



Rajasthan Panorama Dossier

Classic Tour | 22 Days | Physical Level 2

Delhi – Alsisar – Gajner – Jaisalmer – Manvar – Jodhpur – Udaipur – Deogarh – Pushkar – Jaipur – Ranthambore National Park – Agra

Rajasthan conjures up images of maharajas and palaces and is regarded as one of the most colourful and exciting states in all of India. Marvel at the beauty of this region's diverse landscapes, as you travel across deserts, lakes and national parks.

- Explore the heritage town of Alsisar
- Stay overnight in the desert
- Marvel at the imposing Mehrangarh Fort
- Discover vibrant Jaipur
- Visit the magnificent Taj Mahal
- Discover the colourful bazaars of Delhi



Rajasthan Panorama 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 Australian passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary 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/Local Guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Physical Level 2:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights. 'Rajasthan Panorama' is rated 2 on the physical level scale. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- Sightseeing will involve climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- There will be some uneven surfaces during the safari in Ranthambore which could make for a bumpy ride

Of course, our National Escorts 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. If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Country Profile: India

India evokes images of colourful religious festivals, deserts lined with historic forts, tented camps nestled in sand dunes, delicious food and royal palaces. Abundant wildlife such as the Asian Elephant and the Royal Bengal Tiger are found in the numerous national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. All of these images of India may be experienced on our tours, but the most lasting memories that you will take away with you is of the happy, smiling people.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 22 days in duration including international flights. Please note that due to flight schedules you may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on Day 1 in Delhi and end the tour on Day 21 in Delhi Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention 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 maintaining the integrity of your trip.

- The domestic airlines in this region have frequent schedule changes. For this reason, we have indicated morning, afternoon or evening flights only in the following section. Your Local Guide or National Escort will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them.
- The Taj Mahal is currently undergoing renovations to its exterior. The work is estimated to be completed by December 2018 and will be done in phases so that visitors to the Taj will still be able to experience the beauty of the architectural wonder.

2019 changes:

- **Day 16:** There are now two included safaris during your stay at Ranthambore National Park
- **Day 20:** An additional night has been added to your itinerary in Delhi at the end of your tour
- **Day 21:** Late check out is not included and can be arranged at an additional cost

Itinerary – Rajasthan Panorama

Day 1: Arrive Manesar

Fly to Delhi, 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 approximately 1 hour to your hotel in Manesar and check-in.

Day 2: Manesar - Alsisar

This morning a tour introduction will either be held in the hotel or on the coach. Drive approximately 7 to 8 hours to the heritage town of Alsisar for a picture of village life in rural Rajasthan and have lunch en route. There is no sightseeing on arrival in Alsisar so the rest of the day is at your leisure.

Destination Information

Alsisar - Alsisar, located in the Shekhawati region, provides the visitor a non-commercialised picture of village life in rural Rajasthan. The whole area of Shekhawati has beautiful frescoes, havelis and mansions and is often referred to as an open-air art gallery.

Day 3: Alsisar - Gajner

Drive approximately 7 to 8 hours to the desert town of Bikaner. Visit the impressive Junagarh Fort to commence easy sightseeing including a rickshaw ride through medieval streets to the Old City Bazaar. Discover the Prachina Bikaner Cultural Centre and Museum and enjoy lunch at the museum café. Afterwards continue driving approximately 45 minutes to Gajner and check into your hotel, a former palace.



Destination Information

Junagarh Fort - Built by Raja Tai Singh in 1588, Junagarh is one of the most impressive forts in India. The various palaces at Junagarh Fort include the Chandra Mahal (Moon Palace) with mirror work, carvings and marble decorations and the Phool Mahal (Flower Palace). The royal chapel is Har Mandir, where royal weddings and births were once celebrated.

Prachina Bikaner Cultural Centre and Museum - Established by Siddhi Kumari, daughter of Late Maharaja Narendra Singhji of Bikaner, in 2000 with a vision to preserve Bikaner's rich cultural diversity and to showcase monolithic identity of Bikaner in form of a Museum. Siddhi Kumari's endeavor is in line with the Bikaner royal family's rich and glorious tradition of establishing institutions for public benefits.

Bikaner - A major desert town in northern Rajasthan that was founded in 1488.

Day 4: Gajner – Jaisalmer

This morning drive approximately 7 hours to Jaisalmer and check into the hotel. In the afternoon, head of town to Sunset Point for leisurely sightseeing including a local market.

Destination Information

Jaisalmer - Founded by Prince Jaisala in 1156, it has been 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 view the city, including the fort.

Day 5: Jaisalmer

This morning's sightseeing takes place at the Jaisalmer Fort, built atop the 80m-high Trikuta Hill. Explore the Fort, then continue to the beautifully carved Jain temples and Badal Vilas Palace for approximately 2 to 3 hours sightseeing on foot. After lunch, drive approximately 1 and half hours to the Sam Sand Dunes. Sightseeing here involves a camel ride at sunset in the Thar Desert National Park before returning to the hotel for dinner. 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 the 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 7 yellow intricately carved sandstone Jain temples date back to the 15th and 16th century.

