

# *Coronation Durbar* *Park*

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North of Old Delhi, in a now-desolate field, lies an incredible historical junkyard. Coronation Durbar Park – named for the sumptuous durbars of 1877 and 1903, and for playing host to the coronation of King George V as Emperor of India in 1911 – is a dusty slice of Raj history. It was right here that the new Emperor announced the shifting of the capital from Kolkata to Delhi. This was the original site for what was conceived of as New Delhi (before the risk of flooding prompted architects Lutyens and Baker to relocate their plans to Raisina Hill, where Rashtrapati Bhavan and its governmental satellites stand today).

This forgotten ground houses a solitary obelisk, a statue of George V that's shrouded in shrubbery (it was placed here after being ousted from the now-empty canopy on Rajpath that you've often wondered about), and statues of a motley assortment of Raj officials (good, bad and obscure), all dumped here post-Independence. The majority are unidentifiable, as someone seems to have forgotten to inscribe the names of these officials on their plinths, and bafflingly, there are about 20 empty plinths that might once have borne the weight of British governors and generals. We did manage to find the splendidly whiskered Lords Willingdon and Hardinge.

This landmark site is now a grungy post-script to the British Raj. When we visited, the only patrons were a gaggle of budding cricketers. Coronation Durbar park is north of Old Delhi and is best reached by autorickshaw from the Delhi University (Vishwa Vidyalaya) Metro station. It's about a 15-minute auto ride. The park is north of the radio masts near the Ring Road. Enter from Shakti Swaroop Tyagi Marg, two kilometres north of Kingsway Camp.