

DAY 1

Arrive Delhi

Welcome to Delhi, India's capital and a major gateway to the country, contemporary Delhi is a bustling metropolis, which successfully combines in its folds - the ancient with the modern. Amidst the fast spiraling skyscrapers the remnants of a bygone time in the form of its many monuments stand as silent reminders to the region's ancient legacy. The first impressions for any visitor traveling in from the airport are of a spacious, garden city, tree-lined with a number of beautiful parks.

Upon arrival you will be met and escorted to your hotel.

Duration 2 Nights

Accommodation Sheraton New Delhi Hotel

DAY 2

Delhi Sightseeing

Your morning exploration of Old Delhi begins with a visit to the Red Fort, a symbol of Shah Jehan's Mughal power and elegance, also known as the greatest wonder of all the cities of Delhi.

India's history has been closely linked with this fort. It was from here that the British deposed the last Mughal ruler - Bhadur Shah Zafar, marking the end of a three - century long Mughal rule. It was also from its ramparts that the first prime. Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, announced to the nation that India was free from colonial rule. Your tour continues with a visit to India's largest mosque Jama Masjid, originally known as 'Masjid-I-Jahan-Numa', meaning 'The mosque with a commanding view of the world'. This mosque was commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan and was completed in 1656.

This afternoon you will explore 'Lutyens' Delhi or New Delhi. Drive through the city viewing the government buildings, President's House and Parliament House. Also Visit India Gate and drive past the government buildings. Built as an imperial capital by the British, all the main buildings, designed in the 1920's by the British architects Lutyens and Baker, remain today.

At one end of the avenue known as the Rajpath (literally the "King's Way") is the War Memorial Arch, better known as India Gate, a memorial to the 90,000 Indians who gave their lives in World War I. As you drive along the majestic Rajpath - the broadest avenue of Delhi - our first views encompass the enormous Secretariat buildings with their 1,000 rooms and miles of corridors, and the Parliament House, a huge circular building in red and grey sandstone with an open colonnade extending around its circumference. At the other end stands the Rashtrapati Bhawan, one of the largest and most grandiose of the Raj constructions, built originally for the British Viceroy and now the official residence of the President of India.

Continue to Humayun's Tomb. Emperor Humayun, the father of Emperor Akbar, lies buried in this magnificent monument built in red sandstone. Haji Begum, Humayun's first wife and mother of Emperor Akbar designed and supervised the entire construction. Her design was way ahead of the times and is the basis for the design of the famous Taj Mahal, built almost a hundred years later!

Your tour ends with a visit to Qutab Minar, India's tallest stone tower. At a height of 234 feet, the "Tower of Victory" is considered by some to be the world's most perfect specimen of tower architecture. A mathematical marvel, this building has remained standing for eight centuries. Another important monument within the complex

is the Quwwat ul-Islam Mosque, literally translated as 'The Might of Islam'. Though today the mosque is in ruins, it is believed that twenty-seven Jain temples were destroyed, and their materials reused to construct the monuments of the complex.

Meal Plan Breakfast

DAY 3

Delhi to Agra

This morning you will drive Agra, the capital to the Mughals in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Agra was also the repository of many of the Mughals most famous monuments. The city has long astonished visitors and many places of interest date back to the Afghans, who predated the Mughals.

Arrive and proceed to your hotel.

Later today you will visit the Agra Fort. Set on the bend of the River Yamuna. Emperor Akbar built it as his citadel over the years 1565-1573. This magnificent fort, with its imposing gates, walls of red sandstone and moat, dominates the center of the city. The fort was built by three different Mughal Emperors: Akbar the Great erected the walls, gates and first buildings; Emperor Shah Jehan built the impressive imperial quarters and mosque; while Emperor Aurangzeb added the outer ramparts. A visit to the Hall of Public Audience and the Royal Pavilions is a must! At the end of his life, Aurangzeb imprisoned his father, Shah Jehan, at Agra Fort - a mild punishment considering the luxury of the fort. Legend states that Shah Jehan died in Muasamman Burj, a tower with a marble balcony with an excellent view of the Taj Mahal.

