappointed.



Picture 5: The nearest you can get to the Taj Mahal if you are a wheelchair user – an alternative to explore possibility of being carried down physically

If you do manage to get down the first level of 8 feet mentioned above, after a short walkway along the fountains you will have to climb two more levels (close to 20 feet) by steps to **feel** the white marble and to get an inside view of the Taj Mahal.

People from all over the world have been visiting the Taj Mahal for generations. Lack of resources is not an excuse. It is not that we do not have the 'know-how' or 'expertise' to come up with appropriate designs and standards that blend with the aesthetics of the place.

Personally, these 'so-called' ramps are testimony to the many half-baked attempts made in the name of 'inclusion' of persons with disabilities. And in the New Year (2007) we need to renew the pledge to promote and create opportunities for **All** to live life with 'respect and dignity' and to be treated as Equals.

Let us work together to break these artificial barriers.

And finally whatever might be the shortcomings - never ever miss an opportunity to visit the Taj Mahal.

Yours truly,

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