

THE ROYAL RAJASTHAN

15 Nights / 16 Days

Delhi – Mandawa – Bikaner – Jaisalmer – Jodhpur – Ranakpur – Udaipur –
Pushkar - Jaipur – Agra – Delhi

Explore the Indus Valley Civilization in the state of Rajasthan which has a history dating back thousands of years. The early medieval period saw the rise of the Mughal Empire. After Indian Independence in 1947, the various princely states of Rajasthan were integrated into India.

Experience the mesmerizing beauty of the Taj in Agra city, which was built between 1631 – 1648 by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the memory of his favourite wife Mumtaz Mahal. Taj Mahal is an immense mausoleum of white marble, a jewel of Muslim art and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage.



ITINERARY

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. Night in Delhi. **Note**> No meals neither early check in is Included on day1. (Standrad Hotel check in 14h)

Day 02 in Delhi

Breakfast at the hotel. 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 17th 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, closed on Mondays (DECLARED A WORLD HERITAGE SITE BY UNESCO IN 2007) which you will see from the outside, a huge octagon of colossal proportions.

From Red Fort take a 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. **Note** > Both men and women should not wear sleeveless clothing and must cover their legs and head before entering to the Mosque. In fact, this rule apply to all religious places in India.

Also visit Rajghat, the cremation place of Mahatma Gandhi, known as the father of the Nation. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the leaders of India's independence movement, Gandhi is known for the philosophy of "satyagraha", which fosters combatting violence with non-violent resistance.

Optional & Not Included > lunch at local restaurant.

After lunch drive south to New Delhi designed by British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens in a combination of western and eastern styles. Photo stop near by The President House, always subject to security protocol. Once it was the Viceroy's abode but now the official residence of

the President of India. Drive through just across to the eastern end of the Rajpath to the imposing India Gate, the war memorial. India Gate was 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.

Last, we will visit the Qutub Minar complex housing an impressive 13th Century 72m victory tower, an excellent example of Afghan architecture constructed with marble and red sandstone. Return to your hotel for night stay.

Day 03 Delhi – Mandawa (By surface, approx. 06h)

After breakfast leave Delhi for the beginning of your tour of Rajasthan. You will drive to the Shekhawati region, famous for its rich heritage, beautiful architectures full of fresco paintings, painted Havelis and wild peacocks and located in the northeast part of Rajasthan.

Afternoon visit to the Havelis in the surrounding villages of Nawalgarh, Dundlod and Mandawa itself. Night stay in Mandawa or Nawalgarh.

Day 04 Mandawa – Bikaner (By surface, approx. 04h)

After breakfast, drive through the Shekhawati towards the desert of Thar. Upon arrival in Bikaner, check in to your hotel. Your afternoon sightseeing will include a visit to the Junagarh Fort. One of the most interesting forts in Rajasthan, it houses the palaces of the royal family and a splendid museum. If time allows, also worth a visit are the Jain Temples of the brothers Sandeshwar and Bhandeshwar plus the nearby Neminath Sandeshwar Temple. Night stay in Bikaner.

Day 05 Bikaner - Jaisalmer (By surface, approx. 06h)

Leave after breakfast for the drive west into the Thar Desert and the walled fortress town of Jaisalmer. This was once a stopping place on the silk route for the caravanserais from China to Saudi Arabia.

Upon arrival check in at hotel. After little rest we suggest you enjoy sunset at Bada Bagh, which literally means 'Big Garden', is located on the Ramgarh road. It was commissioned by Maharawal Jait Singh in the early 16th century and completed by his son Lunakaran after his death. The site has three different things to watch, a garden, a tank and a dam. In the vicinity itself you will find Govardhan Stambh (pillar). This pillar was constructed to commemorate the construction of the Dam and the tank. In the local dialect the Dam and the tank are known as

Jait Bandh and the Jait Sar respectively. It is believed that these are based on the name of the man who constructed them. The Jait Bandh is a dominating structure. It is about 1,200 feet in length and 350 feet in width. If you observe it closely you will notice that this has been built out of solid blocks of stone. The same material has been used for the construction of well as well as the tank. Return to your hotel. Night stay in Jaisalmer.

Day 06 In Jaisalmer

After breakfast visit the sandstone havelis (merchant's houses). The most well-known are the Patwon-ki-haveli, Salim Singh-ki-haveli and the Nathmal-ki-haveli. Further interesting sights are the lake, citadels, chhatris (monuments to the Maharajas) Jain Temples, the Fort and of course the bazaars. There are many rooftop restaurants in and around Jaisalmer where you can see the Fort itself, with its 90 turrets fully illuminated at night.

