

CLASSIC INDIA

DETAILED ITINERARY

Sep 27/24



**Includes
Diwali Celebration &
Pushkar Camel Festival**

Few countries can match the splendor of India, an ancient culture imbued with exotic traditions. A beautiful land of world-class sites, both natural and man-made, awaits you. From the plains to the rugged Himalayas, India is one of the world's great travel destinations. Our program highlights the famous sites of the north as well as lesser-known, but equally fascinating sites such as Ranthambore National Park.

In New Delhi, we tour India's regal capital, then travel to Varanasi to witness the rituals of bathing, prayer and funerals on the holy Ganges River as they have been performed for thousands of years.

In Khajuraho, we visit the exquisitely carved temple complex, then journey to Orchha for a local home experience. We board the train to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal - one of the most sublime structures ever built. We visit the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, and journey to Ranthambore National Park, one of India's most important tiger reserves.

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 21 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in New Delhi • All meals included
- Includes 3 internal flights • Explore Rajasthan's highlights • Search for tigers in Ranthambore National Park • Explore Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary • Visit the Taj Mahal, Khajuraho and Fatehpur Sikri • View the sunrise on the Holy Ganges River in Varanasi
- Experience Pushkar and a camel safari
- Visit 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- Celebrate Diwali with a local family

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

- Oct 31 - Nov 20, 2024 - \$6995 USD**
- Oct 17 - Nov 06, 2025 - \$6995 USD**

Activity Level: 2

Comfort Level: Some rough/dusty roads and long drives

ACCOMMODATIONS

Comfortable hotels with private bathrooms.

ELDER TREKS



**SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS**

The highlight for many participants of November departures is the Pushkar Camel Festival, one of India's greatest events. Watch as men gather to trade, ride and race camels within a carnival-like setting. It is truly a spectacle not to be missed! Throw in the color of Jaipur and Udaipur in Rajasthan for a truly wonderful adventure.

We will also have the opportunity to participate in a Diwali Festival with a local family. Diwali, the festival of lights is indeed the most awaited and the most celebrated festivals of India. People in every nook and cranny of the country welcome the festival with enthusiastic gestures.

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN NEW DELHI

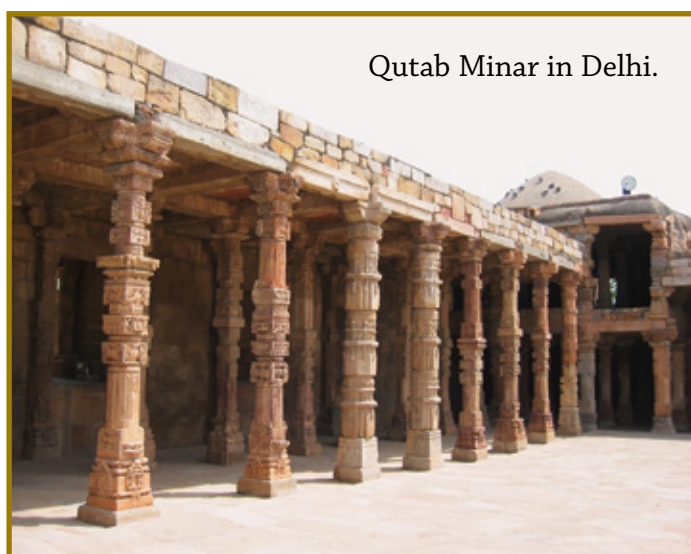
Arrive in New Delhi, the bustling capital of India and transfer to our comfortable hotel in the city. Delhi is slowly becoming the largest city in India rapidly catching up to Mumbai (Bombay) and Kolkata (Calcutta).

In addition, Delhi has long since eclipsed them in political importance. In some areas it remains a spacious garden city, tree-lined with beautiful parks, but it can also be crowded and raucous. Turbaned Sikhs, colorfully dressed Rajasthani and Gujarati women working as manual laborers on building sites and the shopkeepers along Janpath Road all add to the cosmopolitan feel of the city. The rest of the day is free to relax or to explore, before our orientation meeting and welcome dinner.

