

Rajasthan Explorer

Country(ies): India

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C minivan/minibus and sleeper train

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 14 Days

Start location: Delhi, India

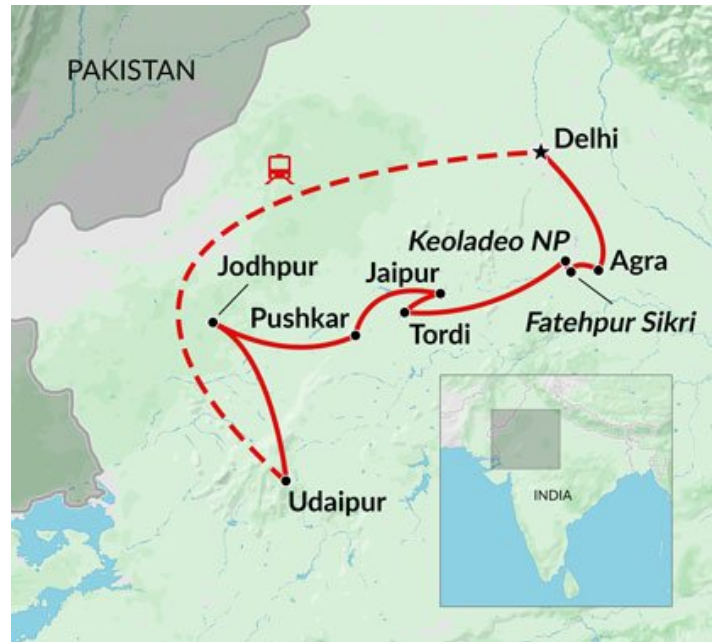
End location: Delhi, India

Departs On: Monday

Meals: Breakfasts - 15, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 1

Highlights: Old and New Delhi, Lakeside Udaipur, Ranakpur Jain temples, Fort and blue streets of Jodhpur, Holy town of Pushkar, Pink city of Jaipur, Tordi Garh, Abhaneri step well, Keoladeo NP, Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal at sunrise, Agra Fort

Places Visited: New Delhi, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Pushkar, Jaipur, Tordi Garh, Keoladeo NP, Fatehpur Sikri and Agra



Itinerary

Day 1: Your Indian adventure starts in Delhi, hotel transfer included

When you arrive in Delhi - one of our staff will meet you and transfer you to your hotel. Once you've settled in, we'll run through the itinerary for the next few days and arrange a time to collect you tomorrow.

OVERNIGHT: Delhi hotel

MEALS: None

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

Day 2: Visiting Delhi's most popular sights

We start with a morning tour of India's capital, New Delhi. Nestled on the banks of the Yamuna River, New Delhi is a city where ancient and modern seamlessly blend together. We'll visit the India Gate - a 42-metre high archway, built in remembrance of the 82,000 soldiers who participated in the undivided Indian Army.

New Delhi is India's political hub as well, and we'll drive past many government buildings such as the President's Palace and the Parliament of India. We'll also pass Humayun's Tomb, the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent and a UNESCO World Heritage Site as well as the Bangla Sahab Gurudwara Sikh Temple.

We'll then hop onto a metro train with the locals at Connaught Place Station - as we make our way to Old Delhi. Here, we'll explore one of its oldest and busiest markets - the Chandni Chowk, before exploring the Chawri Bazar, famous for its brass, copper and paper creations.

We'll also be introduced to Old Delhi's unique street foods and delicacies, giving us a first taste of authentic Indian cuisine. Once our taste buds are sufficiently satisfied, we'll take a rickshaw ride to the Jama Masjid Mosque, one of the largest in India.

Finally we head to the train station to catch the overnight sleeper train to Udaipur. You'll see a lot of busy Delhi life through the windows as the train makes its way out of the city this evening.

OVERNIGHT: Sleeper train

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Delhi to Udaipur flight upgrade

Day 3: Arrive in Udaipur, Eklingi & Nagda temples

We arrive in Udaipur this morning, a city often dubbed as the 'Venice of the East', as it's set around a series of artificial lakes and is known for its lavish royal residences. It was founded in 1553 by Maharana Udai Singh of the Sisodia clan of Rajput, when he shifted his capital from the city of Chittorgarh to Udaipur.

