



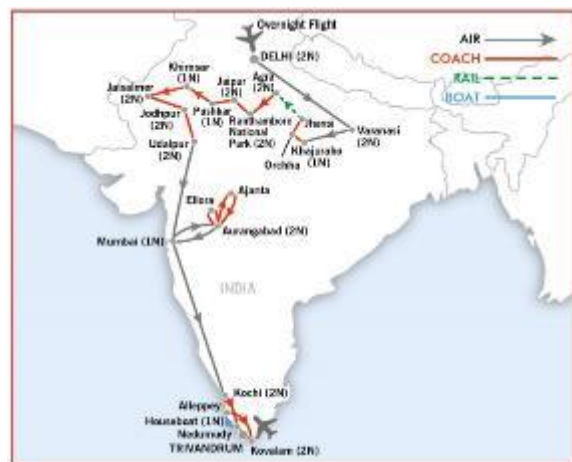
Grand Tour of India

Classic Tour | 29 Days | Moderate

Delhi – Varanasi – Khajuraho – Agra – Ranthambore National Park – Jaipur – Pushkar – Khimsar – Jaisalmer – Jodhpur – Udaipur – Mumbai – Aurangabad – Kochi – Nedumudy – Kovalam – Trivandrum

Become acquainted with one of the most vibrant countries in the world. Embark on a journey from the deserts of Rajasthan in the north, to the backwaters of Kerala in the south, to experience this land of extraordinary contrasts.

- Discover the colourful bazaars of Delhi
- Witness a holy puja ceremony
- Visit the magnificent Taj Mahal
- Meet the local Bishnoi Tribe
- Marvel at the impressive Mehrangarh Fort
- Explore the vibrant city of Mumbai
- Cruise Kerala's backwaters on a houseboat



Grand Tour of India tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers)
- Visa fees for UK and EU passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of India on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Moderate Tours:

'Grand Tour of India' is a **moderate** tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- You will be required to get on and off various sizes of boats and rickshaws throughout the tour

Of course, our National Escort and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Itinerary – Grand Tour of India

Days 1-2: Arrive Delhi

ly to Delhi for a two-night stay. Your National Escort or Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the Delhi International Airport in the Arrivals Hall. Together with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer 45 minutes to your hotel and check-in.



Destination Information

Delhi - As the capital of India, Delhi is the third largest city with a population of approximately 18 million. Its strategic location along the north-south, east-west route has given it a focal position in Indian history and many great empires have been ruled from here. The monuments and ruins of these are scattered throughout the city, often side by side with modern structures and high-rise towers.

Day 3: Delhi

Today starts with a brief tour introduction. This is a full day of sightseeing around Old and New Delhi, involving approximately 4 hours on foot. Your exploration of Delhi begins with a drive past the Red Fort before enjoying a stroll through the fascinating Chandni Chowk Bazaar to Jama Masjid. Stop briefly for a photo opportunity at India Gate drive by Rashtrapati Bhavan and continue to Gandhi Smriti. End the day at Qutab Minar.



Sightseeing today includes visits to a mosque and Hindu temple, please refer to the Appropriate Dress section below. Please note that women are only allowed to enter the mosque outside prayer session times.

Destination Information

Red Fort - Home of the Mughal emperor for many years, the fort is located in the centre of Delhi and houses a number of museums.

Chandni Chowk Bazaar - Built in the 17th century, Chandni Chowk is the oldest and most lively bazaar in Old Delhi. Built by the Mughal Emperor of India Shan Jahan and designed by his daughter, you can find stores selling everything from saris, Nehru suits, souvenirs to spices.

Jama Masjid - Jama Masjid is the largest mosque in India, with a courtyard capable of holding 25,000 devotees. Built between 1644 and 1658, the mosque was Shah Jahan's final architectural achievement.

India Gate - Located at the end of the Rajpath, India Gate is a moving memorial to the 90,000 Indian servicemen who died in World War 1.

Gandhi Smriti - A museum dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. It is the location where Mahatma Gandhi lived the last 144 days and was assassinated on January 30, 1948.

Rashtrapati Bhavan - The official residence of the President of India.

Qutab Minar - Built in the 12th century, this tower of victory is gracefully hand-carved along its entire height of 73m. We also visit the Iron Pillar, which has withstood the ravages of time and has not rusted after 1,500 years.

