



Mystical India With Ranthambore Tiger Preserve

Mystical and spiritual, chaotic and confounding, India overflows with riches. While staying at excellent hotels, we travel the classic Golden Triangle: bustling Delhi; Agra, home of the sublime Taj Mahal; and Jaipur, great city of the Rajput. We also search for elusive Bengals at Ranthambore Tiger Preserve, and absorb the holiness of Varanasi.

With an Post-Tour Extension: Nepal

Itinerary

Created on Mar 19, 2024

Mystical India

Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Delhi, India

DAY 2: Arrive Delhi

We arrive in India's hyperactive capital late evening and transfer to our hotel.

Accommodations: Taj Palace

DAY 3: Delhi

After a morning at leisure followed by a briefing about the journey ahead, we set out to discover Old Delhi. Our first stop is Qutb Minar, the 379-step tower dating to 1192. We continue on to Gandhi Smriti, a museum dedicated to the Indian icon; and pass by India Gate, the majestic arch honoring the 90,000 Indian soldiers who died fighting alongside the British in World War I. Late this afternoon we return to our hotel, where tonight we enjoy a welcome dinner together.

Accommodations: Taj Palace

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Delhi

We encounter more of this pulsating city today, beginning at Raj Ghat, the simple black marble slab honoring Mahatma Gandhi. After stopping for photos at Lal Qila, the Red Fort complex of palaces, we visit a Sikh temple followed by lunch at a local restaurant. This afternoon's sights include the red sandstone and marble Jama Masjid, India's largest mosque; and the colorful Chandni Chowk market, where we ride rickshaws. Then the remainder of the day is free for further exploration and dinner on our own.

Accommodations: Taj Palace

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Delhi/Jaipur

Today we travel by coach to the "pink city" of Jaipur, one of the great cities of the Rajput, with historic forts, palaces, and gardens, and now a UNESCO site. We reach our hotel late afternoon.

Accommodations: Taj Amer

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Jaipur

Our first stop is the stunning Hawa Mahal, the elaborately carved pink sandstone “Palace of the Winds.” We continue on to Amber Fort, built by the Kachhawah Rajputs as their capital from 1037 to 1728; Jantar Mantar, the open-air observatory; and City Palace Museum, housing the magnificent art collections of the Maharajahs of Jaipur.

Accommodations: Taj Amer

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7: Jaipur/Sanganer

This morning we visit the village of Sanganer to see traditional block printing and handmade paper industries. Later we see local life up close as we explore an outdoor market. Tonight we are dinner guests in the home of a multi-generational Rajasthan family.

Accommodations: Taj Amer

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8: Jaipur/Ranthambore

We travel today to Ranthambore National Park, the former hunting ground of the Maharajah of Jaipur and now a 512-square-mile natural preserve that is home to hundreds of species of birds, reptiles, mammals, and of course, Bengal tigers. This afternoon we take our first game drive through the park.

Accommodations: Sawai Madhopur Lodge – IHCL SeleQtions (by Taj)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9: Ranthambore

We take both morning and afternoon game drives today to see not only game (though tiger and leopard sightings are not guaranteed), but also picturesque ruins of forts and palaces.

Accommodations: Sawai Madhopur Lodge – IHCL SeleQtions (by Taj)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 10: Ranthambore/Gadoli

We depart early for Kalakho, where we set out on a village walk to meet local Meena tribespeople in their homes. Tonight we enjoy a traditional folk dance performance.

Accommodations: Dera Village - The Clement Retreats

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 11: Gadoli/Agra

En route to Agra, we stop in the ancient village of Abhaneri to see the fortified Chand Baori step well (c. 800 CE), whose 3,500 steps descend some 13 stories into the ground. Continuing on, we reach the ancient Mughal stronghold of Agra, where this afternoon we visit Itimad-ud-Daulah, the two-story marble “Baby Taj” that inspired the Taj Mahal.

Accommodations: Tajview, Agra – IHCL SeleQtions

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: Agra

This morning we visit the Taj Mahal, the magnificent tomb built by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz. Then we take an Indian cuisine cooking lesson and enjoy the results for lunch.

Later: imposing Agra Fort.

Accommodations: Tajview, Agra – IHCL SeleQtions

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 13: Agra/Delhi/Varanasi

We depart by coach this morning for Delhi, where we board a late afternoon flight to Varanasi, Hinduism’s holiest city.

Accommodations: Taj Ganges

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 14: Varanasi/Sarnath

Before breakfast today, those who wish can join in a private yoga session. Then we visit nearby Sarnath, where the Buddha first taught after achieving enlightenment. One of Buddhism’s four holiest sites, Sarnath draws pilgrims from the world over. We see some of the temples and stupas then tour Sarnath Museum, housing a superb collection of Buddhist artifacts from excavations here. Late afternoon we attend a traditional *aarti* ceremony: as we cruise along the Ganges, we watch as devout Hindus offer their lit lamps to the deities.

Accommodations: Taj Ganges

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 15: Varanasi

Early this morning we return to the Ganges where Hindu pilgrims perform their rituals along the *ghats* (steps) leading to the river. We visit several *ghats* by boat as we experience for ourselves the spiritual aura of the hallowed Ganges waters. Then we return to our hotel with time to rest before this afternoon’s walking tour and private performance of classical sitar. Tonight we celebrate our journey at a farewell dinner at our hotel.

Accommodations: Taj Ganges

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 16: Varanasi/Delhi

We fly this afternoon to Delhi, where the evening is at leisure.

Accommodations: Pullman New Delhi Aerocity

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 17: Return to U.S.

Very early this morning we transfer to the airport for our return flight to the U.S.

This tour itinerary was generated for Mystical India on Mar 19, 2024. Please visit the Mystical India page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/asia-the-far-east/mystical-india/> for the latest and most accurate information.