

# TAJ & VARANASI TOUR

## 10 nights / 11 days



### Day 01 Arrive Delhi

Upon arrival at Delhi Airport, you will be met by your car with chauffeur for the short transfer to your hotel for night stay. Rest of the day free. No meals neither early check in is Included on day1. **Night in Delhi**

### Day 02 in Delhi

Breakfast. Full day sightseeing of Delhi with guide. You could include some of the following: Old Delhi, Red Fort from outside, the Jama Masjid Mosque, with a rickshaw ride through the Chandni Chowk visiting the Spice, Wedding and Silver Markets and then the Birla Temple, Parliament Buildings of Sir Edwin Lutyens, India Gate and Humayun's Tomb.

Start the morning with a visit to Old Delhi. Built in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan this old city is still a dense network of overcrowded homes, markets and endless alleyways dominated by the enormous **Red Fort**. Go by **cycle rickshaw through Chandni Chowk** (closed on a Sunday) a bustling thoroughfare of shops, craftsmen's workshops, mosques and temples. Continue onto **Jama Masjid** the largest mosque in India and then to the Red Fort (closed on a Monday) with its imposing appearance and towering entrance. Also visit **Rajghat**, the cremation place of Mahatma Gandhi.

Continue to visit the **Qutub Minar** complex housing an impressive 13<sup>th</sup> Century 72m victory tower.

In the afternoon drive south to New Delhi designed by British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens in a combination of western and eastern styles. Proceed up to **Rashtrapati Bhavan** once the Viceroy's abode but now the official residence of the President of India and then across to the eastern end of the Rajpath to the imposing **India Gate**. This war memorial, designed by Lutyens, commemorates the Indian soldiers who died in the First World War, on the Northwest Frontier and in the Afghan War of 1919 and, most recently, in the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971. **Overnight stay in Delhi.**

### Day 03 Delhi - Samode – Jaipur (By surface, Aprox 06h)

Half Board. After breakfast drive to Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan. This is a busy bustling city where the bazaars spill over on to the streets, to mingle with the handcarts, camels, elephants, scooters, rickshaws and tuk-tuks. It is lively and colourful and painted pink!

**Lunch.** Before reaching Jaipur, en route stop for lunch at Samode - 50 Kms from Jaipur famous for the elegant Palace, we explore the splendid Palace and have the lunch in the Palace.



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Continued day 3/.....

Continue to Jaipur, for 02 nights stay. (Approx. 01 hrs drive). The highly distinctive planned city of Jaipur, founded in 1727 by Maharaja Jai Singh II, is a colourful capital characterized by fine bazaars, intricately carved palaces and havelis as well as powerful forts. Inheriting the kingdom in a period of instability Maharaja Jai Singh II defeated the Maratha armies of Gujarat and Maharashtra and successfully forged diplomatic ties with the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb thus achieving the political stability he needed to pursue his scientific and cultural interests.

Jaipur is very much the product of his intellectual talent and with the Brahmin scholar Vidyadhar Bhattacharya he was able to utilize his love of mathematics, science and astrology to design his city on a distinctive grid based on Hindu representations of the universe which lasts to this day.

Check in at your hotel at rest of the day free. **Night stay in Jaipur.**

#### **Day 04 in Jaipur**

Breakfast. Whole day to sightsee with an English-speaking guide. Suggest you begin the day to visit Amber Fort Palace, **(Elephant ride)** to view the beautiful palace with its ornate mosaics, coloured stone inlays, intricately painted murals, palaces, temples & cooling courtyard watercourses. In the afternoon take a guided walking tour through the old city to explore the colourful markets & bazaars before continuing onto the **City Palace** complex that occupies the centre of Jaipur. Painted pink as a mark of welcome, the City Palace was completed in 1732 & houses the intriguing Armory Museum. Nearby is the **Hawa Mahal**, or Palace of the Winds, which forms part of the east wall of the City Palace complex. Built at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century these five storied structures with its elaborate façade was built for the ladies of the harem and is best seen from the street outside. Further along is the **Jantar Mantar (Observatory)** the largest stone observatory in world.