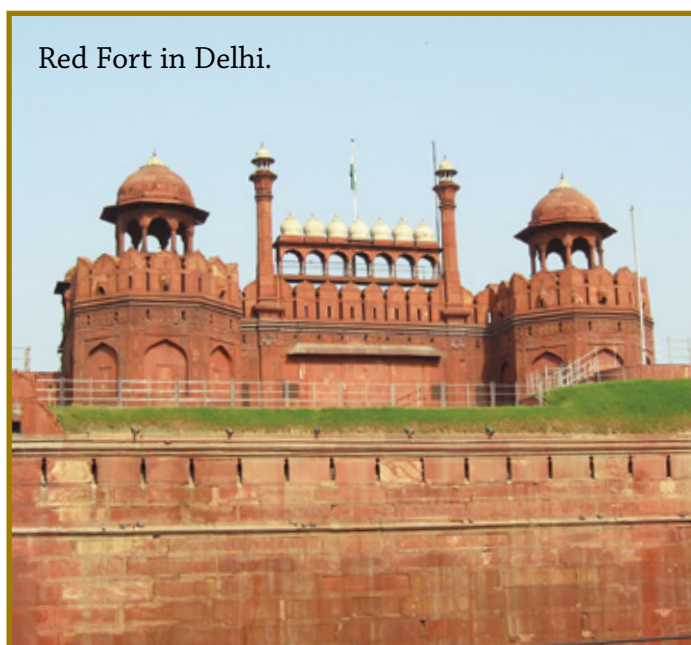
Overnight in New Delhi.

DAY 2 CITY TOUR OF NEW & OLD DELHI, DIWALI CELEBRATION

We spend the day in Delhi, exploring some of the sights in both the "Old" and the "New" cities. In Old Delhi, we visit the Jama Masjid - India's largest Mosque, and also



Qutab Minar in Delhi.



Red Fort in Delhi.



Holy Ganges River.

enjoy a rickshaw ride through Chandi Chowk, Delhi's famous "Silver Street".

In New Delhi, we see the Qutab Minar, Gandhi's tomb, as well as see India Gate - the "Arc de Triomphe" that leads to the Indian Parliament, which we will drive through.

Tonight we will have the opportunity to celebrate Diwali with a local family starting with dinner and afterwards taking part in Diwali Puja Ceremony along with the locals. We will gain an understanding of the rituals which is an integral part of the Hindu culture.

Overnight in New Delhi.

DAY 3 TO VARANASI, EVENING CEREMONY ON THE GANGES

We depart Delhi by plane to the "Eternal City" of Varanasi, also known as Benares. The city lies on the west bank of the Ganges at a point where it sweeps in a great bend north, before resuming its southeasterly