We'll start by making a stop for breakfast, before driving around 20km north of Udaipur to the early Mewar capital, Nagda, famous for an unusual temple that dates back to the 10th century. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and it's made in two structures, one by a mother-in-law and another, by a daughter-in-law. We'll also visit the nearby temple complex of Eklingji, which is home to over 100 temples and very popular with Hindu pilgrims, though few tourists visit here. One of the most famous temples in Rajasthan, the main temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, and holds a striking four faced idol of Eklingji (Lord Shiva) made in black marble. The Shivlinga (phallic form of Lord Shiva) is here garlanded by a silver snake and is also given great attention.

After visiting the temples we return to Udaipur and have lunch at Jodhpur Mishthan Bhandar in Udaipur's city centre, where we can try all sorts of unique Indian treats, such as Mirchi wada, Kachori, Samosa, Pakodi, Khaman (Gujarati

food) and much more. Once we've had our fill of these delicious snacks, we'll check into our hotel and the rest of the afternoon is free for you to relax or start exploring Udaipur yourselves.

OVERNIGHT: Udaipur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: A sightseeing tour of Udaipur

Today is all about exploring Udaipur. We'll start with a visit to the City Palace, which was built over a period of 400 years and is one of Rajasthan's architectural marvels. Located on the edge of Lake Pichola the palace comprises an assortment of pavilions, terraces, courtyards, terraces and hanging gardens, encircled by granite and marble fortifications. We'll then make our way to the Saheliyon Ki Bari Gardens, famous for its lush green lawns, marble art and fountains, before we head to Lake Pichola and board a boat ride to Jagmandir Island, which houses a palace built by Maharana Karan Singh II in 1620. At its entrance, you'll be met by massive stone elephants and the island has an ornate 17th-century tower, the Gol Mahal, carved from bluestone.

We'll also visit the Jagdish Temple, located just outside the Royal Palace, before taking a walk through the Old City. As the evening arrives, we'll visit Bagore Ki Haveli, an ancient palace that has been converted into a museum on the waterfront of Lake Pichola, where we'll enjoy watching a traditional dancing and puppet show.

OVERNIGHT: Udaipur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Jain Temple & monkeys at Ranakpur

We make our way towards Jodhpur today, the second largest city in Rajasthan, with a stop on the way to visit the spectacular white marble Chaturmukha Jain Temple there, the largest and most important temple in the Jain religion built in the 15th century to commemorate the first Tirthankara of Jainism - Lord Adinath. We'll take an audio tour here, and also look out of the large population of monkeys that make the temple their home.

OVERNIGHT: Jodhpur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: A walking tour of Jodhpur

Our morning starts with a visit to Mehrangarh Fort - one of the largest forts in India, standing on a perpendicular cliff, 410 metres above the city of Jodhpur. We'll also visit Jaswant Thada, a milky-white marble cenotaph built by Maharaja Sardar Singh of Jodhpur State in 1899 in memory of his father, Maharaja Jaswant Singh II.

We'll walk through the city, stopping to view the impressive Lord Krishna Temple - a marvel of rich architectural skill and craftsmanship, meeting with the priest and his family, before visiting Ram Rasoda, a community kitchen that has been in use for centuries.

We'll also visit the ancient temple of Jetha Bera, the deep step well of Toor ji ka Jhalra, said to be as old as the sixth century. It's an ancient well that often takes the shape of an inverted pyramid. For decades, the well sat filled with stagnant water, until the pool was recently purified and the steps were sandblasted.

Our walk takes us through narrow winding streets, between the city's famous blue-painted buildings to the grain, produce, silver, crafts and spice markets the streets around the clock tower. While we're walking, you can sample sweets such as Gulab jamun - a milk based sweet and Mawa Kachori - which is a fried puffed pastry stuffed with sweetened and flavoured khoya.

