

India Highlights 17 Days 15 Nights



Day 1

Depart for India

Meals: Provided on Flight

Depart on your overnight flight, subject to final flight schedule.

Day 2

Arrive in India

Meals: Dinner

Upon arrival, you will be greeted by your local tour guide and given a traditional marigold flower garland welcome before being transported to a local hotel. Relax after your long flight!

Day 3

Visit Old Delhi (Jama Masjid, Chandni chowk with Rickshaw ride)

Drive Past Red Fort

Visit Bangla Sahib Sikh Temple

Visit Gandhi Smriti

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Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Rise early and enjoy a group breakfast. Set out to see the many amazing architectural sites of Old Delhi, as you tour the buildings of the Mughal Empire and Shah Jahan's incredible influence on the city. The first stop is the Jama Masjid, one of Asia's largest mosques with a capacity of 25,000 people. It dates back to the 17th century and was one of Shah Jahan's last architectural feats, after already having contributed to the building of the Red Fort and The Taj Mahal. From there, enjoy taking a Cycle Rickshaw tour through the narrow lanes of Chandni Chowk and to Asia's largest spice market. Drive past the Red Fort, Shah Jahan's symbol of power and elegance! It was once a fortified palace of India's old capital, Shahjahnabad. You will also visit the Bangla Sahib Sikh Temple, one of the most prominent Sikh houses of worship in Delhi.

End your first day of touring with a visit to the Gandhi Smriti, a museum that is dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. It is where he spent the last 144 days of his life and where his life ended when he was assassinated on January 30, 1948.

Option: Meditation and interaction with a Buddhist Monk at Tushita Meditation Center.

Day 4

Drive Past Lutyens Delhi

Visit Historic Lodhi Gardens

Visit Humayun's Tomb and Qutub Minar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Enjoy breakfast at your local hotel then begin your day of touring. Drive past the Imperial part of the city designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens for the British in the 1920s. Continue along the main avenue, the impressive Rajpath to the World War I memorial arch, the India Gate and past the Rashtrapati Bhawan, the President's residence and the Parliament Buildings.

Visit the Historic Lodi Gardens, spanning 90 acres and housing prominent Mughal tombs and mausoleums. It is a rare sight of old charm amidst New Delhi! Lodi Garden spans over 90 acres and is steeped in history. The gardens are home to Mughal architectural tombs and mausoleums; the most prominent being that of Sikandar Lodi. You also have the chance to see the Qutub Minar in South Delhi, a World Heritage Monument built in 1199 made of red sandstone and marble.

Day 5

Transfer to Agra

Visit Itmad-ud-daulah

Visit Mehtab Bagh

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast this morning you will transfer to Agra, approximately 4 hours drive. Before checking in to your hotel you'll visit Itmad-ud-daulah, a Mughal mausoleum that is often described as a "jewel box." It is sometimes considered an early draft of the Taj Mahal. Afterwards peruse the Mehtab Bagh, the last of

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the Mughal gardens. It was built along the River Yamuna. It lies close to the Taj Mahal and makes for an excellent spot to view the monument. Check in to your Agra hotel.



Day 6

Taj Mahal by Sunrise (subject to weather condition)

Visit Mother Teresa Charity Home and Agra Fort

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After an early breakfast at your hotel, depart to see the marvelous Taj Mahal by sunrise. The one and only monument of love with its incredible lacy white grandeur is perhaps the most perfect architectural statement in the world. Emperor Shahjahan constructed this most famous and incomparable Moghul monument in memory of his beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal, which took him 22 years. It is the most extravagant act of love ever constructed.

After your Taj Mahal visit, head to Mother Teresa's Charity home in Agra, which has more than 48 children who are orphaned or come from poor families who can no longer provide for them, as well as 150 infirmed adults who can no longer care for themselves. The mission is solely reliant on private donations to support their cause. Give back to this underprivileged part of society by sharing your time with them.

Day 7

Transfer to Jaipur

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Visit Fatehpur Sikri and Abhaneri

Evening Walk in the Bazaar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Have a full breakfast at your Agra hotel, then check out and depart for Jaipur. It will take approximately 6 hours driving. En route, visit Fatehpur Sikri. This magnificent fortified ghost city was constructed by Akbar in 1659 to honor the Saint Sheikh Salim Chisti, who had foretold the birth of Akbar's son, Jahangir. The city is a combination of Hindu and Persian architecture and is in a remarkable state of preservation. It is a fine example of a Mughal city at the height of the empire's splendor. Akbar's court occupied this city until it was abandoned, after the local wells could no longer support a city. Stop for lunch in a Laxmi Vilas Palace, Bharatpur.