Jaipur is famous as a centre for carpet weaving – silk and wool – and for Jaipur blue pottery, but probably best known for its exquisite gems and jewellery. **Night stay in Jaipur.**

#### **Day 05 Jaipur – Abhaneri - Fatehpur Sikri – Agra (By surface, approx. 06h)**

Breakfast. Leave Jaipur after an early breakfast for the drive to Agra, stopping on the way to visit hidden secrets of India, the most fascinating and largest stepwell built by King Chanda somewhere in the 9th century. It has 3,500 narrow steps arranged in perfect symmetry, which descend 20m to the bottom of the well. About 64 feet deep, it is India's largest and deepest stepwells with 13 floors.

Before reaching Agra, we will visit Fatehpur Sikri, the deserted capital city of Emperor Akbar. Visit the beautiful Dargah Mosque, the Buland Darwaza and the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti. Also, the palaces of Akbar's women; Jodh Bal Palace for his Hindu mother, Birbal Bhawan for his favourite courtier and Golden House for his Christian wife. Also make a visit to the Karawan Serai which is a courtyard surrounded by hostels used for visiting merchants, the Paanch Mahal, the Treasury, the Diwan-I-Khas and the Diwan-I-Am.

Continue the short drive to Agra for overnight stay. Rest of the day free. Night in Agra.

## Day 06 In Agra

Breakfast. Morning sightseeing with an English-speaking guide. We would suggest to begin your day visiting **Taj Mahal (closed on Fridays)**, the tomb of Mumtaz, beloved wife of the emperor Shah Jahan and arguably the greatest monument to love, built by Shah Jahan as a memorial to his wife Mumtaz & a building world renowned for its power and beauty. The craftsmanship is outstanding with semi-precious stones inlaid into the marble in beautiful patterns, a process known as pietra dura, whilst the white marble reflects every change in light allowing the Taj to appear to change its hue according to the light & time of day.

Continue to visit the imposing **Agra Fort** on the banks of the River Yamuna which was established by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1565. This powerful imperial fortress dominates the centre of the city & the red sandstone walls enclose a vast area which comprises of palaces, impressive reception rooms and two very beautiful mosques. Afterwards

In the afternoon visit the tomb of **Itmad-ud-Daula**, one of the most beautiful existing Mughal Tombs, built entirely built in white marble in the region. The tomb is also quite famous for the glorious pietra dura (stone inlay) decoration which depicts cypresses, wine glasses and an amazing variety of geometrical arabesque. It stands across Yamuna River and approx. one and a half kilometres away from the Taj. This magnificent tomb belongs to the era of Jahangir and it contains cenotaphs of *Mirza Ghivas* and *Asmat Begum*, the parents of the powerful Mughal Empress *Nurjahan*, queen of *Jahangir* who was an exceptional beauty and an astute administrator. The tomb is significantly built quite departed and aloof from the other Mughal Tombs.

Rest of the time free. Night in Agra.

## Day 07 Agra – Orchha

Early morning transfer to railway station in time to take the train to Jhansi (approx. 02h). Upon arrival you will be met by your driver who will take you to the tiny village of Orchha, once the capital of the Bundelas. Its origin during the medieval times of 16<sup>th</sup> Century built by Bundela rulers.

In the afternoon visit museums, palaces, monuments, temples and is built on the River Betwa and is India's most fabulous Mughal heritage sites, ("LITERALLY HIDDEN PLACE") is still free of development, which is a great relaxing stop on the way to Khajuraho.

Night in Orchha.



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## **Day 08 Orchha – Khajuraho (surface, 3h)**

After breakfast drive to Khajuraho, famous for its temples with erotic carvings. Khajuraho is situated in the state of Madhya Pradesh and is spread over an area of 16.93 sq. km. The theme of the Khajuraho temples is the celebration of women and her myriad moods and facets. The temples are built around 1000 years ago under the artistic patronage of the Chandela Rajput kings of Central India. Sculptures at Khajuraho temples are richly curved, magnificent in form and unique. These temples stand tall and proud in the temple architecture of India.