OVERNIGHT: Jodhpur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 7: A Pushkar adventure

Today, we'll go on a morning drive to the town of Pushkar, located on the edge of the Thar Desert. Pushkar is one of India's oldest cities and also one of the Hindu religion's 5 most sacred dhams (pilgrimage sites). It is set around Pushkar Lake, whose waters are considered holy and are surrounded by 52 stone staircases which pilgrims use to bathe.

We'll arrive just in time for lunch, and once you've checked into your accommodation, we'll explore Pushkar Lake and its temples - including a 14th-century Jagatpita Brahma Mandir, dedicated to the god of creation and its surroundings. If time, there's also the option to take a sunset walk up to the Savitri Temple nestled in the Ratnagiri Hills which offers sweeping lake and valley views. There's also a cable car available to reach the temple.

Pushkar is also famous for its huge camel fair which takes place in October or November every year and one of our departure dates is timed to ensure we visit during the peak of the fair.

OVERNIGHT: Pushkar hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 8: Onwards to the Pink City of Jaipur

You have the option this morning to walk up to the Savitri Temple for sunrise and to watch how dawn breaks over the town.

We'll then say our goodbyes to Pushkar, as we make our way to the pink city of Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. We'll stop to visit Amber Fort, the jewel in Jaipur's crown - an ancient fortress built on a hilltop in the 16th century dedicated to the ruling Kachhawa clan of Amber. It's a massive monument, with some saying it resembles the Great Wall of China.

OVERNIGHT: Jaipur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Exploring the city of Jaipur

You have some options today. You can either choose to go on an early morning hot air balloon over the Jaipur's palaces and forts, taking in the architectural beauty of the pink city, or sleep a little later, before heading out on a sightseeing tour.

During the sightseeing tour, you'll head to the unique Jantar Mantar Monument, an astronomical observatory built by the Rajput king Sawai Jai Singh II between 1724 and 1730. You'll also visit the architecturally brilliant City Palace, built between 1729-1732 AD, which was once the seat of the King of Jaipur and the leader of the renowned Kachwaha Rajput clan.

You'll have lunch, before exploring Jaipur's famous craft markets, where you can see craftsmen such as jewellers, silversmiths, textile workshops and bangle makers conjuring up some of the most unique creations. While you're here, we'll also stop at fruit, vegetable and spice markets.

OVERNIGHT: Jaipur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Hot air balloon in Jaipur

Day 10: Visiting the ancient village of Tordi

Today, we'll head to the village of Tordi, situated in rural region of Rajasthan. Tordi was built in the 16th century by Th. Akhey Singh, a descendant of Khangar Singh who overthrew the regional chief and built a hilltop fortress. All that's left are ruins, which can still be seen today.

The family still lives in the palace and fort built in the plains below, and we'll stay in a section of the palace which has been redesigned for guests.

This afternoon, you'll explore the local village of Tordi, visiting a temple, a school and a potter's house before chatting to the locals, learning about their way of life here in rural Rajasthan.

There are a few optional activities that can be arranged by the family at the palace, such as camel cart riding, a jeep safari to a 300-year-old step well as well as a visit to a shepherds village. Other optional activities include watching the sunset at the Tordi Sagar Dam and the sand dunes, hiking to the 400-year-old Tordi Fort for drinks and snacks at sunset or sunrise. Horse-riding and henna hand art is also available.

OVERNIGHT: Tordi Garh hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 11: The world's largest step well and a guided cycle rickshaw ride through the Keoladeo Ghana NP

Say your final goodbyes to the village of Tordi as we make our way to Bharatpur to visit the Keoladeo Ghana National Park - one of the top places for birdwatching in India.

You'll first visit the Abhaneri step well though, which is the largest of its kind on the entire planet. It has 3,500 steps and is 13 stories deep.