Day 4: Delhi - Varanasi

In the morning, transfer 45 minutes to the airport to board your onward 1 and a half hour flight to Varanasi. On arrival, you will be met and transferred to your hotel, approximately 45 minutes' drive. This afternoon travel to Sarnath to visit the Buddhist sacred sites.

In Varanasi, it would be unwise to wander around without your National Escort or Local Guide at night as there have been several reports of pickpockets.



Destination Information

Varanasi - The religious capital of Hinduism, Varanasi is the oldest living city in India as well as one of the world's most ancient cities. Colourful and chaotic, Varanasi is a fascinating city to discover. Located along the western banks of the Ganges, devotees travel to the city to pray and wash away their sins in the holy river.

Sarnath - Sarnath is the fabled place where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon to his disciples expounding the principles of Buddhism. The ruins here date back as far as the 3rd century BC.

Day 5: Varanasi

Rise early this morning for a 1 to 2 hour cruise on the River Ganges to view the ghats at sunrise, where you will have a vantage spot to watch the devotees perform their ablutions. Please note that it is inappropriate to take photos of any burning ghats, as this is a funeral ceremony. Return to the hotel for breakfast. The rest of the day's sightseeing is leisurely, involving a couple of hours walking. Enjoy a city tour of Varanasi, visiting such sites as the Bharat Mata Mandir and Durga Temple. The afternoon is at leisure. This evening, take a rickshaw ride through the streets of Varanasi to the ghats of the River Ganges where you will witness the Puja ceremony of Ganga Aarti this evening.



Please note: The Ganga Aarti takes place most evenings, so please be prepared for many crowds through the streets, especially leading up to the ghats. Remember to wear closed in shoes and to always be careful and mindful of your belongings. It is also important to watch where you step, as devotees, crowds of tourists, animals and rickshaws all head in the same direction of the ghats.

Destination Information

Ghats of Varanasi - The ghats are the long stretch of steps leading down to the water on the western banks of the River Ganges. Most are used for bathing, but there are some 'burning ghats' where public cremations are held.

Bharat Mata Mandir - A unique temple dedicated to Bharat Mata (Mother India) which houses a relief map of India, carved out of marble.

Durga Temple - Also known as the monkey temple due to the large number of monkeys that have made the temple their home, the Durga Temple is one of the most important temples in Varanasi. Dedicated to the Goddess Durga, the temple was built in the 18th century and is stained red with ochre.

Puja Ceremony of Ganga Aarti - An evening ceremony conducted on the banks of the river Ganges. Aarti means divine light, and this ceremony is filled with song, prayer and ritual.

Day 6: Varanasi – Khajuraho

Today transfer to the airport and fly 40 minutes to Khajuraho. Upon arrival in Khajuraho proceed to the hotel and check-in for an overnight stay. This afternoon, drive 15 minutes to the Khajuraho temples and spend approximately 2 to 3 hours exploring the Western and Eastern groups of temples. You will see the Vamana Temple, dedicated to the 'Vamana' or dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu as well as the Javari Temple. Sightseeing here involves walking with little shade, so make sure you bring sun protection. This evening, enjoy a cultural dancing performance.



Destination Information

Khajuraho - A small village well known for its UNESCO World Heritage listed sculptured temples dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu, and Jain religions.

Western Group of Temples - The Khajuraho temples were built by the Chandella rulers between AD 900 and 1300 and are scattered over 23km sq. Originally a group of 85, they are the largest group of Hindu and Jain temples in the world, although only about 25 of them remain today. Tour the Western Groups of temples, the most important is the Kandariya Mahadevo Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Eastern Group of Temples - The Eastern group represent some of the finest Jain temples including Parsvanatha which is known for its carvings of celestial beauties (sura-sundaris), along with the Adinath and Ghantai temples. We also see the Hindu temples including the Vamana Temple, dedicated to Lord Vamana, the dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu, as well as the Javari Temple.

Day 7: Khajuraho – Agra

Depart Khajuraho and drive approximately 4 to 5 hours to Jhansi, visiting the medieval city of Orchha en route. Sightseeing in Orchha is easy with a few steps and may take up to an hour. Continue to the railway station to board the Shatabdi Express train for approximately 2 and a half hours to Agra, where, upon arrival, you will transfer to your hotel and check-in.