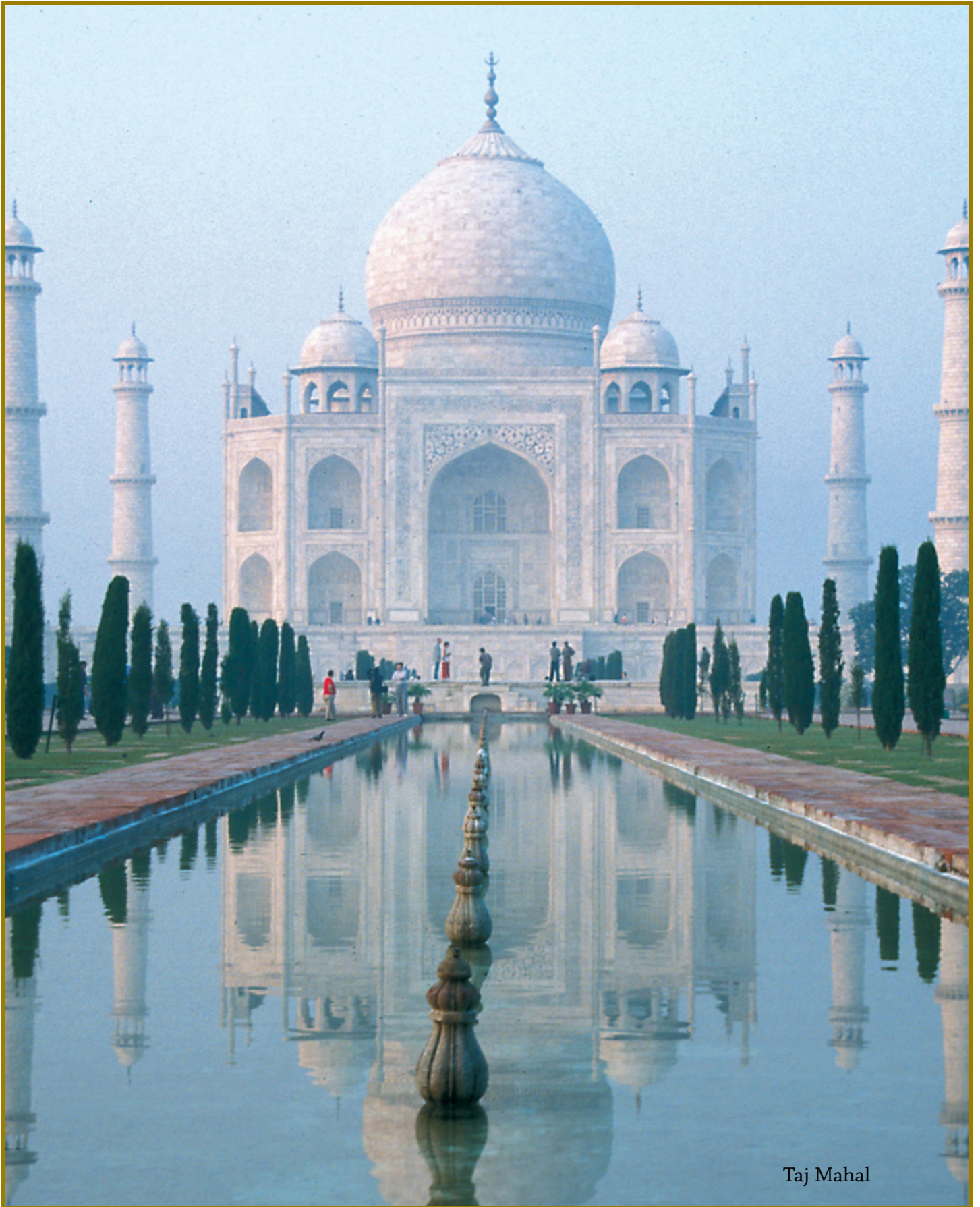
course to the sea. India's most sacred city, it was already an important town in the 7th century BC when Babylon was at the peak of its power and was certainly well established by the time Buddha arrived here in 500 BC. Varanasi is said to combine the virtues of all other places of pilgrimage, and anyone dying within the area is transported straight to heaven. This is why many devout Hindus move to Varanasi to end their days and have their ashes scattered in the holy Ganges.

We journey to our hotel to prepare for our evening experience starting with a rickshaw ride to visit a ghat at aarti (prayer) time.

Overnight in Varanasi.

DAY 4 VARANASI, SUNRISE ON THE HOLY GANGES RIVER, VISIT SARNATH

An early morning boat trip on the Ganges River takes us past the ghats where pilgrims have come to purify themselves and where bathing and cremations are



Taj Mahal

regular activities in these sacred waters. After the boat trip we visit Sarnath, the ancient site where Buddha gave his first sermon. Today the monks are long gone and the buildings are in ruin but its setting among green grass and beautiful trees makes it an ideal place to experience India's profound past. Tonight we take a boat ride for a special ceremony with traditional music along the Ganges River.

Overnight in Varanasi.

DAY 5 KHAJURAHO

In the morning, we take a short flight to Khajuraho, a medieval city filled with intriguing temples. In the afternoon we explore Khajuraho's temples (declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Intricately carved, these ancient temples depict human and divine forms engaged in daily life.

Overnight in Khajuraho.

DAY 6 ORCHHA, LOCAL HOME EXPERIENCE

This morning we depart to Orchha, arriving in time for our cooking class in a local home. We have the opportunity to learn how to prepare local Indian dishes as well as enjoy a sumptuous feast with our hosts. This will be much more than a cooking lesson as you get a first-hand glimpse into Indian life as you interact with a family in their home. After lunch we say goodbye to our hosts and explore the temples of Orchha. In the evening we will see these ancient temples come alive with the brilliant lights that make them shine.