You'll arrive at your accommodation for the day before heading out on a guided cycle rickshaw ride through Keoladeo, which was once a duck hunting reserve, but is now a sanctuary for over 360 species of birds and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Keoladeo is a strategic location on the Central Asian migratory flyway, making it a vitally important location for wintering water birds, most notably the endangered Siberian crane and its huge heronry which in good years can host more than 20,000 nesting birds of various species. Apart from its diverse birdlife, the park is also home to wild boar, black buck, sambar, chital, mongoose, porcupine, several different wild cats, and some huge pythons.

OVERNIGHT: Bharatpur hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 12: Your first view of the Taj Mahal

After being mesmerised by the unique wildlife of the Keoladeo National Park, we'll head to the city of Agra, famous for being the home of India's Taj Mahal.

You'll head to your hotel and settle in, before spending the afternoon on the Mughal Heritage Walk through the ancient village of Kachhpura and surrounding farmland on the banks of the Yamuna River, which will give you your first view of the Red Fort and the impressive Taj Mahal Mausoleum.

The Mughal Heritage Walk was designed by a local NGO who supports the local community with job opportunities and new infrastructure. One of the locals will give you a tour of the village, showing you their architecture, cooking and religious areas as well as how they farm. You'll also be introduced to the local cottage industry for leather shoe making which helps Agra export shoes all over the world.

As the afternoon comes to an end, we'll walk around the Mehtab Bagh Park, which is one of 11 parks built by Emperor Babur on the east banks of the Yamuna River, to take in the breathtaking views of the Taj Mahal at sunset.

Tonight, you have an option to join a local Hindu family for a vegetarian cooking lesson and a tasty meal before settling in for the night.

OVERNIGHT: Agra hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Cook with a Hindu family in Agra

Day 13: Sunrise at the Taj Mahal and a visit to Agra Fort

You had a glimpse of the Taj Mahal at sunset, now it's time to witness its majesty at sunrise.

You'll head for an early morning tour of the Taj Mahal, which was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan and took over twenty-two years to complete. Watch how the colours of the Taj Mahal changes as the light of the day gradually gets brighter.

You'll have breakfast before we visit Agra Fort - a towering complex which once served as the main residence of the emperors of the Mughal Dynasty until 1638 when the capital was shifted from Agra to Delhi. It's also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

After lunch, you'll head back to Delhi to visit the Swaminarayan Akshardham a Hindu mandir and a spiritual-cultural campus, home to millennia of traditional Hindu and Indian culture and architecture to witness the mesmerizing Sahaj Anand water show - which makes use of multicoloured lasers, under-water flames, video projection, water jets combine to provide a captivating experience which tells the story of Kena Upanishad - a Vedic Sanskrit text.

OVERNIGHT: Delhi hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 14: Time to say goodbye! Airport transfer included

You have some free time to buy any gifts for your loved ones back home before we transfer you to the airport to catch your flight back home. Some half-day tour options are available this morning if you have a late flight departure, and extensions to the tour are also available.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Goa beach extension || Ranthambore National Park Safari || Spinmonkey cycling tour || Salam Balak Trust walk

Included

- All accommodation in mid range hotels, homestay and heritage properties
- 24-hour airport arrival and departure transfer service
- Transport and transfers in AC vehicles
- Sleeper train from Delhi to Udaipur (2nd class AC, flight upgrade available)
- Sightseeing tours and activities as per the itinerary
- Services of a local tour leader and specialist local guides
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for drivers and guides
- Entrance fees (budget USD 154, payable in Delhi)
- Any other items not mentioned above

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

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 (INSGRE)

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$495.00

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.

Goa beach extension

Min numbers: 2 persons

Price: \$679.00

After one of our busy sightseeing tours in northern India, why not finish your holiday with some time relaxing on the beach in Goa. Made internationally famous by the hippies that used to throng its northern beaches, Goa today has a huge amount more to offer. You can stay in simple guest-houses, eco resorts or luxury hotels at beaches frequented by backpackers, new-age travellers or remnants of those hippy days. The beaches are gorgeous, and the interior is well worth exploring as well. Extensions to Goa of any length are available on all of our India tours - please contact us for more information and prices.

