

## India on a Shoestring

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**Country(ies):** India

**Tour type:** Shoestring

**Transport:** AC car/minibus, train

**Group size:** Min: 2 | Max: 18

**Days:** 8 Days

**Start location:** Delhi, India

**End location:** Jaipur, India

**Departs On:** Mainly on Saturdays

**Meals:** Breakfasts - 6, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 0

**Highlights:** Old and New Delhi, Forts and palaces in Bundi, Pink city of Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, the Taj Mahal and Red Fort in Agra, great views of rural India and its cities from your train carriage

**Places Visited:** Delhi, Bundi, Jaipur, Agra



# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrive into Delhi, transfer to hotel

Upon arrival our staff will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel in the centre of Delhi for the start of your trip (24-hour service). After check-in you're free to settle in and start to explore the local area. You can also discuss and book any optional tours for your day in Delhi tomorrow. We pick a very central Delhi location for this tour, close to the bustling district of Karol Bagh, Paharganj, Connaught Place and New Delhi Railway Station.

**OVERNIGHT:** Delhi hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** Single room supplement (INSHSH) || Extra day in Delhi - pre-tour

## Day 2: Delhi, free time and tour options

A selection of sightseeing tours are available today to start discovering the different sides of Delhi. These include:

- Half day New Delhi tour (exploring the more modern side to the city)
- Spinmonkey cycling tour of Old Delhi (a fantastic way to explore the streets of Old Delhi, early in the morning before the traffic gets busy)
- Kathputhli Colony tour (this half-day tour explores a district of Delhi populated by street performers and musicians)
- Salam Balak Trust walk (a fascinating and rewarding tour in Old Delhi run by a local NGO and guided by youths who grew up as street children)
- Old Delhi walking and street food tour (this half day tour gives a great introduction to Old Delhi's sites and introduces you to the tastes, smells and sounds of busy India)

To enable us to make all necessary arrangements, these tours should be booked before arriving in Delhi.

In the evening we transfer to the railway station for our first taste of India's famous railways and an overnight sleeper train journey to our next destination, the Rajasthan town of Bundi. Travelling on India's railways is a fantastic way to see more of the country, and to meet some local people. We use the 2nd class AC sleeper carriage to ensure you travel in decent comfort.

**OVERNIGHT:** Sleeper train to Bundi

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Spinmonkey cycling tour || New Delhi half day by car || Old Delhi half-day walking tour || Salam Balak Trust walk

## Day 3: Exploring Bundi

We arrive in Bundi this morning and transfer to our hotel. Bundi is a fascinating town, visited relatively little by tourists, and a huge contrast to the hustle and bustle and chaos of Delhi. The town is packed with temples, step wells and old palaces, with the large Taraghar fort overlooking the town and its blue painted houses from the hillside.

You have some free time to explore here, and a local guide will also take you on a walking tour of the town, taking in some step wells, the Garh palace, and the fort.

**OVERNIGHT:** Bundi hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 4: Bundi to Jaipur

After time for a final early morning walk through the streets of Bundi this morning we leave for the nearby town of Kota to catch our next train to Jaipur, travelling for around 4 hours through the arid Rajasthan scenery, watching local farmers and villagers working in their fields as we pass by.

On arrival in the 'Pink City' of Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, we transfer to our homestay style accommodation for the night. This evening, you could head out to enjoy the fun and spectacle of a classic Bollywood movie, or relax with some delicious Indian home cooking at the accommodation.

**OVERNIGHT:** Jaipur homestay

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** None

## Day 5: Jaipur

Jaipur is a busy and fascinating city, famous for its various markets, jewellery and shopping, as well as some beautiful buildings and the impressive Amber Fort nearby. You have a selection of optional tours available here to discover the city, including some with specialist guides focussing on particular themes. These include:

- Amber Fort by e-rickshaw (a guided tour visiting the hugely impressive Amber Fort just outside of Jaipur)
- Amber Fort & City tour (this longer tour adds the iconic City Palace and the fascinating Jantar Mantar observatory to the Amber Fort tour) - Bollywood movie with transfers (a visit to the famous Raj Mandir cinema to join the locals enjoying a typical Bollywood movie)
- Hot air balloon flight with transfers (a spectacular early morning or late afternoon flight over forts, palaces and farmland tucked in the hills of the Aravali Ranges around the Amber Fort)
- Bazaars & Cuisines (a specialist 2 ½ hr guided walking tour through the craft bazaars sampling a wide range of Indian foods and snacks, sweet & savoury, visit a desert Haveli and take tea with an Indian family)
- Temples & Havelis (another specialist 2 ½ hr guided walking tour through markets and back streets visiting a range of hidden temples, including an ancient Vishnu temple, private Tantra temple, and lively Shri Gopinath Ji Krishna Temple. Also enjoy tea and snacks with an Indian family in a beautifully restored Haveli)

