

*Full Itinerary*

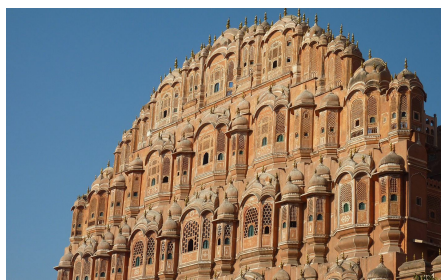
## SPLENDOURS OF INDIA



TALK TO OUR WELL  
TRAVELLED TEAM OF  
EXPERTS

**0844 3350 197**

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00  
GMT



### JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:**

Level 2

**DESTINATION:**

Splendours of India

**DURATION:**

12 days / 11 nights

**FLIGHT INFORMATION:**

Please arrange your flights into New Delhi Airport  
[DEL] on Day 1 and to depart on Day 12

**PICKUP LOCATION:**

New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport  
[DEL]

## OVERVIEW

Choose your own departure date for your group

Journey with us as we explore the best of Northern India, immersing yourself in the spectacular spiritual atmosphere & witnessing the truly astounding architecture...

Discover India's Taj Mahal at sunset and sunrise, learn about Islamic and Hindu Architecture with an informative tour of Agra's famous red sandstone Fort. Complete India's Golden Triangle with a trip to Jaipur's 'Pink City' for trips to see the magnificent Munghal history of Amber Fort, Jantar Mantar observatory and 'Palace of the Winds'.

Join us in India as we embark on exhilarating and exclusive 4x4 safaris in Ranthambore National Park in search of the elusive and majestic Indian Tiger and enjoy two contrasting rickshaw rides through Old Delhi and the UNESCO Heritage site of Keoladeo Ghana bird park with a guided bird-watching trip.

Experience the remarkable atmosphere of Varanasi and the ancient pilgrimage site of Sarnath where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon after enlightenment. Enjoy a boat cruise on the river Ganges and observe a traditional Hindu prayer ceremony.

Under the guidance of your Big Journey Company Tour Director and expert local guides explore the excellent local cuisine, luxurious accommodations and incredible architecture during this unforgettable cultural discovery through India.

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

**DAY 1** - Welcome to India

**DAY 2** - Discovering Delhi City

**DAY 3** - Agra Fort & the Taj Mahal

**DAY 4** - Sunrise at the Taj Mahal

**DAY 5** - Rickshaw Ride in Keoladeo Bird Park

**DAY 6** - On Safari in Ranthambore National Park

**DAY 7** - Journey to Jaipur

**DAY 8** - Jaipur's Amber Fort & Jantar Mantar

**DAY 9** - Voyage to Varanasi

**DAY 10** - Sacred Sarnath & River Ganges Prayer Ceremony

**DAY 11** - Return to Delhi

**DAY 12** - Goodbye India

## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - WELCOME TO INDIA

Upon arrival at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, you will be greeted in the arrivals lounge and transferred to your hotel where a traditional welcome awaits.

Once you have checked in you can enjoy some free time before meeting up with your Big Journey Company Tour Director and your tour group for a welcome dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

**Included meals:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Le Meridien, New Delhi

### DAY 2 - DISCOVERING DELHI CITY

This morning we will enjoy a guided tour of Delhi. The city consists of two parts - **Old & New Delhi**. Old Delhi was the capital of Muslim India between the 17-19th centuries and has many mosques, monuments and forts.

New Delhi (the imperial city) was created by the British as the capital of India.

We begin the day with an exploration of Old Delhi, visiting the **Jama Masjid** (royal mosque) built by the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan in 1656. It is one of the largest and most beautiful mosques in the world and is constructed in red sandstone and white marble. The main prayer hall has a seating capacity of more than 20,000 worshippers.

We will enjoy a quintessential experience in India, a **cycle rickshaw** ride through the narrow lanes of Chandni Chowk, the spine of traditional Old Delhi.

We will then visit New Delhi, driving through its majestic boulevards to the **Rashtrapati Bhawan** (Presidential Palace). This is where the Viceroy once lived and is now the official residence of the President of India before enjoying lunch together at a favoured local restaurant.

After lunch we will visit **Humayun's Tomb**, an enduring hallmark of Mughal architecture in India. Indeed, it is generally regarded as a prototype of Agra's Taj Mahal (you can make your own comparisons tomorrow!) The squat, domed building is constructed of white marble and red sandstone and boasts high arched entrances surrounded by formal gardens. Humayun's wife is buried in the sandstone and marble tomb.

We will later return to the hotel where we will enjoy dinner.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Le Meridien, New Delhi

### DAY 3 - AGRA FORT & THE TAJ MAHAL

This morning we make an early start with an air-conditioned train journey to Agra, home of the world-renowned **Taj Mahal**.

Two great Mughal monarchs, Akbar and Shah Jahan, transformed the little village of Agra into a befitting second capital of the Mughal Empire and giving it the name Dar-ul-Khilafat (seat of the Emperor).