Overnight in Orchha.

DAY 7 AMERMAHAL PALACE, TRAIN TO AGRA

In the morning, we visit the Amermahal Palace, which resembles a European-style castle. In the afternoon we drive to Jhansi where we board the train for Agra, home to the Taj Mahal. Upon our arrival in Agra, we check into the hotel for dinner.

Overnight in Agra.

DAY 8 AGRA - TAJ MAHAL, AGRA FORT AND ITMAD-UD-DAULAH TOMB

We have a full day to explore some of the most famous sights of Agra, including the Taj Mahal (UNESCO). This white marbled jewel was built over a 22-year period by Shah Jehan as a monument to his great love for his wife.

We also visit Agra Fort (UNESCO) built by Akbar the Great, which includes the Pearl Mosque, the Palace, and the Halls of Private and Public Audience. Later, we visit the Itmad-Ud-Daulah Tomb, which was also known as the mini Taj Mahal. We will learn why this tomb pre-dates the Taj Mahal as we marvel in the lace design that makes this tomb so unique.

Overnight in Agra.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TAJ MAHAL:

In 1612, Arjumand Banu Begam, better known by her other name, Mumtaz Mahal was married to Shah Jehan (then Prince Khurram), the fifth Mughal Emperor. This marriage, although the emperor's second, was a real love-match, and Mumtaz was her husband's inseparable companion on all his journeys and military expeditions.

She was his comrade, his counselor, and inspired him to acts of charity and benevolence towards the weak and the needy. She bore him fourteen children, and died in childbirth in 1630 (only three years after his accession to

the throne) in Burhanpur in the Deccan Plateau where she had accompanied him on a military campaign. Overpowered by grief, Shah Jehan was determined to perpetuate her memory for immortality, and decided to build his beloved wife the finest sepulchre ever - a monument of eternal love. It was Shah Jehan's everlasting love for Mumtaz that led to the genesis of the Taj Mahal. The sad circumstances, which attended the early death of the empress who had endeared herself to the people, inspired all his subjects to join in the emperor's pious intentions.

After twenty-two laborious years, and the combined effort of over twenty thousand workmen and master craftsmen, the complex was finally completed in 1648 on the banks on the river Yamuna in Agra, the capital of Mughal monarchs.

The origin of the name the "Taj Mahal" is not clear. Court histories from Shah Jehan's reign only call it the Rauza (tomb) of Mumtaz Mahal. It is generally believed that "Taj Mahal" (usually translated as either "Crown Palace" or "Crown of the Palace") is an abbreviated version of her name, Mumtaz Mahal (Exalted One of the Palace) -Saumya Lashkari