**OVERNIGHT:** Jaipur homestay

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Jaipur tour options

## Day 6: Agra Fort and the Taj Mahal at sunset

We leave Jaipur early today for another train journey, this time heading east to Agra. We'll arrive in time for lunch, and in the afternoon take an included guided tour to the UNESCO world heritage site at Agra Fort. The guide will then take you for a full sightseeing tour of the beautiful Taj Mahal at sunset. Truly one of the wonders of the world this elaborate monument to love was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan and took over twenty two years to complete. Visiting at sunset is a beautiful time as the colours and hues of the temple change as the light fades.

This evening there's an option to visit a local Hindu family for a cooking demonstration and delicious vegetarian thali dinner.

**OVERNIGHT:** Agra hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Cook with a Hindu family in Agra

## Day 7: Agra options, return to Delhi

The day is free to explore Agra further today, with some optional tours available which include:

- Oriental Agra by electric rickshaw (this half-day tour provides an authentic view of Agra's old bazaars, traditional eateries and places of worship, taking in many places not normally seen by tourists visiting the city)
- Food walk tour (as it suggests, this short walking tour explores Agra's markets and food stalls, with tastings of a wide range of sweet and savoury snacks and explanations from the guide about the various foodstuffs sold in the markets)
- Mughal Heritage Walk (this tour designed by a local NGO discovers the village life and homes of the people of Kacchpura village on the opposite bank of the Yamuna river to the Taj Mahal. You'll finish by walking through the fields to the Mehtab Bagh Park, which provides great views of the back side of the Taj Mahal across the water)
- Agra by bike (this early morning cycling tour takes you through back streets and past various temples and important buildings in Agra before the traffic gets too busy).

This evening we'll board our final train for the journey back to Delhi (around 3 hours).

**OVERNIGHT:** Delhi hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Agra tour options

## Day 8: Delhi, free time until your included departure airport transfer

Your time is free today until we transfer you to the airport to catch your flight home. You could also choose to extend your stay in India by going on safari looking for tigers at Ranthambore National Park, or heading south to the beaches at Goa or Kerala.

**OVERNIGHT:** N/A

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Extra day in Delhi - post-tour

## Included

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary in budget hotels, homestays and heritage properties
- Transport and transfers by AC car/minibus
- 2nd class AC sleeper and chair carriages used for train journeys
- 24-hour airport arrival transfer service
- Sightseeing tours as per the itinerary
- Services of local tour leaders and specialist guides
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

## Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Entrance fees to sites visited (budget US\$35 for included tours, plus extra for optional tours)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for drivers and guides

## Notes

### Restoration of the Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal, one of India's most iconic structures, is getting a much need facelift. The almost-four-century-old Taj Mahal is finally showing signs of ageing. Air pollution is unfortunately turning its ivory-white complexion - yellow. Adding to the colouration problems, the Yamuna River, with which the Taj Mahal shares a river bank, is contaminated and the insects that breed in its waters are leaving patches of green residue on its marble. In order to restore the Taj Mahal's glistening white marble, mud-pack therapy is being used. If you're worried that it might affect your India tour, this handy [Taj restoration guide](#) will tell you everything you need to know.

# Options

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Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## Single room supplement (INSHSH)

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$135.00

This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

## Extra day in Delhi - pre-tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$70.00

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

**Note:** Single room and peak season supplements apply.

## Extra day in Delhi - post-tour

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$70.00

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

**Note:** Single room and peak season supplements apply.

## **New Delhi half day by car**

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$55.00

This New Delhi half-day tour by car explores India's capital, located on the banks of the Yamuna River. We'll start at the towering India Gate Monument, a war memorial which resembles France's Arc-de-Triomphe. It was built to commemorate the soldiers who participated in the undivided Indian Army.

New Delhi is also the home of the Indian Government, and we'll pass buildings such the President's Palace and the Parliament of India, before visiting Humayun's Tomb - a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Bangla Sahab Gurudwara Sikh Temple.

Prices are based on two or more people travelling. Solo traveller supplements apply.

