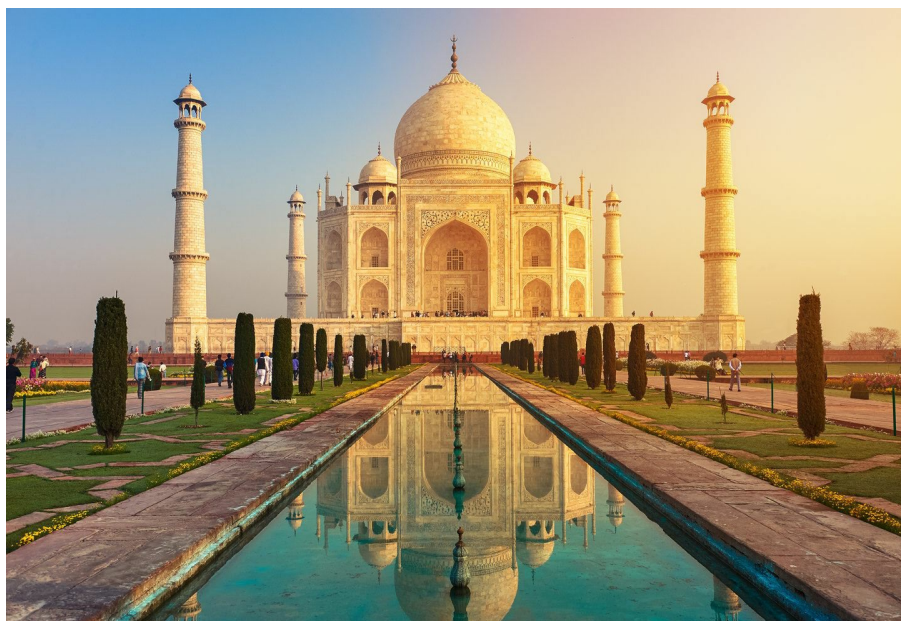


*Full Itinerary*

## A CULTURAL DISCOVERY OF INDIA.



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### JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:**

Level 2

**DESTINATION:**

A Cultural Discovery of India

**DURATION:**

11 days, 10 nights

**FLIGHT INFORMATION:**

Please book flights to arrive at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International airport, India [DEL] to arrive on Day 1 and to depart on Day 11 from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport [BOM]. You may need to depart from your home airport to

**PICKUP LOCATION:**

Delhi Airport [DEL]

## OVERVIEW

Select your own departure dates

India's 'Golden Triangle' and far beyond, including the Mughal Highlights of The Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and the lesser-known but equally magnificent city of Fatehpur Sikri.

How many Mughal icons can you name? You will see the Taj Mahal, the most famous of them all, at sunrise on this tour. Experience for yourself the Mughal history and culture at Agra Fort and the Amber Fort, wonder at the facade of the Hawa Mahal and take in the lesser known but equally magnificent city of Fatehpur Sikri. Some of the finest temple art in the world is to be found in India, as well as excellent cuisine, luxurious accommodations and the company of experts in travel and the local culture make this journey an unforgettable cultural discovery through India.

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

**DAY 1** - Welcome to India

**DAY 2** - City Tour of Delhi

**DAY 3** - Agra and Agra Fort

**DAY 4** - Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri & Train to Ranthambore

**DAY 5** - Ranthambore Game Safari

**DAY 6** - Early Morning Game Drive & Jaipur

**DAY 7** - Jaipur & The Amber Fort

**DAY 8** - Fly Jaipur to Varanasi

**DAY 9** - Cruise on the Ganges & Fly to Mumbai

**DAY 10** - Elephanta Caves & Mumbai City Tour

**DAY 11** - Goodbye to India and Home

## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - WELCOME TO INDIA

Upon arrival at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, India [DEL], you will be met from your flight in the arrivals lounge and transferred to your hotel, where a traditional welcome awaits!

Once you have checked in, enjoy some free time before meeting up with your Big Journey Company Tour Director and your tour group for dinner together this evening.

**Included meals:** Welcome Dinner

### DAY 2 - CITY TOUR OF DELHI

This morning you will be guided to the city tour of Delhi. The city consists of two parts - Old & New Delhi. Old Delhi was the capital of Muslim India between 17th and 19th century 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 starting in Old Delhi, visiting the Jama Masjid, the 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. Here we will enjoy a cycle rickshaw ride through the narrow lanes of Chandni Chowk, the spine of Old Delhi.

Later we also visit New Delhi, driving through its majestic boulevards to the Rashtrapati Bhawan, or Presidential Palace. This is where the Viceroy once lived and is now the official residence of the President of India. Today also includes a visit to Humayun's Tomb, the first great example of Mughal architecture in India. This has developed to become the hallmark of the Mughal Dynasty. The squat building of white marble and red sandstone, with a dome and high arched entrances, surrounded by formal gardens, is generally regarded as a prototype of the famed Taj Mahal of Agra. Humayun's wife is buried in the sandstone and marble tomb.