Please Note: As our train is a day train, our seats will be in an AC Chair Car. More than likely you will not be able to purchase any food or drink on the train, so if you need snacks make sure to pre-purchase them before boarding. The train carriages are shared, so at all times please be aware of your belongings.

Destination Information

Orchha - A medieval city famous for its palaces and temples built by the Bundela rulers in the 16th century. Jehangir Mahal, a tiered palace, is crowned by graceful cenotaphs, and commands a spectacular view of soaring temple spires and surrounding cenotaphs.

Agra - Home to the world-famous Taj Mahal. Agra rose to fame in the medieval period as the capital of the Mughal Empire and was beautified with gardens, waterfalls, bathhouses and canals. In modern times, the city of Agra houses a thriving carpet industry.

Day 8: Agra

Rise early and begin the day by viewing the Taj Mahal in all its glory as the sun is rising. To reach the Taj Mahal, you will board your group coach and drive through the awakening streets of Agra (an early start means that we can avoid the heat and crowds at the Taj Mahal later in the day). Disembarking the coach, you will board smaller electric carts to continue to the entrance gate. After clearing security and baggage checks you will be admitted to the complex. Usually 2 hours is spent here; sightseeing is easy without many steps. For admission to the main mausoleum area, you are required to wear shoe covers (this may be provided on site – be prepared to bring an additional pair of socks).



Return to your hotel to freshen up before visiting a marble inlay workshop. In the afternoon, explore the impressive Agra Fort. Sightseeing here involves approximately 1 and a half hours on foot and climbing of stairs.

Please note: The Taj Mahal is currently undergoing renovations to its exterior. The work is estimated to be completed by March 2018 and will be done in phases so that visitors to the Taj will still be able to experience the beauty of this architectural wonder.

Destination Information

Taj Mahal - One of the most recognisable monuments in the world, The Taj Mahal is a white marble monument found on the southern bank of the Yamuna River. The Taj Mahal was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan between the years 1631 -1648 in memory of his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631.

Agra Fort - Situated on the west bank of the Yamuna River and built by Emperor Akbar between 1565 and 1573. Its imposing red sandstone ramparts form a crescent along the riverfront and encompass an enormous complex of courtly buildings, ranging in style from the early eclecticism of Akbar to the sublime elegance of Shah Jahan. The barracks to the north are British additions from the 19th century. A deep moat, once filled with water from the Yamuna River surrounds the fort.

Day 9: Agra – Ranthambore

Today drive approximately 5 hours to Ranthambore, visiting Fatehpur Sikri en route. Enjoy lunch in Bharatpur before continuing your journey. Upon arrival in Ranthambore, check into your hotel, the remainder of the day is at leisure.



Destination Information

Fatehpur Sikri - Located 40km from Agra, Fatehpur Sikri was built by Emperor Akbar in 1569 after it was prophesied that the then childless Akbar would have sons if he moved his capital to the site. At great expense to the empire, the capital was moved here but sadly only occupied for 14 years before slowly being deserted and ruined after Akbar left the city due to a scarcity of water.

Bharatpur - Located 184km east of Jaipur. Bharatpur was once considered an 'impenetrable city', and was the capital of the Jat Kingdom, whose people were pastoralists of the lower Indus river-valley area.

Day 10: Ranthambore

This morning and afternoon you will have canter safaris in the park. The time in between these safaris will be at leisure. *Please note: You will need your passport to gain entry to the national park.*

Destination Information

Ranthambore National Park - Is one of the prime examples of Project Tiger's conservation efforts in Rajasthan. The forest around Ranthambore was once the private hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Jaipur and is one of the largest national parks in Northern India. Ranthambore National Park is renowned for its tiger population; however, you may also come across other wild animals such as leopard, nilgai, Wild Boar, sambar, hyena and Sloth Bear.

Day 11: Ranthambore – Jaipur

Today drive approximately 4 to 5 hours to Jaipur. Upon arrival check into your hotel where the rest of your day is at leisure to relax or explore independently.



