

Day 1: New Delhi, India

Arrive in New Delhi and transfer to the Taj Mahal Hotel. One of the most distinguished addresses in the city, this landmark 5-star hotel provides a comfortable respite after your travels. The evening is at leisure to enjoy dinner on your own—try one of the hotel's fine restaurants, or inquire with the concierge for nearby suggestions.

Day 2: Discovering Old Delhi

India's thriving capital offers a captivating introduction to the country and its cultures, in vivid counterpoint to the wild places that lie ahead. There are two distinct sections of the city, ancient Old Delhi, and New Delhi, founded in 1911 by the British at the height of their empire. A half-day tour, timed to avoid the heat of midday, explores centuries of Old Delhi's complex, multi-layered history. A rickshaw ride provides a fitting overview, while a guided walk through the narrow lanes and bustling Chandni Chowk Market reveals the colorful display of everyday commerce. We tour the architectural treasure of Jama Masjid, India's largest mosque and the magnum opus of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. Completed in 1656 by more than 5,000 laborers, the grand edifice features alternating vertical strips of red sandstone and white marble, with a vast inner courtyard that can hold 25,000 people. We also visit Bangla Sahib, one of the country's most revered Sikh temples. The complex includes the main temple, a school, a sacred water tank and a large community kitchen that generously prepares over 10,000 free meals each day, known as langar, cooked by volunteers using donated ingredients from Sikh farmers. This evening, join our Expedition Leader for a welcome dinner and orientation to the wild adventures that await.

Day 3: Ranthambore National Park

Transfer by air-conditioned van to Ranthambore National Park and our luxurious 5-star tented accommodations inspired by the opulent caravans of India's royal families of old. Spend the next four nights surrounded by tranquil gardens, forest and grasslands that are the domain of the Bengal tiger, staying in utmost comfort with superb proximity to the park.

Once the hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Jaipur, today Ranthambore National Park is one of India's top conservation success stories. With tiger numbers steadily on the rise, it offers India's best opportunity to observe and photograph them in the wild, especially at this dry time of year when vegetation is sparse and tigers more readily visible. The park sits between the rugged Aravalli and Vindhya hills, a broad swath of jungle scrub bordered by steep, rocky ridges and highland plateaus dotted with lakes. More than 300 different plant species grow here, though the environs are largely dry deciduous forest—and that means it's easier to spot tigers and other wildlife, in contrast to places where the understory is lush.

This afternoon, we make our first foray into the park. Covering 150 square miles, Ranthambore is one of India's largest nature reserves and certainly among its most famous, given its reputation for excellent tiger viewing prospects. While tigers are always elusive, the odds of seeing them are high in Ranthambore, especially at the time of year we visit.

Days 4–6: On Safari in Ranthambore

Our daily safari drives take place early in the morning and late afternoon, when temperatures are relatively cooler, wildlife is more active and light conditions are better for photography. We head out in 4x4 vehicles before sunrise each morning, eager for the day's discoveries. In contrast to an African safari where wildlife is often on display before us, India's animals take more effort to find. Tigers typically take shelter under the cover of trees and bushes, hiding from their prey and seeking relief from the heat. Because their stripes provide excellent camouflage, we have to work hard to locate them. But our Expedition Leaders are seasoned trackers, and we follow their lead, listening for sounds and watching for signs that may reveal a tiger's location: rustling grass, deer racing away from its presence, birds circling overhead.

While tigers are our main focus, other wildlife is also plentiful in the park. Sightings may include spotted deer, nilgai, jackal, jungle cat, sloth bear, sambar, chinkara gazelle, wild boar, langur monkeys and rhesus macaques. Ranthambore is also home to a notable leopard population, although they tend to stay in higher, more inaccessible areas and are not frequently visible. Birds flourish here, too, with more than 300 species in the reserve. Keep an eye out for crested serpent eagles, paradise flycatchers, painted storks, peacocks and many more.

In the middle of the day, return to the comfort of our lodge to relax or cool off in the swimming pool, or visit the Ranthambore School of Art and Dhonk, a local handicraft training institute.

Day 7: Transfer to Delhi / Depart

Our tiger safari comes to a close today as we return via air-conditioned van to Delhi. A room in Delhi is provided before transferring to the airport later today for departing flights.