Today, a visitor to Agra is caught in a world of contrasting edifices of red sandstone and white marble, narrow gullies and quaint buggies, and the irresistible charm this favourite city of the Mughals still retains.

On arrival, we will enjoy a guided tour of **Agra Fort** before checking in to the hotel. The Agra Fort lies in the heart of town on a bend in the river Yamuna. The red, sandstone structure is almost two miles long and contains palaces, audience halls and mosques. The fort shows Islamic and Hindu Architecture. We will explore in the company of a local guide, who will explain the fort's history and culture to us in full.

After check-in and lunch at the hotel, late afternoon we will take a guided visit to the Taj Mahal at sunset. It is said that the world can be divided in half into those who have seen the Taj Mahal and those who haven't yet seen it - today is your chance to join those more fortunate.

The Taj Mahal was built as a Mausoleum by Shah Jahan (the fifth Mughal Emperor) for his wife Mumtaz Mahal. The ivory-white, marble walls, perfect design balance, symmetry and elegant domes were completed in 1643. Some 20,000 artisan workers were engaged in the project under the guidance of lead architect Ustad Ahmad Lahauri at a completion cost (in today's money) of \$1 Billion USD!

Following sunset, today's dinner is arranged at one of the local restaurants in Agra.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** ITC Mughal, Agra

## DAY 4 - SUNRISE AT THE TAJ MAHAL

Perhaps the most romantic time to see the Taj Mahal is at sunrise. We rise early for a guided sunrise visit of the white marble mausoleum. Noted for its elegant domes, intricately carved screens and some of the best inlay work ever seen, the Taj Mahal has been described as a 'poem in stone' and there is no doubt the verse was love poetry. Both Emperor Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal lie entombed within.

After watching the shape and majesty of the Taj Mahal emerge as day dawns we return to our hotel for a well-deserved breakfast.

Buffet lunch is at the hotel in the hotel restaurant. The rest of the day is kept free with time available for shopping or exploring before dinner in a local restaurant in Agra.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** ITC Mughal, Agra

## DAY 5 - RICKSHAW RIDE IN KEOLADEO BIRD PARK

This morning after an early breakfast you will be driven to Bharatpur.

On arrival we will visit the **Keoladeo Ghana Bird Park**, a national park wetland where over 350 species of birds are resident including Cormorants, storks, sandpipers and numerous exotic herons, pelicans and cranes. We will be guided in a cycle rickshaw around the park enjoying a memorable and informative bird-watching experience from inside our chariots!

The sanctuary is 250 years old and is formed in a natural geographic depression where the rivers Gambhir and Banganga converge. It is a **UNESCO world heritage site** as it provides a 'habitat of rare and endangered species.' In addition to the birdlife and waterfowl, we may be fortunate enough to sight otters, jackals, foxes, mongooses or wild boar.

After enjoying the parkland, we will be transferred to Bharatpur railway station to board an air-conditioned train to Sawai Madhopur. We will continue to our hotel in Ranthambore where we will check-in and enjoy dinner in the hotel's restaurant.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Sawai Madhopur Lodge, Ranthambore

## DAY 6 - ON SAFARI IN RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

Today we will take morning and afternoon safaris to the **Ranthambore national Park** in exclusive open-sided Jeeps.

Ranthambore National Park is one of the largest national parks in northern India and provides the possibility of sighting the majestic Indian Tiger roaming within natural habitats. Surrounded by the Vindhya's and Aravali hill range and Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, it covers an area of approximately 1334 sq.km.

Today we will be accompanied by professional local guides, with in-depth local knowledge. The guides' experience and expertise will maximise opportunity to sight the myriad of animals that rove freely within the park and ensure a game drive to remember!

Make sure you have your binoculars ready and camera batteries fully charged.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Sawai Madhopur Lodge, Ranthambore

## DAY 7 - JOURNEY TO JAIPUR

This morning you will enjoy breakfast at the hotel before driving to Jaipur.

**Jaipur**, is known by UNESCO as 'the pink city of India' due to the predominant pink hue of its beautiful architecture. In 1876 the city was painted pink to celebrate the visit of the then Prince of Wales (King Edward VII)



Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, is named after the boy Prince, who commissioned it - Maharaja Jai Singh II - a warrior, astronomer and politician who reigned over the Mughals from 1699 to 1743. It is the home to the UNESCO world heritage sites of Amber Fort and Jantar Mantar.

We arrive in Jaipur and check in to our hotel before a late lunch. The rest of the day will be spent at leisure to follow your own interests; perhaps to shop for Jaipur blue pottery or block-printed cotton linens before dinner together.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** ITC Rajputana, Jaipur

## DAY 8 - JAIPUR'S AMBER FORT & JANTAR MANTAR

This morning after breakfast we will enjoy a guided excursion to the magnificent **Amber Fort**, a palace famous for excellence of design and decoration.