Destination Information

Jaipur - Known as the 'Pink City' for the colour of the buildings in the old town. Some parts of the road are very rough so the journey takes most of the afternoon. Jaipur was founded in 1727 as Mughal power within India was declining. The then Maharaja Jai Singh moved his capital from Amber Fort down onto the plain below. The city is now the capital of Rajasthan State and commonly called the 'Pink City' because of the pink paint on all the buildings in the old city area. This was apparently done to imitate the magnificent, red sandstone buildings of the Mughals and in an attempt to impress the Prince of Wales when he visited Jaipur in 1876.

Day 12: Jaipur

Sightseeing today begins with a photo stop at the Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) in downtown Jaipur. Tourists are unable to enter, so you will view it from the busy road opposite. Tour members are asked to be careful when crossing the road for a closer photo. Continue to the impressive Amber Fort, where you will ride jeeps to and from the bus park and palace entrance. Elephant rides up to the palace have not been included in your itinerary because of the concerns to the animals and the unreliability of this service.



Sightseeing this morning involves 2 to 3 hours on foot and there are a number of steps within the fort. In the afternoon, enjoy some shopping inside the walled city, where villagers from around Jaipur come to sell and trade their produce. You will find everything here from saris, jewellery, clothing, shoes to spices. Later, have dinner at a local restaurant and enjoy live music and traditional entertainment.

Please note: Jaipur is a larger city where it would be unwise to wander around without your National Escort or Local Guide at night, as there have been reports of pickpockets.

Destination Information

Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) - A five-story palace erected in 1799 by the Sawai Pratap Singh so that the veiled ladies of his harem could observe, unnoticed, the lively street scenes below.

Amber Fort - Built from yellow and pink sandstone and white marble, Amber Fort was built in the 16th century by Raja Man Singh. Inside the fort the Hall of Victory houses the famed Sheesh Mahal.

Choti Choper - A market located inside the walled city, where villagers from around Jaipur come to sell and trade their product.

Day 13: Jaipur – Pushkar

After breakfast, drive approximately 3 to 4 hours to Pushkar, where, on arrival, you will check in at your hotel. Later this afternoon, visit Pushkar Lake and the temple of Lord Brahma, the creator according to Hindu mythology. In the evening, enjoy a camel cart ride to watch the sunset in the desert.



Destination Information

Pushkar – According to Hindu scripture, Pushkar was created when Lord Brahma dropped a lotus flower and where the petals landed a lake was formed. One of the oldest cities in India, it is surrounded by hillocks on three sides.

Brahma Temple - An important pilgrimage centre for Hindus. The temple is constructed of marble and houses a statue of Lord Brahma in the seated position.

Day 14: Pushkar – Khimsar

After breakfast, drive around 3 to 4 hours to Khimsar, on arrival check in at hotel. Here, you will overnight at the 15th-century fortress which is now converted into a heritage hotel. Later explore the local area in Khimsar to get a glimpse of life in rural India.

Destination Information

Khimsar – A small village perched on the edge of the great Thar Desert in the heart of rural India.

Day 15: Khimsar – Jaisalmer

Depart Khimsar and travel 5 to 6 hours to Jaisalmer, where you will proceed to your hotel for check-in. Later enjoy an evening visit to Sunset Point to take in the views.

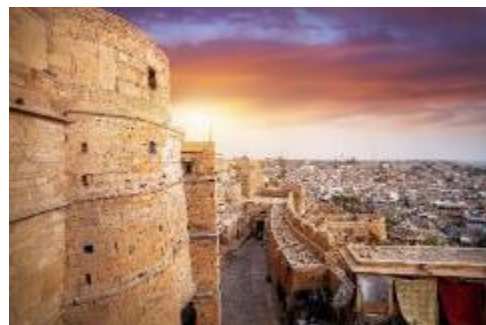
Destination Information

Jaisalmer - Founded by Prince Jaisala in 1156, it is dubbed the 'Golden City' because of the honey-coloured sandstone walls, emphasized by the setting sun. It was once a flourishing trade centre, strategically located on the busy caravan trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Jaisalmer's wealthy traders and rulers vied with each other to beautify their austere desert surroundings with splendid palaces and havelis. Made of the local golden-yellow sandstone, they are the most spectacular example of the Rajasthani stonemason's art.

Sunset Point - A vantage point located on top of a small hill where you can enjoy a spectacular view of the city, including the fort.