Visit one of the most amazing sites of the tour, 'Abhaneri Step Well.' The small village of Abhaneri has one of India's deepest and largest step wells (or "baolis"). Step wells are unique to India. They were used as cool places of resort, as pools for ritual cleansing before a temple visit and as a water supply for dry weather.

Check in at your Jaipur hotel. Jaipur is a treasure trove for shoppers! A wide range of handicrafts are available in the market: most of items are produced in the centers in and around the city. The city is one of the most important centers in the world for precious and semi-precious stone, diamond cutting and polishing. The rest of the day is yours to explore Jaipur's unique markets on your own with your English-speaking guide! Dinner will be provided at your Jaipur hotel.

Day 8

Visit Amber Fort with photo stop at Hawa Mahal

Visit City Palace and Jantar Mantar

Evening Aarti Ceremony at Govind Dev ji Temple

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Begin your day with breakfast before beginning your exploration of Jaipur. Start with the Forts of Rajasthan, where you will ascend to Amber Fort by Jeep. In our international partner's endeavor to not support animal cruelty, we advise our clients not to avail of the elephant ride. However, we understand if you would like to participate in this activity and can add it as desired.

This hilltop fortress was the Royal Family's residence and is one of the most enchanting forts of India. A complex of palaces, temples, mirror inlaid public halls and beautifully manicured gardens, the fortress is an exquisite example of Rajput architecture. Within the fort are enchanting palaces and chambers, notable amongst them being the Sheesh Mahal (Palace of Mirrors) and Diwan-e-Aam (Hall of Public Audience). Lunch will be served at a local restaurant.

After lunch, take in a city tour of the Pink City of Jaipur. Your tour will include the Jantar Mantar Observatory, City Palace, and a drive past the magnificent façade of Hawa Mahal. City Palace is a beautiful palace was built during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. This palace stands apart, with its

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outstanding art and architecture. The Jantar Mantar Observatory is a collection of architectural astronomical instruments, built by Sawai Jai Singh who was a Rajput king. The name is derived from jantar ("instrument"), and mantar ("formula", or in this context "calculation"). Jantar mantar means literally "calculation instrument."

Join the Govind Dev Ji Temple for their evening aarti ceremony. "Aarti, also spelled arti, arati, arathi, aarati, aarthi, aarthy, arthy (In Devanagari: आरती ऍरती) is a Hindu religious ritual of worship, a part of puja, in which light (usually from a flame) is offered to one or more deities." You will find yourself pulled in to the ritual and celebrating easily alongside lifelong practitioners of the faith.

Day 9

Transfer from Jaipur to Chennai via Flight

AM Chennai City Tour OR Excursion to Vendanthangal Bird Sanctuary

Transfer to Mahabalipuram

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast at your Jaipur hotel you will transfer to Chennai via local flight. Upon arrival in Chennai you may either embark on a guided city tour or an excursion to the Vendanthangal Bird Sanctuary. Chennai is often referred to as the "Gateway to South India." Located on the Coromandel Coast off the Bengal Bay, this city has a magnetic draw to tourists and locals alike. Once your morning activity is complete, continue to Mahabalipuram.

Day 10

Visit Kanchipuram: Ekambareswarar and Kailasanathar Temples

Visit Five Rathas, Shore Temple, Arjuna's Penance

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast this morning embark on a morning excursion to visit Ekambareswarar and Kailasanathar Temples. These historically relevant temples are some of the oldest structures in Kanchipuram. It is a Hindu temple built in the Tamil architectural style; they are dedicated to Lord Shiva. Return to Mahabalipuram and visit the structures that have withstood the test of time over hundreds of years. These monuments are Mahabalipuram's best known sites. Return to your hotel and relax for the evening.

Day 11

Transfer to Kumbakonam

Hospital/Clinic Visit, TBD

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After your group breakfast you will depart for Kumbakonam, partially by train and partially motor coach. The city is known as a "temple city" for the many temples here and is renowned for its Mahamaham Festival which attracts visitors from all over the world. Subject to permission, visit a hospital or clinic in Kumbakonam.