Within the complex is **Ganesh Pol**, an imposing gateway painted with the images of the elephant-headed god, Ganesh. Rajput and Mughal architectural styles are beautifully captured in the buildings and in the Charbagh garden, where the landscape is perfectly proportioned.

After lunch, this afternoon, you will be guided in a tour of **Jaipur city**. We will visit the high-walled **City Palace** which occupies one seventh of the centre of Jaipur. The palace has been described as a 'spectacular synthesis of Rajput and Mughal architecture.'

We will then visit the **Jantar Mantar Observatory** which houses 19 astronomical instruments built by King Sawal Jai Singh II the founder of Jaipur. Each instrument serves a particular function for measuring 'the harmony of heavens' and gives an accurate reading to this day.

Our tour culminates with a photo stop at **Hawa Mahal** known also as 'Palace of the Winds.' This beautiful façade is probably the most photographed in Jaipur. It's ornately carved windows were designed so that the ladies of the palace could look out onto the streets unobserved.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** ITC Rajputana, Jaipur

## DAY 9 - VOYAGE TO VARANASI

This morning we will check out from our hotel and be transferred to Jaipur Airport for a flight to Varanasi.

**Varanasi** is probably the place in India that has the most profound impact on visitors. Formerly known as Benares, it sits on a bend of the Ganges, and its spiritual significance comes from its status as a 'crossing place', where Gods and Goddesses can descend to earth.

It has been a pilgrimage site since the sixth century BC; Hindus try to visit at least once in their lifetime to pray and bathe in the holy river. The **Old City**, a maze of tiny alleys, has several temples, including the Golden Temple - which is only accessible to Hindus - and many cows, which have traffic priority!

You will be met on arrival in Varanasi and transferred to your hotel where we will enjoy dinner in the hotel restaurant.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Taj Ganges, Varanasi

## DAY 10 - SACRED SARNATH & RIVER GANGES PRAYER CEREMONY

We head out early this morning to enjoy a **boat cruise on river Ganges**. The ghats - hundreds of stone steps flanking the riverbank - are an incredible sight, particularly at sunrise when thousands of pilgrims bathe in the spiritually cleansing waters. We will also witness colourful temples lining the riverbank.

We return to our hotel for breakfast and some free time.

After lunch at the hotel, we will visit **Sarnath**, near the conflux of the Ganges and the Varuna rivers. This is one of four sacred places of Pilgrimages for those following Buddhist principles and is where Lord Buddha preached his first sermon after attaining enlightenment. It remains a spiritual place with many stupas, shrines and temples. We will also visit the museum which houses a collection of valuable ancient scriptures and artifacts related to Buddhism.

Later in the evening we will experience an 'Aarthi' or **Hindu prayer ceremony** on the bank of the river Ganges. We will be escorted to Dhaswashmedh Ghat from where we embark on a boat to witness 20 – 30 minutes of an Aarthi ceremony. The riverbanks 'ghats' and temples are lit with oil lamps and candles which create a magical effect. Devotees float the oil lamps in the water as an offering to the holy river.

After the ceremony we will return to our hotel where dinner will be served.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Taj Ganges, Varanasi

## DAY 11 - RETURN TO DEHLI

This morning after a leisurely breakfast, you will be transferred to Varanasi Airport for a flight to Delhi.

On arrival in Delhi you will be met and transferred to your hotel, after which the rest of the day is free leisure time available for any last-minute souvenirs or sight-seeing you may wish to do to complete your Indian adventure.

This evening we will come together to share a farewell meal in the hotel restaurant and perhaps discuss which The Big Journey Company destination you might explore next!

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Le Meridien, New Dehli

## DAY 12 - GOODBYE INDIA

After breakfast at the hotel, you will be transferred to New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport for your flights home at the end of your wonderful Indian adventure.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** none

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- One way internal flights: Jaipur [JAI] - Varanasi [VNS]; Varanasi [VNS] - New Delhi [DEL]
- Meet & Greet at the airport on arrival in Delhi
- Transfers as detailed in the itinerary in an air-conditioned deluxe vehicle
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- English speaking tour guide
- Tour Director from The Big Journey Company as well as the local tour guide (subject to minimum group size being reached.)
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- ATOL Protection
- Flights to/from New Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport - please ask for a flight quotation
- Transfers on arrival or departure, to/from the airport(s), outside of the tour dates
- Drinks
- Gratuities
- Visas, travel and medical insurance
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under included in price above
- Any meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Any optional activities offered
- Any COVID-related entry or exit requirements

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please note, flights to/from India are not included in this package. The Big Journey Company would be happy to provide a quotation for your flights - please contact us for further details
- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Check in is after 2 - 3pm and check out is before 10am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 – 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.
- Please consult your doctor for advice on vaccinations and inoculations before travel.



## BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

*Choose from the list of dates below*

*Call to Book*

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00 GMT