Day 16: Jaisalmer

Enjoy a full day of sightseeing in Jaisalmer. Explore Jaisalmer Fort, built atop the 80 metre high Trikuta Hill, before continuing to the beautifully carved Jain temples and Badal Vilas Palace. The mornings activities will involve 2 to 3 hours of walking. After lunch drive an hour and a half to the Sam Sands Dunes in the Thar Desert, where you will have the opportunity to take a camel ride at sunset. Tourist numbers can be high as camel rides have become very popular, which has led to tourists littering in the area. If time permits, your guide will try to lead your group away from the crowds.



Destination Information

Jaisalmer Fort - The fort rises like a fabulous mirage out of the sands of the Thar Desert. The impressive contours of its 99 bastions are softened by the golden hue of the stone. Built in 1156 by Maharawal Jaisal and added to by his successors, this citadel stands on the peak of the 80m-high Trikuta Hill. In medieval times, Jaisalmer's entire population lived within the fort and to this day thousands of people reside here, making it India's only living fort. Royal palaces, a cluster of Jain temples, mansions and shops are all contained within its walls.

Jain Temples - Located within the fort walls, the seven yellow intricately carved sandstone Jain temples date from the 15th and 16th centuries.

Haveli's - Jaisalmer is home to some impressive merchant mansions (havelis) including the Patwon Ki Haveli, a five-storey mansion with carved pillars and murals.

Sam Sand Dunes - The picturesque sand dunes are located 42km west of Jaisalmer in the midst of the Thar Desert.

Day 17: Jaisalmer – Jodhpur

This morning, depart Jaisalmer and commence the drive to Jodhpur, the second largest city in Rajasthan. Drive approximately 6 to 7 hours to Jodhpur. Upon arrival transfer to your hotel for a two night stay. Later, explore the imposing Mehrangarh Fort, which involves 2 hours of sightseeing over steps of varying heights. Visit Jaswant Thada and stroll through the museum located in the Umaid Bhawan Palace before enjoying some free time to wander Subzi Mandi, a local vegetable and spice market.



Destination Information

Jodhpur - The second largest city in Rajasthan is located at the entrance to the Thar Desert in a region called Marwar. The old city, founded in 1459, is surrounded by a 10km-long wall and situated on a 125m-high hill. The massive Mehrangarh Fort overlooks the city and the red sandstone palaces within the fort form one of the most impressive complexes in Rajasthan.

Mehrangarh Fort - Raised 125m above the city's skyline, Mehrangarh Fort is one of the most magnificent and best-preserved forts in India. Within the fort are some magnificent palaces with meticulously carved panels, latticed windows known as Jarokhas. The chambers of Moti Mahal, Phool Mahal, Sheesh Mahal, the Sileh Khana and the Daulat Khana are noteworthy for the splendour and glamour of a bygone era.

Jaswant Thada - A 19th century royal cenotaph built in honor of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II, the 33rd ruler of Jodhpur.

Umaid Bhawan Palace - One of the last great palaces in India, it now houses a remarkable museum and luxury hotel.

Day 18: Jodhpur

After breakfast this morning, drive by jeep to Rohetgarh to visit a Bishnoi Tribe. After lunch return to Jodhpur, the rest of your day will be at leisure.

Destination Information

Bishnoi Tribe - The Bishnois' follows 29 principles of a non-violent Vaishnavas sect and was founded in the 15th century by Jambeswarji.

Day 19: Jodhpur - Udaipur

Depart Jodhpur and begin the drive to Udaipur, stopping to explore the Jain temple complex of Ranakpur en route. The drive to Ranakpur is approximately 4 hours and sightseeing here involves 30 minutes of easy walking. Drive approximately another 2 to 3 hours to Udaipur. Upon arrival, proceed to your hotel for a two night stay. This afternoon, take a relaxing cruise on Lake Pichola, passing the Lake Palace.



Destination Information

Ranakpur - A Jain temple complex built in the 15th century and located in the lovely valley of the Aravalli. The main temple in the complex is the Chaumukha (four-faced) Temple, built in 1439. Its 29 halls are supported by 1,444 pillars, of which no two are alike. Also visit the Surya Temple, dedicated to Surya the Sun God, and other Jain temples.