A trip out to the desert is also suggested today. You could leave Jaisalmer late afternoon for the drive out towards the village of Sam. Here you can mount camels for a short camel ride which will take you to the sand dunes at Sunset Point. After sunset return to your hotel for overnight stay in Jaisalmer.

Day 07 Jaisalmer - Jodhpur (By surface, approx. 06h)

After breakfast drive to the blue city of Jodhpur, the second largest city in the state of Rajasthan, in northwest India, in the Thar desert, known for its many palaces, forts and temples. The city also known for his blue houses. In the beginning the Brahmin had their houses blue only and very soon the colour was adopted by the other castes as well because it was said that it repelled the heat and mosquitoes.

Afternoon free and night in Jodhpur. If you wish, in the evening you visit the bazaar and Jodhpur city by foot, which is fascinating.

Day 08 In Jodhpur

After breakfast visit the magnificent fort palace of Mehrangarh. Perched more than 300 feet above the city, it not only is a fascinating place to visit but affords incredible views over the city, which is painted blue.

Continue to visit Jaswant Thada, lies to the left of the Mehrangarh fort complex. It is a royal cenotaph made up of white marble. It was built to commemorate Maharaja Jaswant Singh. Some rare portraits of the former rulers of Jodhpur are also displayed here.

In the afternoon we will visit a Bishnoi community, who are staunch worshipers of nature in all its forms, especially the sanctity of plant and animal life. Even pray to the green trees and animals that inhabit their land. They worship Lord Vishnu and are vegetarians. Their strict way of life is based on the texts of the guru Jambheswar, who in the 15th century wrote the 29 rules that give this community its name ('Bishnoi' means '29'). Night in Jodhpur.

Day 09 Jodhpur – Ranakpur – Udaipur (By surface, approx. 06h)

After breakfast drive to lake city of Udaipur. Also known for the Venice of India as it acclaimed the most romantic & heritage city in India and built around the Aravalli hills. It considered one of the 7 pearls of Rajasthan, and surrounded by a wall of 5 gates. Udaipur is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating cities in India.

We stop on the way at Ranakpur to visit the Jain Temples. These temples were built in the 15th century in a stunning location and set amidst deep forest. Built on 1444 marble pillars, they are some of the finest examples of Jain architecture and not to be missed. In general, the Jain temples of Ranakpur present a distinct style of their own. The ceilings of the temples are adorned with foliate scrollwork and geometric patterns. The top and bottom part of the domes are joined by Brackets with figures of deities on them. The most important amongst all the temples within the complex is the Chaumukha Temple, dedicated to the first Jain Tirthankara, Adinath, it is a four faced temple which has a basement of 48000 sq feet. The temple boasts of four subsidiary shrines, 24 pillared halls and 80 domes standing on the support of nearly 400 columns (the total number of columns in the temple complex, however, is much larger, around 1444). Each of the columns is richly carved and interestingly no two columns present the same design. Moreover, the columns change color from golden to pale blue with the passage of every hour during the day.

Continue drive to Udaipur for night stay. Check in hotel and rest of the day free. Night stay in Udaipur.

Day 10 In Udaipur

After breakfast we will visit the impressive and powerful City Palace. It is the largest palace complex in the state of Rajasthan. It is a conglomerate of buildings added by various Maharajas. Despite this, it maintains a surprising uniformity of design. We will also visit the Jagdish Temple and the bazaars full of shops selling textiles, footwear and miniature paintings.

In the afternoon after we will Visit Saheliyon Ki Bari or "Garden of the Maidens". It is a small ornamental garden located on the shores of the second largest lake in Udaipur, the Fateh

Sagar. It was built by King Maharana Sangram Singh for a melancholy princess who worshiped the rain and used as a resting and walking place for court ladies.

Afternoon we would suggest an afternoon boat ride over the lake to the Jag Mandir Island. The High Tea (**OPTIONAL & NOT INCLUDED**) at the Fateh Prakash Palace with its magnificent views over the lake is highly recommended. Night in Udaipur

Day 11 Udaipur – Pushkar (By surface, approx. 06h)

Today drive north to the holy site of Pushkar. Built around a holy lake it is a place of pilgrimage for Hindus. Here the pilgrims perform their daily prayers and rituals. The lake is surrounded by more than 100 temples which all have Ghats - staircases- leading down into the lake.

Pushkar is home to countless temples. Most of them are not very old since many were destroyed during the conquests of the territory by the Muslims. The Brahma temple is the most important temple here and is, in fact, the only Brahma temple in India. Pushkar is also known for the Annual Camel Fair.

Pushkar is best seen by foot and for the adventurous there is a climb up to the Savitri Temple. Night in Pushkar.