Last stop before returning to our hotel is the Sikh temple of Bangla Sahib. This magnificent and spacious bungalow in Delhi was once owned by Raja Jai Singh Amber (Jaipur). It has become a place of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Sikhs and is also known as the holy shrine "Gurudwara Bangla Sahib". The Art Gallery located in the basement has paintings depicting historical events connected with Sikh history.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

### DAY 3 - AGRA AND AGRA FORT

This morning we make an early start and drive to Agra, a journey of approx. 4 hours. Two great Mughal monarchs, Akbar and Shah Jahan, transformed the little village of Agra into a befitting second capital of the Mughal Empire - giving it the name Dar-ul-Khilafat {seat of the Emperor}. Today, a visitor to Agra is caught up in a world of contrasting edifices of red sandstone and white marble, narrow gullies and quaint buggies, and the irresistible charm that this favourite city of the Mughals still retains. It is not surprising, that modern Agra still reflects its Mughal heritage most conspicuously. A walk down the narrow bustling streets of the city will introduce the visitor to the wafting aroma of Mughlai cuisine. When we arrive in Agra we will enjoy a guided tour of Agra city before checking in to the hotel and refreshing ourselves before this afternoon's excursion to the spectacular Agra Fort.

The Agra Fort is an imposing structure with walls of red sandstone is almost two miles long and contains palaces, audience halls and mosques. We will explore in the company of a local guide, who will be able to share the history and culture of this place with us fully. This evening we will eat dinner at our hotel in Agra

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

### DAY 4 - TAJ MAHAL, FATEHPUR SIKRI & TRAIN TO RANTHAMBORE

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 the other half! The 17th century Taj Mahal is often called a poem in stone, a love poem created by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan for his favourite wife. It took 22 years to complete its stunning design and perfect symmetry. Today will be an early start- sunrise is the perfect time to see the Taj Mahal. We will return to the hotel for breakfast and to check out.

Fatehpur Sikri - the deserted red sandstone city- is the second stop for today. Built by Emperor Akbar as his capital and Palace in the late 16th century, it is a veritable fairy tale city and its ruins are in pristine condition. It is not hard to imagine what the court life must have been like in the former days of its grandeur. After the visit we will be driven to Bharatpur for a simple lunch.

After lunch, we transfer to Bharatpur railway station to board a train to Sawai Madhopur and Ranthambore. Dominated by a vast 11th-century fortress of the same name, Ranthambore is a 400sq-km park situated in an area of rocky hill country, clothed in dry, deciduous forest, grassland, and scrub, and dotted with several small lakes that can be alive with birds. Here have a good chance of encountering the largest and most powerful of the world's big cats- Bengal Tigers. Other large mammals are well represented at Ranthambore, and among the species we might see are Spotted Deel, Hanuman Langur, Small Indian and Wild Boar, and Leopard and Sloth Bear. Ranthambore also boasts an exciting array of birds.

When we arrive in Sawai Madhopur we will be transferred to the hotel in Ranthambore, (approx 45 minutes). This is a complete vegetarian hotel. Dinner is at the hotel tonight.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 5 - RANTHAMBORE GAME SAFARI

Today we will be accompanied by professional local guides, who have the best in-depth local knowledge to ensure we see the best of what is available through the park. Their expertise will ensure that this is a game drive to be remembered. We will travel in 4x4 jeeps. make sure you have your binoculars ready and camera batteries fully charged.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 6 - EARLY MORNING GAME DRIVE & JAIPUR

Early this morning we will leave for game viewing by open 4x4 jeeps again, catching different species of animal out and about at this time of day. We will return to hotel for breakfast.

Today we will drive to Jaipur (approx 4 hrs). Jaipur, "The City of Victory", was named after the boy Prince who commissioned it. Maharaja Jai Singh II was a warrior, astronomer and politician who reigned over the Mughals from 1699 to 1743. Today's Jaipur is pink, sometimes described as the city shaded with the colours of sunset. Almost the entire city was given a coat of pink paint in 1876 to coincide with the visit of the Prince of Wales (King Edward VII), thus giving it the name "The Pink City".

We arrive in Jaipur and check in to our hotel before a late lunch is at the hotel's coffee shop. The rest of the day will be spent at leisure to follow your own interests.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 7 - JAIPUR & THE AMBER FORT

This morning we will enjoy an excursion to the magnificent Amber Fort. We tour the chambers and hallways of the palace, famous for the excellence of its design and decoration with our own local expert. 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 captured in the buildings and in the Charbagh garden, where the landscape is perfectly proportioned.

This afternoon we will enjoy a city tour of Jaipur. We will visit the City Palace and museum. Here we will see a superb collection of Rajasthani costumes, armoury of the Mughals and Rajputs including swords, antiques and artifacts. Then we proceed to astrological and astronomical Observatory of Jantar Mantar before we enjoy cycle-rickshaw ride in the colourful bazaar of the old city. We also visit Hawa Mahal, or the "Palace of the Winds." This beautiful façade is possibly the most-photographed in all Jaipur. Its ornately carved windows were designed so that the ladies of the palace could look out onto the streets unobserved.