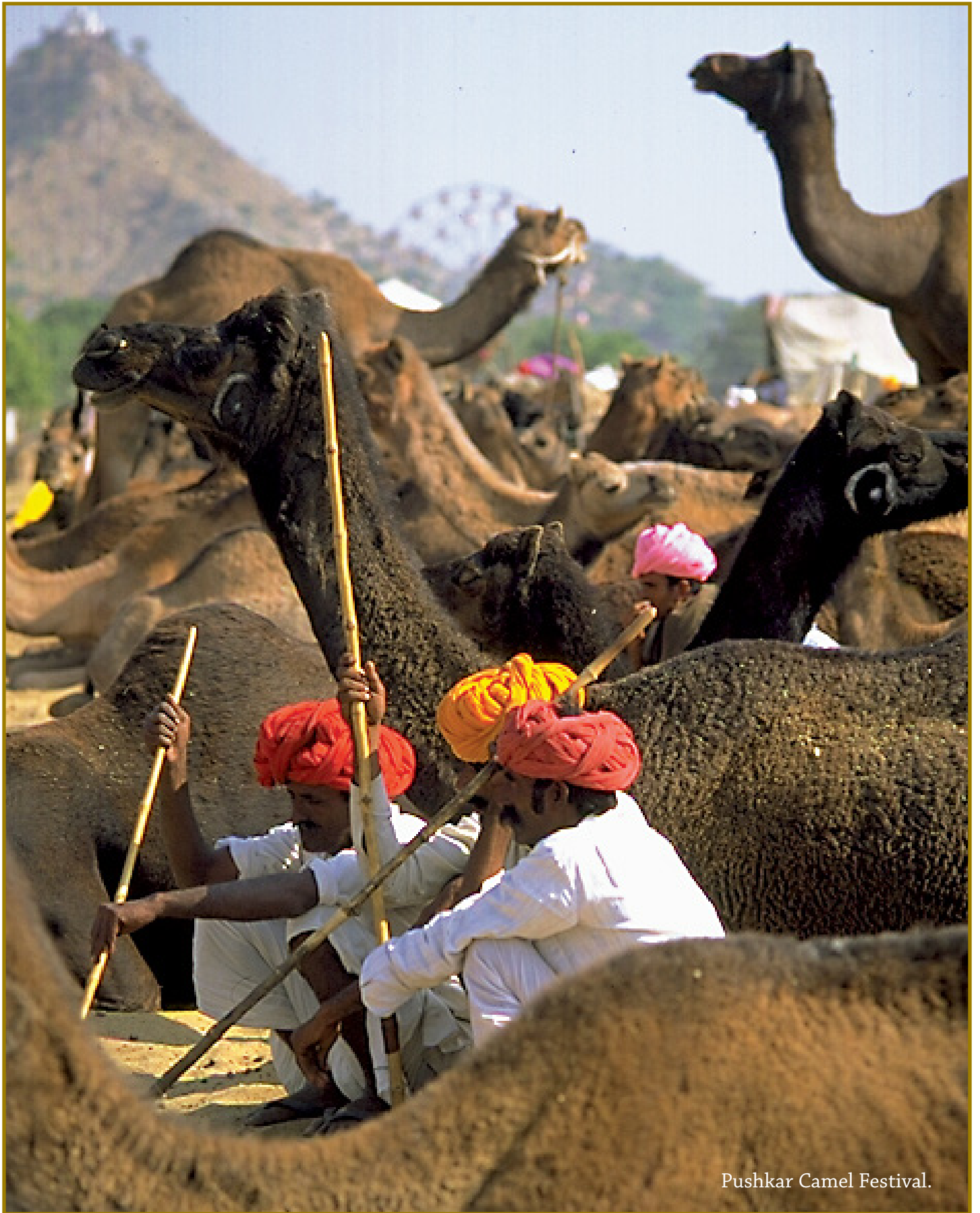
DAY 9 BHARATPUR BIRD SANCTUARY

In the morning we depart Agra and journey to the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, stopping enroute to visit the ancient ghost town of Fatehpur Sikri, and wander amongst its beautiful stone buildings set in the desert.

Onward, we arrive at our resort where you will have some free time to relax. In the late afternoon when the birds are at their best we will take a rickshaw into the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary (UNESCO) to learn about the







Pushkar Camel Festival.

beautiful bird life in this wonderful park. The sanctuary is a 20 sq. mile marshland, reputed to be one of the best bird sanctuaries in the world - over 360 bird species have been recorded here.

Overnight in Bharatpur.

DAY 10 RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

We depart Bharatpur for Ranthambore. We arrive in time for lunch followed by an afternoon visit to the Ranthambore Fort. Be sure to have your cameras ready as the fort is set inside the park and you never know when you will see a tiger, bear or other wildlife.

Overnight in Ranthambore.

DAY 11 RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK, SAFARIS

We spend the day in this park, which is famous for its tiger population. Here we learn about these elusive creatures as we travel by open vehicle. There are two safaris - one in the early morning and one in the late afternoon.

The chances of seeing a tiger in the wild are small, but it provides a great opportunity to learn about them and to take in the beauty of the park at the same time. Other wildlife include deer, crocodiles, Asian sun bears, leopards, monkeys and a wide variety of birds.

Overnight at Ranthambore.

DAY 12 TO JAIPUR

In the morning we depart Ranthambore for Jaipur, the "Pink City" of Rajasthan, which was built in 1728 and holds many attractions for the modern-day traveler. It earned its moniker as the Pink City because the rock that was used in the city's construction has a pink hue. Enjoy a relaxing evening in the Pink City or for those

who want to learn more about the famous Bollywood, we will attend a true Hindi Bollywood movie at one of the oldest and most extraordinary cinemas in Jaipur.