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Day 12

Visit Temples at Swamimalai and Darasuram

Visit Saree Weaving Center in Darasuram

Walk in Nearby Village inc. Bullock Cart Ride

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Gather for breakfast at your hotel before departing to visit the temples at Swamimalai and Darasuram. These temples are working temples and popular with local Hindu worshippers. Stop to visit the saree weaving center in Darasuram. Witnessing the beautifully delicate fabrics on the loom is an unforgettable picture. Handwoven fabrics are few and far between in typical western cultures but here you will find the spirit of the craft is alive and well in local sarees. This evening you will take a walk in a nearby village, to include a bullock cart ride. These kinds of carts have been in use since ancient times in many parts of the world.

Day 13

Transfer to Tanjore

Tanjore: Visit Brihadishvara Temple and Bronze Gallery

Transfer to Trichy

Trichy: Visit Rock Fort Temple and Srirangam Temple

Transfer to Madurai

Madurai: Night Ceremony at Meenakshi Temple

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before transferring to Tanjore. Visit the Brihadishvara Temple which is dedicated to Shiva. It is one of the largest South Indian temples and an excellent example of Dravidian architecture—a stunning temple complex unlike anything you have seen. Stop by an exquisite bronze gallery to see statues from throughout the ages. Transfer then to Trichy where you will visit the Rock Fort Temple and Srirangam Temple. These monuments in Trichy were constructed in the 6th century AD. End your day in Madurai at a night ceremony conducted at Meenakshi Temple. Non-Hindus can witness an icon of Shiva carried out from his shrine to his wife, Meenakshi's, shrine. Worship happens among smoke, chanting, drums, and horns. Check in to your hotel and relax for the evening.

Day 14

Madurai: Visit Meenakshi Temple and Thirumalai Nayak Palace

Transfer to Munnar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast in Madurai you will visit the Meenakshi Temple. This temple is over two thousand years old! Its complex is spread across 14 acres and has 4,500 pillars and 14 towers. It is a “living temple” and is in a constant state of use—people are bustling around and couples linger in the corridors waiting to be wed. Non-Hindus are welcome to visit the massive complex but are not permitted to enter the shrines. Next visit Thirumalai Nayak Palace, a 17th-century palace that is an excellent example of Dravidian and Rajput styles of architecture. The palace features spectacular sound and light shows and is a popular

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location for filming due to its impressive large pillars. Transfer to Munnar after touring and settle in to your hotel.

Day 15

Visit Tea Plantation & Tea Factory

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel before departing for a visit to a tea plantation and factory. Commercial tea production in India is a story steeped in British colonialism. The British East India Company once took over massive tracts of lands and converted them for tea production, but the industry has survived to modern day. Tea is such a popular drink in India that about 70% of the tea produced here is consumed here! Munnar is one of the most popular tea plantation regions. It is elevated from the surrounding area leading to a cooler climate. Much of the tea is handpicked. You will learn about how the fresh tea is



processed into the familiar tea that is brewed at home. The rest of the day is free to spend at your leisure.

Day 16

Transfer to Cochin

Visit Fort Kochi (St Francis Church, Jewish Synagogue, Dutch Palace, Chinese Fishing Nets)

Evening Kathakali Dance Show

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast this morning you will transfer to Cochin to visit Fort Kochi. This charming seaside area is filled with fascinating sites. Some of the sites include St. Francis Church, which is one of the oldest

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European churches in India; the Paradesi Synagogue, which is the oldest active synagogue of the former British commonwealth; the Mattancherry Palace, popularly known as the “Dutch Palace,” which has Kerala murals and portraits that depict the Rajas of Kochi; and finally, the Chinese fishing nets that are used across the coast of Southern China and Indochina. This unique method of fishing has become something of a tourist attraction due to their unique method and eye-catching shape. In the evening you will gather for a cultural dance show. The traditional Kathakali dance show is a bright fusion of dance and theatre. Costumes, movement, and music come together to tell a story of Kerala culture. It is a fabulous end to your trip!

Day 17

Transfer to Delhi

Free Time

Depart

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Once you have enjoyed breakfast at your hotel, check out and transfer to Delhi. The rest of the day you will have time for shopping and relaxation. After a deep dive into Indian culture it is time to return home!

Day 18

Arrive

Meals: Breakfast

Arrive home with priceless memories and souvenirs to remind you of your time in India.

The Trip ends here! Thank You for traveling with Four Winds!!

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