Udaipur - The origins of Udaipur are based on a legend, which tells of a holy sage that Maharaja Udai Singh encountered while hunting in the foothills of the Aravalli Range in Mewar. The sage told the King to build a palace in that exact spot and it would be well protected and so with this advice, Maharaja Udai Singh built his residence there. At the time, Chittorgarh was the capital of Mewar state, however in 1568 Chittorgarh was attacked by the Mughal emperor Akbar, and so Maharaja Udai Singh moved the capital to Udaipur.

Lake Pichola and Lake Palace - The 4km long Lake Pichola is fringed with hills, palaces, havelis, ghats and temples. While on the cruise we will see the Lake Palace, formally known as Jag Niwas, built between 1734 and 1751. It was once a royal summer retreat and is now one of the world's greatest hotels. It is also a popular location for film shoots, including James Bond's Octopussy.

Day 20: Udaipur

Begin the day with a drive around the Fateh Sagar Lake. Tour the city, visiting sites such as the Sahelion Ki Bari Gardens, the Folk Museum and Mewar Art Gallery. Later, explore the City Palace, which involves approximately 2 hours of sightseeing on foot. Some stairs at this location are without handrails, so please be cautious. At the palace there are many Pools, also known as gateways. Later, wander through the surrounding local streets and shops.



Destination Information

Fateh Sagar Lake - An artificial lake built in 1678 embellished with 3 islands, one which houses a garden café.

Sahelion Ki Bari Gardens - A delightful 18th-century garden retreat in the north of the city built for the Queen of Udaipur, whose dowry included 48 maids.

Folk Museum and Mewar Art Gallery - Houses a remarkable collection of Rajasthani folk art that's well worth a visit.

City Palace - The spectacular City Palace was built in 1725 by Maharana Udai Singh and overlooks Lake Pichola. The Palace comprises of 11 palaces including the Dilkhush Mahal, Sheesh Mahal, Moti Mahal and the Palace of Lord Krishna, all of which are ornately decorated. The City Palace also houses the world's largest private collections of crystals. Today, the City Palace of Udaipur is still home to Maharaja Udai Singh's descendants who remain rulers of this independent state. It is possible to tell if the Maharaja is in residence by the flag hanging from the palace wall.

Day 21: Udaipur - Aurangabad

Rise early this morning. After checking out of your hotel, you will be transferred approximately 45 minutes to the airport for your 1 and a half hour flight to Mumbai where you will connect with an onward flight to Aurangabad. Due to flight schedules, there will be a long transit in Mumbai airport between flights.

Destination Information

Aurangabad - Founded by Malik Ambar in 1610, Aurangabad was formerly known as Khirki, meaning 'window', because of its strategic position that provided a window view of the Deccan Plateau. The town was an important seat of the Mughal Empire and holds a good number of Mughal architectural marvels making it an important historical destination of Maharashtra. The town is situated on the banks of the Kham River with mediaeval monuments, cultural heritage, silk and cotton textiles, and is also within proximity to the famous UNESCO World Heritage listed sites of Ajanta and Ellora.

Day 22: Aurangabad – Ajanta Caves

This morning drive 4 hours to the UNESCO World Heritage listed Ajanta Caves. Sightseeing here involves climbing a short but steep hill to enter the first cave, then 2 to 3 hours walking with few stairs. Please note that flash photography is not allowed here so it is a good idea to bring a small flashlight. Return to Aurangabad and this evening enjoy an Indian Tandoor BBQ for dinner.

Destination Information

Ajanta Caves - As Buddhism slowly declined, the Ajanta Caves were abandoned and gradually forgotten. But in 1819 a British hunting party stumbled upon them and their remote beauty was soon unveiled. Their isolation contributed to the fine state of preservation in which some of their remarkable paintings remain to this day. Within the 30 rock-hewn caves, the murals show scenes from the Buddha's life and from the Jataka Tales, which recount stories of Buddha's previous incarnations as an enlightened being or Bodhisattva. The magnificent, detailed compositions include depictions of court scenes, princes and musicians and offer fascinating glimpses of daily life dating back to the 2nd century.

Day 23: Aurangabad – Mumbai

Travel 2 hours to the Ellora Caves, another UNESCO World Heritage listed site. Sightseeing here involves approximately two hours walking with some stairs. Later, return to Aurangabad where you will be transferred to the airport to board your 1 hour onward flight back to Mumbai. Transfer to the hotel and check-in for overnight stay.

