5. IRON PILLAR
Standing at the centre of the Qutb-ul-Islam Mosque, the Iron Pillar, an intriguing piece, a marvel of architecture and traditional knowledge, with its austerity and natural brilliance has never ceased to amaze archeologists, metallurgists, academicians, and of course tourists, for the way it has resisted corrosion through the last 1,600 years. The pillar may originally have been located elsewhere, as the inscription on it says that it was placed on a hill called Vishnupada. It may have been shifted to this location during Tughlaq times.

The pillar is considered to be a tribute to Lord Vishnu, the patron deity of the Gupta kings; it is believed that the wonderfully crafted capital was once crowned by a figure of Garuda (Vishnu’s carrier). The pillar is said to have resisted corrosion because of its pure composition of iron, a high presence of phosphorous, and the method of casting.

6. ALAUDDIN KHALJI’S TOMB AND MADRASA
To honour his greatness, the sultan’s loyal nobles gathered after his death and constructed a tomb and madrasa in his name in AD 1316. A learning centre in conjunction with a tomb appears here for the first time, perhaps inspired by West-Asian traditions. The tomb is flanked on either side by chambers, seemingly smaller in scale, where perhaps rest the graves of Alauddin’s family.

7. ILTUTMISH’S TOMB
This self-built tomb of the second ruler of the Slave Dynasty, Shamsuddin Iltutmish, built in AD 1235 sits along the north-west corner of the Qutb Complex, next to Iltutmish’s own extensions of the Qutb-ul-Islam Mosque. Interestingly, one of the first tombs to be built in the city, it fulfills Iltutmish’s desire to be placed where he ruled and secondly to be close to the dargah (shrine) in Mehrauli. The tomb is a 9 m square in plan. Its sheer austerity on the exterior, is a striking contrast to the heavily decorated interior.

The structure demonstrates the presence of a dome originally which collapsed twice perhaps because of the comparatively thinner walls (2.2 m) that might not have been able to support the outward thrust generated by a dome. The intricately carved double-arched mihrab (prayer niche in wall), in white marble, includes different scripts and a rich amalgamation of Hindu art into Islamic architecture.

8. ALAI MINAR
This incomplete minaret that lies within the northern boundaries of the Qutb Complex was started by Alauddin Khalji to commemorate his victory in the Deccan campaigns. The tower was intended to be twice the height of the Qutb Minar and was placed right opposite it. The incomplete minaret stands in undulating rubble masonry with just a single storey that ceased to be constructed further after the sultan’s death in AD 1316.
1. Tomb of Imam Zamin
East of the Alai Darwaza stands the tomb of Imam Zamin. A native of Turkistan, Zamin came to India during the reign of Sikandar Lodi (AD 1488–1517) and probably discharged important duties in connection with the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. This striking tomb is typical of the Lodi period with sandstone piers filled in with lattice screens. The square chamber is surmounted by a dome of sandstone on the underside—features that seem to have exclusively served the royalty or perhaps enclosed temporary shelters and the double storey complex. The colonnades detailing, being stylistically more geometric than the ones erected during Aibak’s rule. Further additions by Alauddin Khalji (AD 1296–1316) in the later part of his reign led to a substantial expansion of the mosque and other distinct structures within the entire complex. The colonnades possibly served as temporary shelters and the double storey enclosures along the corners seem to have exclusively served the royalty or perhaps more particularly the women for both independent and community prayers.

2. Alai Darwaza
The Alai Darwaza was conceived to be the main gateway to the ambitious extension of the Qutb-ul-Islam Mosque undertaken by Alauddin Khalji in the early fourteenth century. Its four gateways, forming a square, are covered by a wide bulging dome with a central knob, resting on horse-shoe shaped arches.

3. Qutb Minar
One of the great iconic buildings of the thirteenth century, the Qutb Minar is a minaret (a tower adjoining a mosque, from where the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer) but is too tall to have served such a purpose. In fact it is simply a victory tower proclaiming the triumph of Mohammed Ghori over Prithviraj Chauhan. The Alai Minar, the unfinished Alai Minar, and the tomb of Imam Zamin are some of the other structures in the complex. Timings: Sunrise–Sunset. Entry: Indian Citizens—Rs 10, Foreign Nationals—Rs 250 & free for children upto 15 years.

4. Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque
The mosque was extended after Aibak’s death by Ilutmish in the year 1230. Extension of the western screen wall from either side resulted in a space almost double the size of the original mosque. These extensions reveal an apparent maturity in both design and detailing, being stylistically more geometric than the ones erected during Aibak’s rule. Further additions by Alauddin Khalji (AD 1296–1316) in the later part of his reign led to a substantial expansion of the mosque and other distinct structures within the entire complex. The colonnades possibly served as temporary shelters and the double storey enclosures along the corners seem to have exclusively served the royalty or perhaps more particularly the women for both independent and community prayers.