Day 1 - Travel to Goa

We pick you up from your hotel in Delhi and transfer you to the airport for an internal flight to Panjim, the state capital of Goa. We meet you on arrival and transfer you to your boutique hotel in Calangute.

Overnight at Casa de Goa boutique 3-star hotel (B)

Days 2-4 - Goa. Free time

Your next 3 days are free to spend in Goa as you wish. You can relax on busy or remote beaches, go exploring inland, visit Anjuna flea market, or try a wide range of watersports. Goa also has its famous nightlife to try if that's your thing.

Overnight at Casa de Goa or similar (B)

Days 5 & 6 - Return to Delhi

We pick you up from your hotel and transfer you to your flight back to Delhi. You then have one night in Delhi and free time before we transfer you to the airport for departure

Overnight at Delhi hotel (B)

Includes: Internal flight Delhi-Goa, 5 nights' accommodation with breakfast, Return transfers by an AC CAR

Note: Prices shown are for low-season (mid-April to September) and higher rates will apply for high season and peak periods. These are shown on our online reservation form and are available on request. Single room supplements apply. There is a minimum of 2 people required to run this option.

Ranthambore National Park Safari

Min numbers: 2 persons

Price: \$720.00

Ranthambore is one of the largest national parks in northern India and was declared one of the Project Tiger reserves in 1973. As well as the tigers which are the main attraction for most people, there is a multitude of other wildlife including more than 300 species of trees, 50 aquatic plants, over 300 species of birds, marsh crocodiles and monitor lizards, and 30 mammals including sloth bear, wild boar, Chinkara, Porcupines and Jackals, Leopards, Jungle cat, Sambhar, Chital, Nilgai, Gazelle, Boars, Mongoose and Indian hare. The park is within a day's journey from Delhi.

Day 1 - Travel to Ranthambore

We pick you up from your hotel in Delhi on the last day of the main tour and transfer you to the train station journey on the Kota Jan Shatabdi Express to Sawai Madhopur (approx. 13.20-18.00). The park and your lodge is a short drive from the station.

Overnight at Ranthambore Bagh, Tiger Den, Pugmarks Resort or similar (dinner)

Days 2 & 3 - Morning & afternoon safaris

We include an early morning and late afternoon guided wildlife safari on each of these two days. These are the best

times for wildlife viewing, and the middle of the day is spent relaxing back at the lodge. We include two safaris travelling on a 'Canter' which is an open backed truck which provides good height to see into the bush and forest. An additional two safaris are included by jeep, which give you more flexibility to explore different parts of the park. The park is split into different zones, and we will aim to visit several to provide variety and the best chance of good animal sightings. Zones for each safari are allocated by the park authorities and out of our control.

Overnight at Ranthambore Bagh, Tiger Den, Pugmarks Resort or similar (breakfast, lunch & dinner)

Day 4 & 5 - Return by train to Delhi

You leave the lodge early to catch the NZM Jan Shatabdi Express back to Delhi (approx. 0705-1230). You then have one night in Delhi and free time before we transfer you to the airport for departure.

Overnight at Delhi hotel (breakfast)

Notes:

- This option is available between October and June. Pricing shown is based on a minimum of 2 people travelling. Solo traveller and single room supplements apply.

- The extension can also be added to the start of the tour with the night in Delhi being spent at the beginning and Day 5 becoming the first day of the main tour. Please contact us if you would like to arrange it this way.

Cook with a Hindu family in Agra

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$40.00

In this optional activity, you'll learn the art of making a few authentic Indian dishes, before settling down for a Vegetarian Thali meal with a Hindu family.

You'll be given a tour of the live kitchen, which whips up strictly vegetarian Indian cuisine, before enjoying a meal which incorporates dishes from the North Indian, South Indian, Punjabi, Gujarati, Rajasthani and Mughal cuisines.

You'll be mesmerised by the aromas of the homemade spices - before going on a journey of rich Indian cultural heritage, leaving you with a feeling of love, family and warmth of an Indian home.

Hot air balloon in Jaipur

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$265.00

Capture the spectacular views of Rajasthan's forts with an early morning hot air balloon ride over Jaipur for a different perspective of this vibrant capital. Float high above the pink painted rooftops and enjoy a bird's eye view of Jaipur.