## **Old Delhi half-day walking tour**

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$70.00

This Old Delhi half-day walking tour starts from your hotel and after arriving by car or metro in the old city we explore with a guide on foot, walking through some of its oldest and busiest markets such as the Chandni Chowk and the Chowri Bazaar, which sells unique brass, copper and paper creations.

You'll also have the chance to taste some of India's wide variety of tasty street snacks and delicacies, introducing you to the wonders of Indian cuisine. Once you're full, you'll head out in a rickshaw to explore the Jama Masjid, the largest mosques in India.

## **Salam Balak Trust walk**

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$55.00

This two hour tour operated by a respected local NGO through the city of Delhi is guided by adolescents who grew up living and working on the streets, but have since been trained as travel guides with the aim of helping them improve their communication skills and opportunities.

Listen to the stories of these kids as they take you through the busy streets of Delhi, exploring Paharganj and the area around the New Delhi Railway Station. The tour provides a fascinating and different insight into the daily lives of the locals that live here than most typical city tours.

The tour normally starts at 10am, though earlier or later starts can be arranged. It can be arranged on your final day in Delhi or if additional days are added. It can be run on any day of the week though Sundays are not ideal as the streets are much quieter. Transfers to and from your hotel are included.

## **Spinmonkey cycling tour**

**Min numbers:** 1 person

**Price:** \$55.00

The Spinmonkey cycling tours which run through Old and New Delhi are led by a group of young cyclists who want to change the way that people explore Delhi, promoting healthy interaction and fun along the way. It's the perfect introduction into the history, culture, food, architecture and spirit of Delhi.

During the Old Delhi cycle tour, you'll visit the Turukman Gate, the Chawri Bazar, the Jama Masjid Mosque, Chandni Chowk, and a spice market before being treated to an authentic Indian breakfast.

The New Delhi cycle tour explores Connaught Place, the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, Rashtrapati Bhawan, India Gate, Agrasen Ki Baoli, Dhobi Ghat before enjoying breakfast at the Bengali Market.

This cycling tour normally starts early at 6 or 6.30am during summer or winter to avoid the busy traffic later in the day, and lasts around four hours. The cycling tour can be arranged on your final day in Delhi (subject to your flight departure time) or if additional days are added. It can be run on any day of the week, and transfers to and from your hotel are included.

# Tour Notes

## 1. Accommodation

This tour uses a variety of budget hotels, homestays and heritage style properties. Accommodation is based on same-sex twin or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. Single travellers may choose to pay a single room supplement to guarantee themselves a single room throughout the tour. Alternatively, they may choose to share a room with another travellers of the same sex. If there are no other single travellers available for you to share with at the time of your booking, then we will need to add the single supplement to your tour price, but will refund this or deduct it from your balance payment if we are able to arrange a room share you up later on.

## 2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour.

All sightseeing tours and transfers (except pure walking tours) use private AC cars/minibuses appropriate to the number of travellers in the group.

Travel between towns & cities is done by train, providing a great chance to experience Indian railways and to see much more of rural India, and the outskirts of its towns and cities from your train carriage. The overnight sleeper journey from Delhi to Bundi is in a 4-berth compartment in the 2nd class AC sleeper carriage. Comfortable seats with fold down beds, with pillow, sheet and blanket are provided. All other train journeys are based on the 2nd class AC chair carriage.

## 3. Transfers

The tour includes a 24-hour airport arrival transfer from Delhi airport to your hotel, and back to the airport at the end of the tour.

All other transfers between hotels, stations and during tours are also included.

## 4. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

Most of our Indian tours start and finish at Delhi airport (DEL).

## 5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guides. This tour therefore has a maximum

of 14 travellers in each group. Departures are guaranteed for a minimum of 2 people.

Specialist local guides are used for all of the sightseeing tours mentioned in the itinerary, and for additional optional tours. For groups of 6 and over, a tour escort accompanies the group throughout the tour.

At Encounters Travel we have a policy of only using local Indian guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

## 6. Entrance Fees

The tour price does not include entrance fees to the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. You should budget Rs 2150 (approx. USD 35) to cover the included tours in Bundi and Agra. You will also need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit that are not listed in the main tour itinerary. A list of current entrance fees (Jan 2018) to the main sites in each location visited on the tour is given below. These are subject to change by the local authorities at any time.