There will be some free time here, perhaps to shop for Jaipur blue pottery and block-printed cotton linens.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 8 - FLY JAIPUR TO VARANASI

We leave Jaipur early this morning with a packed breakfast to get to the airport in time for our flight to Varanasi.

Varanasi stands on the banks of the holy river Ganges and is a city of more than a thousand temples and shrines. It is here that millions of Hindus come to wash away their sins; where the great Gautam Buddha first preached 25 centuries ago; where Asia largest residential university was founded and is still a center for art and learning. WE will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel for second breakfast.

The check in time at the hotel is 14:00 hrs. There will be somewhere to leave our luggage and have a little time to ourselves before lunch and an afternoon visit to Sarnath. Sarnath is where Lord Buddha preached his first sermon. It is now a spiritual place of stupas, shrines and temples. Later this evening, we will be taken to witness a Hindu prayer ceremony 'Aarthi' on the Ganges River by boat. The river banks 'ghats' and



temples are lit with oil-lamp and candles and look truly magical at this time of day. Devotees float the oil lamps in the water as an offering to the holy river.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 9 - CRUISE ON THE GANGES & FLY TO MUMBAI

We head out early this morning to enjoy a boat cruise on River Ganges (subject to weather conditions). The ghats - hundreds of stone steps flanking the riverbank - are an incredible sight, particularly at sunrise when thousands of pilgrim's bathe in the spiritually cleansing waters. We return to hotel for breakfast and some free time before being transferred to the airport for our flights to Mumbai.

Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra, is the fastest moving, most affluent and industrialized city in India. Mumbai is part of India's beautiful west coast that runs down from Gujarat, through Mumbai to Goa, Karnataka and Kerala. The city's natural harbour which was developed by the British and is still one of the busiest ports of India today. This fascinating city is home to people of all Indian creeds and cultures. We will be met on arrival and escorted to the hotel, where dinner awaits.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 10 - ELEPHANTA CAVES & MUMBAI CITY TOUR

Today we make a leisurely start to the day before heading out for Elephanta Caves. We will enjoy a shared boat ride to the island of Elephanta, the glorious abode of Lord Shiva. The island is famous for its great cave shrine, excavated in the sixth century. The island was named Elephanta by the Portuguese after the huge carved elephant they found at the place where they landed. The cave temple, which is the pride of Elephanta, sprawls over an area of approximately 5000 square metres. It is reached by climbing a flight of more than 100 steps to the top of a hill but the sights at the top are worth the effort.

Lunch will be in a local restaurant before heading back to Mumbai for a city tour. We drive up to Malabar Hill to the lovely Hanging Gardens and the Kamla Nehru Park for a wonderful view of Mumbai and the Arabian Sea spread out below. We will see Dhobi Ghat, the well-known open-air laundry. The washers, locally known as Dhobis, work in the open to wash the clothes from Mumbai's hotels and hospitals and this is a real example of Indian industry. We also visit Ghandi's Mani Bhawan. From here, Gandhi began the famous Indian Non-Cooperation movement. In the library stands a statue of Mahatma Ghandi where Indian people still come to offer their tributes. The photo gallery exhibits photographs of his life, from childhood to his assassination, displayed alongside informative press clippings.

Next on today's itinerary is the bustling Crawford Market. The market houses a wholesale fruit, vegetable and poultry market. Then we will return to the hotel for dinner this evening.

**Included meals:** Breakfast Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 11 - GOODBYE TO INDIA AND HOME

After breakfast at the hotel this morning, you will be transferred to Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport [BOM] for your flights home.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** none

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at the airport on arrival and transfer to the hotel.
- Transport using an air-conditioned deluxe vehicle for all transfers, sightseeing & excursions as per the program.
- Transfers as detailed in the itinerary.
- Domestic economy flights Jaipur- Varanasi and Varanasi- Mumbai..
- 4\* Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary.
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary.
- English speaking tour guide.
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary.

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flights to arrive at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International airport, India [DEL] to arrive on Day 1 and to depart on Day 11 from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport [BOM].
- 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 tests or related entry & exit requirements

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please book flights to arrive at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International airport, India [DEL] to arrive on Day 1 and to depart from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport [BOM] on Day 11. You may need to depart from your home airport the day before the start of the tour to arrive in Delhi on Day 1.
- The check-in baggage allowance for flights from Jaipur to Varanasi is 15kg per person and cabin baggage weight limit is 7kg.
- The check-in baggage allowance for flights Vaanasi to Mumbai is 25kg per person and cabin baggage weight limit is 7kg.
- 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. Final payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- 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.
- We can provide you with a list of recommended tipping scales if you wish, or suggest an all-inclusive tips package that we will distribute fairly to ensure the best possible service.

## BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

*Choose from the list of dates below*

*Call to Book*

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