Destination Information

Ellora Caves - Ellora Caves encompass 34 rock-cut shrines representing Buddhist, Hindu and Jain art dating from the 4th-9th century AD. The caves are carved into the side of a basaltic hill 30km from Aurangabad. The most remarkable among them is the Kailash Temple, meant to be a replica of Lord Shiva's celestial abode, Kailash. It is the best example of rock-cut architecture and the engineering skills of that era.

Mumbai - Mumbai is home to the world's biggest cinema industry, popularly known as 'Bollywood'. Some 15 million people, from billionaire tycoons to homeless pavement dwellers, live in this teeming megalopolis.

Day 24: Mumbai - Kochi

Tour the thrilling city of Mumbai today. Drive past the Gateway of India, the Afghan Church and along Marine Drive. Visit the Hanging Gardens, Chowpatty Beach, Kamalala Nehru Park and Mani Bhavan, where Mahatma Gandhi stayed during his visits to Mumbai in 1917 to 1934. Stop to view the Dhobi Ghat and the colourful Crawford Market and Flora Fountain. This evening transfer to the airport where you will board the onward 1 and a half hour flight to Kochi for a two-night stay.



Destination Information

Gateway of India - One of the most unique monuments in Mumbai, the Gateway of India was built to commemorate the 1911 royal visit of King George V, but was not completed until 1924.

Afghan Church - Commissioned by the East India Company, the Afghan Church was built as a memorial to those of the British and Company Armies who died in the first war in Afghanistan.

Hanging Gardens - Stroll the terraced gardens, located on the top of Malabar hill, while admiring the view over the sea.

Chowpatty Beach - One of the most famous beaches of Mumbai, Chowpatty beach is a favourite picnic and dining spot for local people.

Kamala Nehru Park - Situated on the top of Malabar Hill, Kamala Nehru Park is one of the oldest children's park in Mumbai and covers an area of 4,000 square feet.

Dhobi Ghat - Dhobi Ghat, Mumbai's largest outdoor laundromat, has been operating for over 100 years. Everyday over 100 people wash hundreds of kilograms of clothes and linen in open-air troughs.

Kochi - Better known as Cochin, Kochi is Kerala's most cosmopolitan city. It is also its main trading centre for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Kochi is in fact a collection of narrow islands and peninsulas.

Day 25: Kochi

Today tour the satellite towns around Kochi and Ernakulam, visiting sites such as the Dutch Palace, the Santa Cruz Basilica and St. Francis Church. While driving along the coastline near the harbour, view the unique cantilevered Chinese fishing nets. End the day exploring Fort Kochi and this evening enjoy a Kathakali dance performance. Sightseeing today involves approximately 2 to 3 hours of walking.

Destination Information

Dutch Palace - The Palace was built in 1545 AD by the Portuguese and presented as a gift to the Raja of Kochi. Originally called the Mattancherry Palace, it became known as the Dutch Fort when the Dutch renovated the building in 1663.

Santa Cruz Basilica - One of the eight basilicas in India. The Santa Cruz Basilica has an eventful history, which originates back to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1500.

St. Francis Church - St. Francis Church is thought to be the first European church built in India, constructed by the Portuguese in 1503.

Cantilevered Chinese fishing nets - A relic from the 14th century traders, the Chinese fishing nets are still in use today.

Day 26: Kochi – Nedumudy

This morning, visit the Jewish Synagogue (closed on Fridays and Saturdays) before driving 1 and a half hours to Nedumudy to board your overnight houseboat, a converted rice barge known as a 'Kettuvallam'. Enjoy lunch on board as you cruise past Kerala's exceptional scenic beauty. The boat docks for the night at sunset as the fishermen cast their nets in the backwaters and therefore boats are not allowed to cruise.



Destination Information

Jewish Synagogue - Constructed by the Kochi Jewish community in 1568, the Synagogue is the oldest synagogue in the Commonwealth nations.

Kerala Backwaters – A stretch of waters parallel to the coast of the Arabian Sea traditionally used for transportation; nowadays the backwaters attract tourists to a unique experience travelling along a mixture of manmade and natural canals, lakes and rivers.