Delhi:

Qutub Minar – Rs 550

Humayun's tomb – Rs 550

Red Fort – Rs 550

Bundi:

Bundi Fort, Museum Sukhmahal, Taragarh Fort (composite Ticket) – Rs 550

Jaipur:

Amber Palace - Rs 600

Jantar Mantar Observatory - Rs 250

City Palace - Rs 250

Nahargarh Fort - Rs 600

Sisodiya Gardens - Rs 220, plus Galta Temples - Rs 35 (Camera Rs 100)

Jaigarh Fort - Rs 110

Agra:

Taj Mahal - Rs 1050

Agra Fort - Rs 550

Sikandra - Rs 350

Itmad ud daulah - Rs 250

Mehtab Bagh - Rs 200

## 7. Tipping and Haggling

Haggling is a traditional necessity, so its wise not to pay too much regard to initial prices. Instead fix an items value in your mind then negotiate towards it unhurriedly and don't be afraid to simply walk away if the price isn't right. Once you have offered a price though, you should be prepared to pay it as you may cause offence if you then back out.

While an accepted part of the culture and customs in India, tipping is always optional, and the amounts paid should reflect excellent service. We are often asked for advice on common amounts, and for assistance with tipping. Some suggested guidelines are given below.

**Restaurants and taxis:** Local markets and basic restaurants - leave the loose change. More up-market restaurants we suggest 5% to 10% of your bill.

**Local guides:** Throughout your trip you may at times have a local guide in addition to your tour guide. We suggest USD 5-10 per person per day for local guides.

**Drivers:** You may have a range of private drivers on your trip. Some may be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for several days. We would suggest a higher tip for those more involved with the group, for example if you don't have an extra accompanying guide. However USD 3-6 per person per day is generally appropriate.

**Tour Guides:** To answer your next question. . . as a guideline for tour guides who accompany you on the entire tour, we suggest you allow around USD 5-10 per person per day, but ultimately, as with all the tipping described above, its up to your satisfaction with their service and your personal budget. You should not feel pressured to tip any particular amount.

## 8. Health and Vaccinations - India

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

**India:** Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Yellow fever rules for India are quite complicated and lengthy. Please read the [WHO guidance](#).

**Malaria:** Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting. In general the north eastern regions of India including Assam and Orissa are considered high risk, while the rest of India is generally considered low enough risk that anti-malarial tablets are not necessary for most travellers doing relatively short tours.

**Yellow Fever:** This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view a [World Health Organisation map](#) of areas where the virus is present in monkeys and therefore a potential risk to humans. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

## 9. Passports and Visas - India

Your passport expiry date must be at least 6 months after your time in India finishes. Do not bring a full or almost

expired passport. You must also have a machine-readable passport or you may be denied entry. If you have an old-style manually issued passport you will need to replace this with a new machine-readable passport before you travel.

Most nationalities (including UK, USA, European, Australian, Canadian) will need to arrange their Indian tourist visa in advance. A new online e-visa system is available which makes the process more straightforward than before. You can make your application online here... <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

Visa requirements for India can and do change regularly and we suggest that you arrange your Indian visa early and re-check your specific visa requirements prior to travel for any changes.

## 10. Time

The time in India and Sri Lanka is GMT plus 5 1/2 hours.

The time in Nepal is GMT plus 5 3/4 hours.

The time in Bhutan is GMT plus 6 hours.

The time in Tibet is GMT plus 8 hours.

Daylight saving adjustments are not applied.

## 11. Voltage

Sockets are mainly two round pronged and 230 volts (Type C,D,M). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are sometimes available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already but cannot be guaranteed.

If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

## 12. Money

Rupee (INR; symbol Rs) = 100 paise. Notes are in denominations of Rs 2,000, 1000, 500, 200, 50, 20, 10 and 1. Coins are in denominations of Rs 10, 5, 2 and 1, and 50 paise (Rs 0.5). Note: The import and export of local currency is prohibited. Sometimes smaller vendors will not take bills larger than Rs 500. It is best to carry a range of rupee notes if you are shopping at bazaars and local markets.

Note: You must present your passport whenever you change currency or travellers cheques. Commission for foreign exchange is becoming increasingly rare; if it is charged, the fee is nominal.

Credit cards: In major cities, the full cadre of banks cards are generally accepted including debit cards, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa. However, in smaller towns and villages, choice is generally narrowed to cash or MasterCard and Visa.

ATM: 24 hour ATM machines can be found in all the major cities and most large towns. Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, Maestro and Plus are amongst the most commonly accepted cards.