Continue to the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is everything that has been said about it and more. Visitors are asked to remove their shoes prior to entering the interiors of the Taj Mahal.

Taking 22 years and 20,000 men to build, the white marble was quarried 200 miles away and was transported to the site by a fleet of 1000 elephants! Built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal (literally translated as Jewel of the Palace). She died at the age of 39 giving birth to her fourteenth child and he went into mourning for two years, turning away from the business of running an empire and becoming more involved with his other great love - architecture! Feast your eyes on the exquisite intricate marble inlay work! Legend has it that the cenotaphs were inlaid with diamonds. A blanket woven of pearls covered Mumtaz's shroud. A railing of gold circled the cenotaphs, which was later on replaced by a marble one. Gold leaf was said to have covered all or part of the dome.

Return to your hotel where the rest of the day is at leisure.

Meal Plan Breakfast

Duration 1 Night

Accommodation ITC Mughal

DAY 4

Agra to Ranthambore National Park

Early this morning proceed to the railway station where you will board your train to Bharatpur, stopping en route to visit Fatehpur Sikri or "The City of Victory - the deserted red sandstone city, built by the Great Mughal Emperor

Akbar as his capital and palace in the late 16th century. Fatehpur Sikri (the City of Victory) was the capital of the Mughal Empire for only some 10 years. It was abandoned soon after it was built when the local wells went dry and it remains today in much the same condition that it was over 300 years ago. It is complete with palaces and mosques and used to be a town larger than London when it was originally constructed.

Arrive Bharatpur and proceed for lunch at a local resort.

Later continue to the railway station where you will board your train to Sawai Madhopur, and home to the Ranthambore National Park originally was the hunting reserve for the Maharaja of Jaipur and it was declared a game sanctuary in 1955. In 1972 this park came under Project Tiger and finally in 1980 it became a National Park. Ranthambore is one of the best locations to get a close view of the tigers with a viewing sometimes as near as 30 feet.

Upon arrival you will be met and escorted to your resort.

You will enjoy dinner at the resort.

Meal Plan Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Duration 2 Nights

Accommodation Sawai Vilas

DAY 5

Ranthambore National Park

Early this morning you will enjoy a pre-booked game drive in a canter through the Ranthambore National Park. You will be accompanied by a naturalist. This is the perfect time and place to indulge in wildlife photography.

Numerous animals are found in this park and it is common to spot antelopes, nilgai, sambhar and chital (different species of deer). Down by the lake and at the water holes many other animals can be sighted like the sloth bear, wild boar, porcupine, jackal, leopard, jungle cat and crocodile. A large number of birds are also found within the park and there are over 300 different species of birds here. But of course it is the tigers that everyone comes to see. And seeing these magnificent animals in the wild is a fantastic experience. Ranthambore is one of the best locations to get a close view. They are sighted almost daily somewhere in the park especially early in the morning. The luckiest visitors may catch a glimpse of tigers hunting, and the females taking care of their cubs.

Return to your hotel for lunch.

This afternoon you will set out on another game drive.

Dinner is served at the resort.

Meal Plan Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 6

Ranthambore to Jaipur

This morning you will enjoy a visit to the Ranthambore Fort, balanced on a hilltop and often shrouded in mist at the time of early morning game drives. A visit to its thousand-year-old ramparts provides a magnificent view of

the surrounding area. Built by the Mughals, the fort was given as a gift to the Maharaja of Jaipur in the 17th century. Its breath-taking interiors display intricate workmanship, and the Hammir Court is known for its acoustics -- even a whisper can be heard at the other end of the building. A visit to the Gupt Ganga, a series of steps cut into the rock and leading down to the source of a perennial stream, is also a must.

