

Restoring Man Singh Haveli, the defining symbol of Rohtas Fort

Rohtas Fort has towered majestically on its height above the ancient "royal road" since it was constructed in 1541 by Emperor Sher Shah Suri after his defeat of Mogul Emperor Humayun. It is one of the most important historical medieval forts still in existence in Pakistan. Within the four-kilometer circumference of this World Heritage Site is the Man Singh Haveli, a Rajput palace. Funded by the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation was able, starting in 2004, to take the first important steps of documenting the structure and layout of the palace, while carrying out a topographic survey of the area.

After constructing scaffolding and walkways to allow safe access to the site, emergency consolidation of decaying parts of the ground floor of the haveli were completed. Damaged floors, walls and shades on the upper floors were repaired with lime plaster. Soil erosion in the courtyard allowed rainwater to seep into the ground floor; that problem was resolved so that water does not accumulate. The restorers also had to contend with tufts of grass and even a tree penetrating the walls. The expanding tree trunk caused part of the base of the cupola's drum to separate from the structure.

Two original motifs encircling the cupola were discovered as workers stripped away damaged and decayed mortar; they have been restored, as well as the brick design on part of the rim. This allows viewers to get an idea of what the original design looked like. Visitors also benefit from new illumination, safety railing and information panels.

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