Check in hotel. In the afternoon visit Eastern and Western erotic temples of Khajuraho.

Khajuraho has about 85 temples in total that were constructed over a period of 100 years from 950 AD to 1050 AD. Unfortunately, only 22 temples have survived the ravages of time. Every temple at Khajuraho is very artistically made. The temples are divided into three geographical groups of Western, Eastern and Southern.

The Western group is certainly the best known, as it houses the Kandariya Mahadev, which is 31 km high and yet perfectly symmetrical. The main shrine has an exquisitely carved entrance arch with a multitude of themes. The western group also houses the Chaunsat Yogini, the only granite temple in the Khajuraho group. Dedicated to Kali, it is also unique in being quadrangular in plan.

Hindu and Jain temples make up the Eastern Group, which lies close to the Khajuraho village. The largest Jain temple, Parswanath, is in this group. The Southern Group of temples lies 5 km from the Khajuraho village. The fine Chaturbhuj Temple in this group has a massive intricately carved image of Vishnu in the sanctum. **Night stay in Khajuraho.**

## **Day 09 Fly Khajuraho - Varanasi**

Breakfast. Moring at leisure. Later depending on your flight, transfer to the airport for Varanasi, one of the most holy places for Hindus. Built on the banks of the River Ganges, this visit will show you the spiritual side of the Indian culture. **Please note**, the flight does not operate every day, so pls check before booking your holidays / International flights.

Upon arrival at Varanasi airport you will be met by a member of our team at the airport along with Car and chauffeur and transferred to the hotel for 02 nights stay. Rest of the day free.

Enjoy evening ceremony at the Ganges River. The best way to reach by man-pulling rickshaw. The evening Ganga Aarti is an hour-long ritual performed daily at the bank of the main Ghats, absolutely don't miss the grand 'aarti' at Dasaashwamedh Ghat, conducted every sunset by five white-robed priests. These five young men sway in seemingly choreographed movements, worshipping the river goddess with incense, camphor, flowers and earthen lamps. Thousands of illuminated lamps are immersed in the waters of the holy Ganges and the floating lamps add a divine look to the river at dusk. Sit with some 'sadhu' and enjoy knowing their lifestyle from proximity. You might even run into someone who is more than 100 years old!

The Ghats also provide a good option for photography with serene temples and their bustling courtyards creating a perfect back drop. **Night stay in Varanasi.**

## **Day 10 in Varanasi**

Early morning boat ride over the river Ganges to witness the sunrise and the many pilgrims performing their morning rituals. Along the banks there are more than 100 hundred temples and Ghats. This is a "must do"! Return to hotel for breakfast.

Later proceed for a sightseeing tour of Varanasi visiting the *Vishwanath Temple*, erected by Rani Ahalayabai Holker of Indore in 1776. The gold plating on the shikharas was a gift of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1835. It is therefore popularly known as Golden Temple. *Bharat Mata Temple* is a novel temple dedicated to Mother India, which instead of the customary gods and the goddesses' houses one of the most perfect relief maps of India carved out of marble. *Tulsi Manas Temple* was constructed in 1964 by a philanthropist family of Varanasi and is dedicated to Lord Rama. The temple is situated at the place where the great seer of the medieval ages, Tulsidas, lived and wrote the epic Ramcharitmanas expounding the history and deeds of Lord Rama who was an incarnation of the god Vishnu

Afternoon visit to Sarnath, 10km from Varanasi and the place of Buddha's first sermon after he got enlightened in Bodh Gaya. Later, Emperor Ashoka built magnificent stupas and monasteries here which were for the main part destroyed by Muslim invaders. Many of the monuments are set in pleasant gardens, the most important being the Dhamekh Stupa. **Return to Varanasi for your overnight stay.**

## **Day 11 Fly Varanasi - Delhi**

Breakfast. Morning free. In time transfer to Varanasi airport for Delhi. Upon arrival in Delhi meet and transfer to the International airport for your connecting flight for onward destination

## **End of our services**

Please note: For International flights, airlines require you to report for check in 3 hrs prior to departure if you are flying economy class