



WORLD DISCOVERY  
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

## India with Taj Hotels



The imposing Gwalior Fort overlooks the city

### DAY 1 - Depart UK.

### DAY 2 - Arrive Delhi.

On arrival in Delhi in the morning you will be met by a representative of World Discovery outside immigration and customs. You will then be taken by private car direct to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

### DAY 3 – Delhi Sightseeing.

After breakfast, you will meet your World Discovery guide and spend the morning visiting the highlights of India's capital city, beginning with the colossal **Qutb Minar**. This amazing 73-metre high Victory Tower was completed in 1236 to celebrate Qutb-ud-Din's defeat of the Turks and can be seen for miles around. Continue to the elegant **Humayun's Tomb**, a fine example of early Mughal architecture, and later visit the fascinating **Hindu temple complex of Chattarpur**. The afternoon is spent exploring **New Delhi**, planned on a grandiose scale as the capital of British India by the architect Edwin Lutyens and his colleague Herbert Baker, and inaugurated in February 1931. This morning you will drive along the wide avenues of this late-imperial capital, viewing the vast complex of government buildings and the famous **India Gate**, built to commemorate the 70,000 Indian soldiers who died in the First World War. You will also visit **Raj Ghat**, the moving memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, set in landscaped gardens, and the interesting **Gandhi Museum**.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 4 – Fly to Varanasi.

Late morning flight to Varanasi (Benares), India's holiest city on the banks of the sacred Ganges. Transfer direct to your hotel. The remainder of the day is free.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 5 - Boat ride on the Ganges.

An early rise to experience one of the most atmospheric sights of India - the morning rituals on the banks of the River Ganges. You will travel by rowing boat alongside the famous 'ghats' (steps down to the river) where you will see hundreds of Hindu pilgrims bathing in the river, facing the rising sun. The scene is quite incredible and will remain in your memory for ever. Afterwards, walk through the narrow alleys of the old city to visit several temples and further capture the spirit of this unique city. The afternoon is at leisure, with the option of visiting the ruins of **Sarnath**, where Buddha is believed to have delivered his first sermon in 528 B.C.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 6 - Fly to Khajuraho.

Around midday take the short flight to Khajuraho and transfer to your hotel. In the afternoon your guide will take you to visit the astonishing temples of Khajuraho, built under the Chandela kings in the 10th and 11th centuries. The 20 remaining temples (originally there were 85) are intricately carved with mythical beasts, celestial nymphs, Hindu gods and goddesses and cult images. There are many erotic representations for which Khajuraho has become world-famous. The temples have been granted World Heritage status.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 7 – By road via Orchha to Gwalior.

Drive north from Khajuraho to the atmospheric abandoned city of **Orchha**, set on an island on a bend in the Betwa River. Built in the early 16th century by the Bundela dynasty this little visited medieval fortress boasts some splendid buildings, especially the Raj Mahal, which contains a selection of beautiful murals, and the Lakshminarayan Temple. After lunch, continue your journey by road to Gwalior.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 8 – Gwalior. By road to Agra.

Despite being somewhat off the beaten tourist track, the huge hilltop fortress of Gwalior is one of the most impressive in northern India. Sightseeing in Gwalior will also include the **Maharaja's Palace** (also called the Jai Vilas) which incorporates the **Scindia Museum**, an unusual collection of royal possessions. The Durbar Hall of the palace is famous for containing two of the world's largest chandeliers, each weighing over 3 tons. In the afternoon drive to Agra, capital of the Mughal Empire.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 9 – Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort.

This morning visit what is generally regarded as the world's most romantic building – the glorious white-marble Taj Mahal, built by the fifth Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. This magnificent monument, a fusion of Indian Hindu and Persian Muslim architectural traditions, never fails to impress. You will also explore the huge red-sandstone Agra Fort overlooking the River Jumna. Afternoon at leisure. In the evening you may wish to return to the Taj Mahal for an optional sunset visit.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 10 – Drive to Jaipur via Fatehpur Sikri and Bharatpur.

An hour and half drive to the west of Agra lies the atmospheric 'ghost town' of Fatehpur Sikri. This perfectly-preserved red-sandstone city was built by the Emperor Akbar as his new capital in the late 16th century, but was mysteriously abandoned after just 14 years. What remains is for many people one of the most spectacular sites in the whole of India. After a guided tour of this wonderful city, continue to Bharatpur to spend some time in the **Keoladeo Ghana National Park**, a designated World Heritage Site which is a paradise for birdwatchers – more than 300 species have been sighted here. We have included a lunch for you at the delightful **Laxmi Vilas Palace**, built in 1899 for the son of the Maharajah of Bharatpur. In the afternoon drive to the famous 'pink city' of Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 11 - Amber Fort and Jaipur.

Before Jaipur was founded, the capital of this region was **Amber**, built high on a ridge overlooking the surrounding countryside. The huge palace-fortress is just 11km north of Jaipur, and this morning you will set off to visit it after breakfast. Explore the courtyards and pavilions of this superb complex, including the marvellous Sheesh Mahal (Hall of Mirrors) and the elegant Jai Mandir (Hall of Private Audience) with its delightful painted ceiling. Founded in 1727 by Maharajah Jai Singh II, Jaipur is the classic Rajput city, with its colourful bazaars, palaces and 'havelis' (mansions). In the afternoon drive into the centre of the city to view the elaborate façade of the Hawa Mahal, better known as the 'Palace of the Winds', and continue to the Maharaja's Palace, now an interesting museum. A further visit is included to the fascinating Jantar Mantar, Jai Singh's outdoor observatory "for measuring the harmony of the heavens". The Old City of Jaipur is a shopper's paradise, with a huge selection of shops specialising in printed cotton, handicrafts, carpets, pottery and jewellery.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 12 - Drive to Jodhpur.

Your journey continues to majestic Jodhpur, second city of Rajasthan.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 13 - Jodhpur.

In the morning visit the monumental **Meherangah Fort** which towers above the city. This imposing construction was begun in 1459, but most of what can be seen today dates from the 17th century. Part of the fort has been turned into a museum which contains a superb collection of the maharajah's memorabilia. The view from the ramparts over the city of Jodhpur is breathtaking, and you will notice the predominance of blue-coloured houses. Contrary to what many people believe, these are not 'Brahmin' houses, but simply reflect the colour of the most effective treatment against white ants! You will also visit the impressive white marble cenotaphs of the rulers of Jodhpur, set in pleasant gardens beneath the fort. The afternoon is at leisure.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 14 - Continue via Ranakpur to Udaipur.

Your journey continues to Udaipur, with a visit en route to the delightful Jain temples at Ranakpur. Built around a man-made lake in the heart of the Aravali Hills, Udaipur is regarded as one of the most beautiful and romantic cities in India, a place of white marble palaces reflected in the blue waters of the lake and luxuriant greenery amidst the unyielding aridity of the surrounding countryside. Transfer to your hotel for a relaxing stay in this wonderful spot.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## **DAYS 15 AND 16 - Udaipur.**

Two days in Udaipur. A short cruise on Lake Pichola is included; the rest of the time is at leisure. You may wish to visit the stunning City Palace overlooking the lake.

**Meals included: Full breakfast each day.**

## **DAY 17 – Depart for home.**

Transfer to the airport for the morning flight to Delhi to connect with your homeward flight.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**