Day 12 Pushkar – Jaipur (By surface, Aprox 3h)

If you wish morning stroll around the Ghats if you wish to witness the pilgrims doing “puja” at the lakeside. 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.

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 13 in Jaipur

After breakfast the whole day to sightsee with an English-speaking guide. We will start the day taking photos of an incomparable work of art, the famous Palace of the Winds. It has a majestic facade in pink and white; the ladies of the palace, for whom it was built, could observe the outside without being seen through its many verandas filled with almost a thousand windows and latticework. **Note >** due to traffic rules it will be a quick stop to take the photos of the façade only.

After photo stop, we will approach the Amber Fort Palace, one of the greatest jewels in all of Rajasthan, with a succession of walls, access doors and palaces that rise on a rocky hill located next to a lake. Ascent to Amber Fort on foot or by Jeep. (NO Elephant ride**) * * Due to the animal protection law in India and of respect for the animals, we do NOT use the elephant to go up to the fort. However, if still someone wants to ride an Elephant, please let your guide know in the morning when you start your tour. He will do his best to help you, but sometimes the Elephants are NOT available at the last moments. However, payment must be made directly with the Mahout (elephant driver)

Optional & Not Included > lunch at local restaurant.

We will continue with the Jantar Mantar Astronomical Observatory with 18 giant precision instruments. We will end with a visit to the City Palace, or the Maharajah's Palace, which is a huge enclosure with numerous courtyards surrounded by various buildings.

If time permits, enjoy walking tour through the old city to explore the colourful markets & bazaars where you can enjoy shopping, both in bazaars and in small local shops. You can find handicrafts from India and the Rajasthan area, handmade rugs, goldsmiths, jewellery, and endless objects that will surprise you. 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 14 Jaipur – Abhaneri - Fatehpur Sikri – Agra (By surface, approx. 06h)

After breakfast, leave Jaipur after an early breakfast for the drive to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal. On the way we will 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.

Optional Lunch & Not Included > If you wish and the time permit which does not disturb any visit you can stop on the way for lunch at Laxmi Vilas Palace in Bhaktapur. An excellent place to have lunch before reaching Agra. It is a beautiful place where you can breathe peace, tranquillity, the spirit shakes before so much beauty.

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.

Day 15 In Agra

We suggest visiting the Taj Mahal at dawn, **(Closed on Fridays)** one of the most beautiful, suggestive, and fascinating architectural works in the world, and that never disappoints, no matter how many expectations you might had as it is the most beautiful, perfect, and balanced mausoleum in the world. It combines elements of Islamic, Persian, Indian and even Turkish architecture.

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. We will have time to walk around and enjoy the whole atmosphere of this monument dedicated to love. We return to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast we will visit the Red Fort, built in red sandstone which contains an impressive set of palaces and stately buildings with different architectural styles, 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. The Great Mughals of the Mughal Empire lived and ruled from here.

Continue to visit the mausoleum of Itmad-ud-Daula, one of the most beautiful existing Mughal Tombs, built entirely in marble. The tomb is also famous for the glorious pietra dura (stone inlay) decoration which depicts cypresses, wine glasses and an amazing variety of geometrical arabesque. 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.

Agra has many markets selling handicrafts, especially copies of the Taj Mahal, a variety of leather goods including shoes, bags, and knick-knacks, brass, stone, embroidered clothing, stonework inlaid with semi-precious stones. Night in Agra.

Afternoon at leisure. If you wish you en experience **(OPTIONAL & NOT INCLUDED)** an Ayurvedic massage. Ayurveda, also known as "The Science of Long Life". It is natural, ecological and exclusively prepared based on medicinal herbs and natural oils.

Day 16 Back to Delhi airport. (Surface. Aprox 4h)

Breakfast and free time on your own. (Official hotels check out: 11h)

In time drive back to Delhi airport for onward journey...

End of our services....

SOME OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS.

These are some optional suggestions and are always subject to change. Advance booking required at most of the places.

1. If required, the itinerary can be modified as per your wish.

2. If you wish you can experience an Ayurvedic Massage during your trip.
3. You can have an experience of yoga and meditation as well.
4. You can enjoy high end meals at the Imperial Hotel in Delhi, The Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, The Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra, or the ITC Mughal in Agra, The Lake Palace hotel in Udaipur.
5. An excellent restaurant 1135 AD at Amer Fort highly recommended for lunch.
6. You can enjoy lunch or dinner with the local family in Jaipur.
7. You can have mock wedding during the tour. (No legal value)
8. You can explore the narrow bazaars in Jaipur by riding a man pulling rickshaw.
9. You can enjoy dinner with typical Rajasthani dance in Jaipur.
10. You can enjoy Mohabbat the Taj Show in Agra.
11. If you wish you can visit Camel breeding farm in Bikaner.