Overnight in Jaipur.

DAY 13 JAIPUR - AMBER PALACE FORT, ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY & CITY PALACE

In the morning we visit Amber Palace and Fort with its impressive architectural style, perched on a hill overlooking Maoto Lake. We stop at the Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) to catch the morning sun on this beautiful structure. We will explore this majestic fort and learn the history of Jaipur and how life was like in the king's day. In the afternoon we will journey to the famous Jantar Mantar, the largest stone astronomical observatory built by Maharaja Jai Singh (UNESCO). We will also visit the City Palace.

In the afternoon we will end our sightseeing with some free time to wander the colorful markets of Jaipur or take a rikshaw ride through the old city.

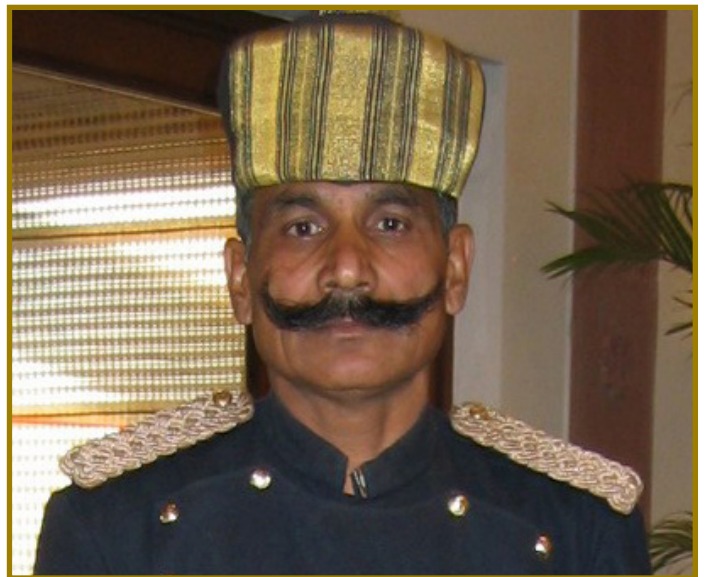
Overnight in Jaipur.

DAY 14 TO PUSHKAR

Today, we travel overland to the idyllic desert town of Pushkar. Situated on the edge of the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, the town of Pushkar is a peaceful oasis where travelers escape the bustle of big city India - to a place frozen in the ancient ways of an India from the past.

Arriving in the afternoon you have free time to sit by the lake and watch the pious perform their ablutions in the holy waters, or explore this fascinating town as troops of monkeys perform their antics around you.

Overnight in Pushkar.



DAY 15 PUSHKAR CAMEL FESTIVAL

We have planned our fall departures around one of India's largest festivals, the Pushkar Camel Festival. Pushkar is an oasis in the desert and is a special place in its own right. Every year Pushkar becomes a world-class spectacle during the Camel Festival, whose dates are timed with the lunar calendar. For centuries, traders have been coming to this event to buy, sell and trade oxen, cattle, mules and even elephants, but it is camels who hold center stage at Pushkar. It is estimated that up to 50,000 camels are bought, sold and traded every year at the Camel Fair. Overnight, Pushkar is transformed. Devotees, traders, musicians and jugglers flock to the town. Pushkar bursts with color, people, and gaiety during the week of the autumn full moon. Held for five days and culminating on the auspicious Purnima (full moon of the Hindu month of Kartik), the Pushkar Camel Fair is one of India's greatest festivals.

Today we will get up early to walk around the fair grounds and watch the trading of livestock in action. Talk to the farmers and learn where they traveled from to sell or trade their camels. Get up close and personal with the camels and learn about these fascinating creatures. Make sure your camera is ready at all times as the colorful decorations and amazing designs that the camels show off are truly something you will want to capture. We will watch the day's competitions and street theater and walk amongst the variety of vendors selling interesting handicrafts. In the evening we will take a camel safari to watch the sunset over the fair grounds and the desert.

Overnight in Pushkar.