This option runs from 1st of September to 10th of May each year.

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.

Delhi to Udaipur flight upgrade

Min numbers: 1

Price: \$170.00

This option exchanges the sleeper train journey from Delhi to Udaipur with an evening flight to Udaipur and an extra night in the hotel there. All transfers are included, and you don't miss anything on the normal tour itinerary by choosing this option.

Notes: Train tickets are generally issued 4 months before departure and are non-refundable after your arrival in India. If you select this upgrade after train tickets have been purchased, a supplement will need to be added to cover the unused ticket. Prices are also subject to flight availability. Single room supplements apply.

Tour Notes

1. Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the Indian 3-star and 4-star level on this tour as well as some heritage properties. These heritage hotels are often converted from former palaces or merchant houses and are full of historical character, though they may feel a little dated. They are often a highlight of your stay. We normally homestay property in Jodhpur on this tour, though as it is very popular and only has a few rooms available, occasionally this may be exchanged for a heritage hotel.

The specific hotels listed on our website are our preferred hotels for our small-group tours. However, these may be changed from time to time based on current availability and other logistics. In this event alternative hotels of a similar standard will be used. If you would like to guarantee any particular hotels for your trip, please contact us to request a tailor-made tour.

Accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. All couples will receive a private double room. See the Transport notes for details on the sleeper train accommodation.

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 traveller of the same sex. If there are no other single travellers available to pair up with at the time of 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 pair 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. Due to the somewhat chaotic nature of Indian roads, we only use private vehicles for all road journeys on this tour.

The tour also features an overnight journey on India's famous railway network, from Delhi to Udaipur. We aim to book seats in the AC2 class (2nd class air-conditioned carriage). This is relatively clean, comfortable and not overcrowded. You get a padded seat during the day which the carriage steward will convert into a flat padded bunk with pillows, sheets and blankets in the evening. There are no separate self-contained compartments, with the layout more open plan with curtained bays of four bunks on one side of the aisle (two upper and two lower) and two arranged along the wall of the carriage across the aisle from there. Meals and drinks are available on board.

Due to the huge distances some trains cover, Indian trains are subject to delays and on these overnight journeys of around 12 hours a delay of an hour is not unusual. Delays can be longer in the winter months if the weather is foggy.

Tickets are issued 120 days in advance and are subject to full cancellation fees after you have arrived in India (US\$10 up until that point). If you book within 120 days of departure we cannot guarantee that you will be allocated a berth next to other people in the group, though the carriage stewards are generally very helpful in arranging to swap you with another traveller.

Flight upgrades are available for the Delhi to Udaipur journey in the evening of Day 2, with an extra night spent in the hotel in Udaipur. All transfers are included.

3. Transfers

The tour price includes a 24-hour airport meet & assist service in New Delhi airport, your arrival and departure airport-hotel transfers and all other transfers.

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 guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we won't ever put you in a 50-seater coach with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set our India group departures to have a maximum of 12 travellers. The minimum group size is 2.

In India we provide a fully trained, local English-speaking tour leader/driver to accompany our groups. On this tour they will accompany you from Udaipur through to Agra where you will be shown to your seat on the train. You will then be met on arrival in Varanasi station by your guide for the stay there. Additional specialist local guides are used for some of the sightseeing tours and national park activities included in the tour.

At Encounters Travel we have a policy of aiming to use only 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. This allows for fluctuations in the prices set by the local authorities, which do change from time to time.

You should currently allow approx. US\$154 per person to cover these entrance fees (this includes one visit to the Taj Mahal). 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. Your guide will offer to collect the entrance fee cost from everyone at the start of the tour and pay on your behalf, or you can arrange them yourself as you go along.

7. Tipping and Haggling

Haggling is a traditional necessity, so it's wise not to pay too much regard to initial prices. Instead fix an item's 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 small-group tours throughout the year, with less frequent start dates during the hot monsoon months of May 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

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.