Continue with a visit to the local Dastkar Center that was created for an income generation programme for the village crafts persons, particularly women. The key objectives of this organisation is to use local craft skill and materials to create products whose production and sale would generate employment and income, without destroying the traditional structures of village life, or preventing the producers from engaging in other agricultural and household duties.

Whilst visiting you will be able to see a variety of carefully crafted products - patchwork cushions, quilts, lacquer bangles, decorative pot holders, scarves, terracotta-ware and rag rugs.

After your visit continue to Jaipur, a city, whose past is never too far from hand. The city of victory, Jaipur presides over the fascinating desert state and its people: surrounded by rugged hills, each crowned by a formidable fort; and beautiful palaces, mansions and gardens dotted throughout its precincts. The palaces and forts of yesteryear that were witness to royal processions and splendour are now living monuments, accepted quite naturally into the lifestyles of the people of the "pink city". Jaipur, whose past is never too far from hand. The city of victory, Jaipur presides over the fascinating desert state and its people: surrounded by rugged hills, each crowned by a formidable fort; and beautiful palaces, mansions and gardens dotted throughout its precincts. The palaces and forts of yesteryear that were witness to royal processions and splendour are now living monuments, accepted quite naturally into the lifestyles of the people of the "pink city". There is a timeless quality to Jaipur's bazaars and its people. With its historical past, Jaipur revives legends of the ancient Rajputs.

Arrive and proceed to your hotel and the rest of the day is at leisure.

Meal Plan Breakfast

Duration 2 Nights

Accommodation ITC Rajputana Palace Hotel

DAY 7

Jaipur Sightseeing

The morning you will drive along the streets of Jaipur, to Amber Fort, stopping en-route to view and photograph the Palace of Winds. Completed in 1799, the Palace was originally built to allow the sequestered ladies of the court to view the bustling life of the city. It is popularly known as Hawa Mahal, because of the perforated screen facade which catches the welcome breeze or Hawa.

Continue on to the Amber Fort. On the crest of a rugged hilltop and overlooking Lake Moata, the fort evokes thoughts of legends and fairy tales. The fort has been constructed in white and red sandstone. The Fort is unique in that it's outside, an imposing and rugged defensive structure, is markedly different from its inside, an ornate, lavish interior influenced by both Hindu and Muslim styles of ornamentation. The walls of the interior of the fort are covered with murals, frescoes, and paintings depicting various scenes from daily life. Other walls are covered with intricate carvings, mosaic, and minute mirror work.

This afternoon you will explore the city. Your program begins with a visit to the City Palace complex that continues to evoke the splendour of a bygone era. In an unending series of delights, from its grand aged entrance to the play of ornamental fountains, the City Palace is a dazzling showplace of Hindu and Mughal architecture. Amongst the pleasures of the Palace is a museum with ample evidence of opulence.

Next to the city palace is Jantar Mantar, literally translated as Calculation Instrument. This Observatory was built between 1728 and 1734 by Maharaja Jai Singh, Jantar Mantar was built on a grand scale and was way beyond its time. This was modeled after the one that was built in Delhi, the then Mughal capital. He had constructed a total of five of which the one in Jaipur is the largest.

After your tour board a cycle rickshaw to explore the local markets! Jaipur is a shopper's paradise, renowned for gems and jewelry: precious and semi-precious stones set in gold, 'meenakari' (enamel work), antique and chunky silver jewelry; and Colombian emeralds which are actually brought to Jaipur for cutting and polishing and are available at reasonable prices. Other finds include carpets, 'Pechwai' and miniature paintings on silk and paper, a unique type of blue pottery and even glass bangles! Fabric-wise, there are brocades, tie-and-dye, block printed, and the famous 'mirror work' embroidery, also used in table linen, cushion covers and ready made garments.

Return to your hotel.

Meal Plan Breakfast

DAY 8

Depart Delhi

Following a leisurely breakfast, you will be transferred back to Delhi. Upon arrival proceed to the airport for your onwards flight.

Meal Plan Breakfast