Day 27: Alleppey – Kovalam

Disembark your houseboat this morning and drive 5 to 6 hours to Kovalam. Upon arrival in Kovalam, proceed to your hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.



Destination Information

Kovalam - Until the 1960s, Kovalam was just a sleepy fishing village with narrow lanes and thatched dwellings with wide courtyards for drying fish. Now Kovalam is a charming resort town with a popular beach.

Day 28: Kovalam

Enjoy a full day of sightseeing in Trivandrum today. Tour the Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple before continuing to the Zoological Gardens and Museum. Later visit the Observatory, the Kanakakunnu Palace and Sree Moolamthirunal Shastri Purthi Memorial (State Handicraft Institute).

Destination Information

Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple – Built in a fusion of Keralan and the neighbouring Dravidian styles, the temple is thought to be the richest Hindu temple in the world.

Day 29: Depart Trivandrum

You will be transferred to the airport according to the departure time of your flight today. Any time before your flight will be at leisure.

Grand Tour of India Travel Information

Visas

A visa is required for entry into India. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. You will need to complete the visa application form following the instructions on the visa help sheet. Once completed you will need to email or post the appropriate documents to our office in order for us to process your visa with the embassy. Once your visa has been approved we will send you a copy of the completed visa by email for you to print out and take with you when you travel to India. Any passports and visa applications that require an express service will incur an extra fee. Your passport must be valid for 6 months from your date of return from India, and should have at least 2 blank pages for your Indian visa.

In rare cases, you may be required to provide further information or documentation to the Indian embassy and/or be required to attend an interview at the embassy. If this is the case, we will notify you as soon as we have been advised.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Eating in India

Indian cuisine is one of the most influential, diverse and flavoursome culinary styles in the world. Indian dishes incorporate many spices and seasoning to create an explosion of flavors. Though Indian cuisine can vary greatly from the Indian food we get in the UK, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our classic group tours, from dinner on the arrival day until breakfast on the day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

Dishes served in restaurants on our group tours are varied. Some will be vegetable-based with meat mixed in, and a few will be meat-based. Our restaurants are well aware of the western palate – there are plenty of non-spiced options. When eating meals on group tours, you will usually be seated around a large table with other tour members. Dishes will be served in the traditional ‘family style’; meaning that various dishes will be laid out in the centre of the table. These dishes are intended to be shared amongst the group – there is always more than enough to feed everybody.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in India. We recommend that when it comes to Indian food, you stay open minded and try to be adventurous!

Safari Ranthambore National Park

To ensure your safari booking at Ranthambore National Park we will require a scanned copy or photocopy of the bio page in your passport along with your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot confirm your safari arrangements without this information.

Accommodation

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort or Local Guide.

Throughout Rajasthan state you will get the opportunity to stay in heritage properties which are restored palaces or forts. As these properties were not originally designed to be hotels, the room sizes will vary in the same accommodation category, as will the décor and layout. This uniqueness only adds to your experience in India.

On this tour, you will stay on a houseboat, or 'Kettuvallam', which has all the comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, cozy living rooms, a kitchen and even a balcony for angling. Parts of the curved roof of wood or plaited palm open out to provide shade and allow uninterrupted views. Please note: While on the houseboats, electricity can be intermittent. There is a generator on board, so keep this in mind when charging phones, cameras or other electronic items. The cabins on board are all air conditioned from 9pm to 6am, but the living areas and deck may be cooled with fans. If you are a light sleeper you may wish to bring ear plugs, as the generators may be loud at night.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Main and inner city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Trains: This trip involves a train journey in AC class cars. Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered as passengers will start boarding well before people have finished getting off! If your group is disembarking at a stop that is not the end of the line, the train will only stop for 10 minutes and you must have your luggage ready and by your side a few minutes before the train pulls into the station.

Development in India

Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the UK; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum.

We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions, which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest; for example, in Agra you will be able to see local artists creating stunning marble pieces, similar to what is used on the Taj Mahal. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 29 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with Local Guides.

Tipping Policy

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and India is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and trousers or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are ‘shoe minders’ who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a ‘tip’ – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces.

Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Please note: The Taj Mahal is currently undergoing renovations to its exterior. The work is estimated to be completed by March 2018 and will be done in phases so that visitors to the Taj will still be able to experience the beauty of this architectural wonder.

Last updated: July 2017