DAY 16 TO JODHPUR, MEHRANGARH FORT

Today we depart Pushkar for Jodhpur. Once the former capital of Marwar State, Jodhpur was founded in 1459 by Rao Jodha, who himself claimed descent from Lord

Rama (the hero of the epic Ramayana). The massive fort, Mehrangarh, came first and around it grew the city of Jodhpur, protected by a high stone wall with its seven gates and countless bastions.

Today, the city has grown to become the second largest city of Rajasthan yet still manages to maintain its medieval character. As in the past, Jodhpur remains one of the leading trading centers of wood, cattle, camels, salt and agricultural crops. However, the past is never very far behind and Jodhpur boasts some fine reminders of this glorious past - palaces, forts, temples and other elegant monuments of architectural and historical value. After lunch we will embark on a tour of the fort. Learn about the caste system and the rich history of the region. Take your time at each room, go back to your favorite place or just sit in the peaceful courtyards. We conclude our tour with a stop at the viewing point for a picture of the Jaswant Thada, a royal cenotaph made of white marble.

Overnight in Jodhpur.

DAY 17 VILLAGES OF BISNOIS, RANAKPUR JAIN TEMPLE, TO KUMBHALGARH

This morning, we visit the villages of Bisnois - a community of nature worshippers. We will be welcomed into a local home to learn about their beliefs and see how they live in this harsh land. We will also visit a traditional carpet-weaving village and learn the art of weaving. We continue our journey to Kumbhalgarh, stopping enroute to see Ranakpur Jain Temple. We arrive in Kumbhalgarh in the late afternoon and settle into our hotel.

Overnight in Kumbhalgarh.

DAY 18 UDAIPUR - KHUMBALGARH FORT AND CULTURE SHOW

After breakfast, we depart for Udaipur but first we stop to visit the Khumbalgarh Fort. Udaipur is set in the Girwa Valley amidst the Aravalli hills of south Rajasthan. Udaipur is a beautiful city, regarded by Indians and foreigners alike as one of the most romantic in India. It is a lovely city to explore with fairy tale white marble palaces, placid blue lakes and green hills that create a feeling of serenity. Udaipur is undoubtedly an oasis of color in an arid region of India.

Upon arrival we will have a walking tour of the small streets with some free time. In the evening we will attend a culture show followed by dinner.

Overnight in Udaipur.

DAY 19 UDAIPUR - CITY PALACE, SUNSET CRUISE

Today we have a full day of sightseeing with a visit to the City Palace and a local artist studio to see how the famous miniature paintings are created. After lunch

we board a small boat for a lake cruise to view this wonderful city from the water, including a view of the famous Lake Palace.

Overnight in Udaipur.

DAY 20 TO NEW DELHI

After breakfast we will enjoy a relaxing walk through Udaipur before transferring to the airport for our flight to New Delhi. We will have some time upon arrival before our farewell dinner this evening.

Overnight in New Delhi.

DAY 21 DEPART NEW DELHI

Today we say goodbye to this remarkable part of India. You are transferred to the airport for your international departure flight.



Akbar Tomb in Agra.





QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (porterage), bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit many temples and historical sites, and develop an overview of Indian history and culture. But this is only a portion of the educational experience. We believe that it is equally educational to meet local people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in Hindi. Sometimes the most “educational” moments are spent sipping a cold drink in a street market.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All local transportation is included in the land price of the trip. Most of the transportation is by bus, although we also travel by boat, train and plane. Of course, we also explore on foot and have the option to ride camels in Pushkar.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We always stay in good accommodations — hotels all have private bath or shower. Accommodations have been chosen on the basis of location, atmosphere and local charm.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

There are wide variations in climate in northern India with winter, spring, summer, monsoon and autumn experienced in all regions. Generally, December and January are cool, with maximum temperatures around 70°F - 75°F (21°C-23°C), and minimum temperatures as low as 40°F (4°C). February and March are very

pleasant, with temperatures starting to heat up in April, and peaking in late May at around 100°F (38°C). June to September bring the monsoon rains, followed by the October to December period that brings clear skies and cool weather.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms & Conditions” section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

**Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after receiving your booking deposit for the trip.

11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local foods prepared in a wide range of settings. In many cases, we simply order a number of dishes and share, allowing you to sample new foods and decide what you enjoy best.

12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please do not hesitate to contact our office or your travel agent for additional information. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked on the tour.