Travellers cheques: These are gradually getting less accepted but may still be changed at larger banks and some larger hotels. The most widely accepted currencies include US Dollars and Pounds Sterling. Some banks may refuse to change certain brands of traveller's cheques whilst others may exchange quite happily.

## 13. What to take

**Luggage:** Suitcases are fine, though you may find rucksacks or large bags are more practical. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips - you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always porters to assist.

**Luggage allowances:** Most international airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 23kg per person of luggage to go in the hold of the plane. Domestic flights often have smaller allowances around 15kg. As airline rules vary we recommend that you take no more than 20kg of luggage if your tour just includes international flights, and no more than 15kg if there are any domestic flights included in your itinerary. Please ask us for details if you are unsure about luggage allowances on your tour. Any excess baggage fees will be your responsibility to cover. Most airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage so we suggest that you take no more than 5kg unless you have confirmed that your airline(s) will allow more than this.

**Clothing:** The weather is mainly hot most of the year with significant variations from region to region. The coolest weather lasts from around the end of November to the beginning of March, with fresh mornings and evenings, and mostly sunny days. The really hot weather, when it is dry, dusty and unpleasant, is between March and June. Monsoon rains occur in most regions in summer anywhere between June and early October.

**NOTE:** India is very traditional and some heads will turn if you dress provocatively in public. Short tops, short skirts / shorts, tight or body revealing clothes etc should be avoided. You might invite unwanted attention from certain men who stare and pass comments at women to amuse themselves. More detailed climate information is available on the India Country Guide page on our website.

**Suggested List:** This is a guide only - there's no problem if you bring more or less with you. Cheap comfortable clothing is also readily available in India and laundry is inexpensive. It is also worth having some smarter clothes for going out. Towels are provided and laundry services are available in all the hotels we use.

Men: Lightweight trousers, shorts, light shirts & t-shirts, Swimwear

Women: Light cotton skirts/dressers, loose-fitting trousers, light shirts or t-shirts, loose shorts, Swimwear

Men & Women: Jumper/sweatshirt/fleece, Long sleeved shirt(s) (for cool nights, protection from the sun & mosquitoes, and visits to religious sites etc), Handkerchiefs, socks & underwear, Comfortable trainers/sandals for daily wear, Other shoes/sandals for evening wear, Sunhat or headscarf (headscarfs come in handy for some sights which require women to cover their head)

**First Aid:** Although First Aid and medication is readily available in India, it may be very different to what you are used to so individuals should consider bringing along their own personal kit. Your personal kit might include: Sunscreen, sunblock & aftersun, Insect repellent/relief, Antiseptic cream/spray, Plasters and a bandage, Lomotil or Imodium against diarrhea, Pills against nausea, Aspirin for heat-stroke (or hangovers) Your kit should also include your brief medical history, including allergies, blood group, drug vaccinations etc. We suggest bringing copies of prescriptions if you will be carrying medicines on board your flight.

**Toiletries:** Razor, soap & box, shampoo, Toothpaste, toothbrush & container, Sanitary items

**Note:** If you wear contact lenses, you should consider taking or wearing glasses instead, as lenses can be uncomfortable and/or cause infections in hot and humid climates.

**Other useful items:** Sunglasses, Small Torch, Money belt, Camera and equipment, Toilet paper (this is not always provided in public toilets so it is a good idea to carry some spare tissues in your bag. It should be placed in the basket beside the toilet, not flushed away, for you might block the pipes).

**IMPORTANT:** As it can get extremely hot in India, and the sun can burn very quickly, it is very important to ensure you are protected from the sun with sun-cream & sun-hats, and do not get dehydrated.

## 14. Dates & Prices

We run small-group departures on our Indian tours throughout the year, with less frequent start dates during the hot and wet monsoon months of June to September. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 travellers. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website (please check the website for up-to-date prices and special offers).

Private and tailor-made tours are available on any dates and may be adjusted to fit your personal requirements, available time and budget.

## 15. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

## 16. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover

provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally, or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

*IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.*

## 17. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and an ABTA Member (Y4447) and you can be confident when booking with us that your money is safe and protected.

Financial failure insurance is also provided through Affirma to protect all customers for the land portion of your tour. Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

## 18. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water

- bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
  - Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
  - If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

## 19. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

[www.facebook.com/encounterstravel](http://www.facebook.com/encounterstravel)

[www.twitter.com/encounterstravl](http://www.twitter.com/encounterstravl) (yes, without the 'e')

## 20. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.



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**Note:** Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.

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