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

Day 6: Jaisalmer - Manvar

Depart Jaisalmer and drive for approximately 5 hours into the Thar Desert to Manvar. This afternoon travel by camel and jeep safari to Bishnoi villages and meet the local people.

You will have a memorable overnight stay in a tented camp in the desert. The camp consists of 30 deluxe tents tastefully decorated, all with bathrooms providing running hot and cold water. Meals are provided in the dining tent, which offers breathtaking views of the sunrise, sunset and the surrounding countryside. Evenings are livened up by campfire, mashaals and local musicians and dancers. Please bring an overnight bag as there is the option to leave your main luggage on the coach or at the nearby Manvar Resort.

Manvar Resort is used if the camp is unavailable (The camp is closed from mid-April to September). Manvar Resort is located 7km from the camp and is designed in a 'village settlement' style.

Destination Information

Manvar Desert Camp - Spend a memorable night in the midst of the wilderness surrounded by sand dunes.

Local Bishnoi Village - The Bishnois follow 29 principles of a non-violent Vaishnavas sect, founded in the 15th century by Jambeswarji.

Day 7: Manvar - Jodhpur

Today drive approximately 3 and a half hours to Jodhpur, located on the edge of the Thar Desert. Upon arrival proceed to your hotel and check-in for a two-night stay.

Destination Information

Jodhpur - Known as the 'blue city' due to the vivid blue painted houses in the old city. It is the second largest city in Rajasthan and 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.

Day 8: Jodhpur

Sightseeing today begins with a visit to Jaswant Thada, the royal cremation grounds. Continue on to explore the imposing Mehrangarh Fort, where sightseeing involves approximately two hours on foot and some steps. Next stop is Umaid Bhawan Palace. Sightseeing here involves approximately one hour of easy walking around the palace and museum. Later take an auto rickshaw to a local restaurant for lunch before enjoying a walking tour through Subzi Mandi, the local vegetable and spice market.



Destination Information

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

Mehrangarh Fort - Raised 120m 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.

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

Day 9: Jodhpur - Udaipur

After breakfast depart Jodhpur and travel approximately 5 hours to Ranakpur where you will visit the largest Jain temple complex in India. Sightseeing here involves 30 minutes of easy walking. Drive a further two hours to Udaipur. Before sunset 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 Palace - The 4km long Lake Pichola is fringed with hills, palaces, havelis, ghats and temples. While on the cruise you 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.

Day 10: Udaipur

Begin the day with a drive around the Fateh Sagar Lake. Tour the city at a leisurely pace of approximately 1 to 2 hours, visiting sites such as the Sahelion Ki Bari Gardens, the Folk Museum and Mewar Art Gallery. After lunch, explore the City Palace and wander through the surrounding local streets and shops for approximately two hours. At the palace, there are many stairs without handrails, so please be cautious.



Destination Information

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

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

City Palace - The City Palace, built in 1725 overlooking Lake Pichola, comprises of 11 palaces including the Dilkush Mahal, Sheesh Mahal, Moti Mahal and the Palace of Lord Krishna, all of which are ornately decorated. Today, the City Palace of Udaipur is still home to Maharaja Udai Singh's descendents who remain rulers of this independent state.

Day 11: Udaipur - Deogarh

Travel approximately four hours to Deogarh, stopping en route to visit the small town of Eklingji to explore a temple. Proceed to Deogarh and upon arrival check in to your hotel, an imposing 17th-century palace standing atop of a hill. The palace offers a panoramic view of the Aravalli mountain range and the numerous lakes spread throughout the countryside. This evening, enjoy a royal dinner with folk music and dancing.

Destination Information

Eklingji - One of the most famous temples in Rajasthan, Eklingji Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Admire the exquisite architecture and the four-faced idol of Eklingji (Lord Siva).

Deogarh - Deogarh is situated on the right bank of the River Betwa at the Western end of the Lalitpur range of hills. The chief of Deogarh, known as 'the Rawat', was one of 16 Umraos (feudal barons) entitled to wait upon the Maharana of Udaipur.

Day 12: Deogarh - Pushkar

This morning after breakfast transfer to the local railway station and board a rural 1930s train, enjoying a short ride through the wooded hills from Deogarh to Phulad. Here disembark the train and continue by road north to Pushkar. Continue your drive for approximately 5 hours to Pushkar and check into your hotel. After lunch take a walking tour of the market and stop at the Brahma Temple.



Destination Information

Pushkar - The village of Pushkar lies 11km from Ajmer on the edge of the Thar Desert. At its heart is one of India's most sacred lakes, Pushkar Lake. There are 52 ghats around the lake and numerous temples.

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 13: Pushkar - Jaipur

Depart Pushkar and begin the drive to Jaipur, approximately 3 and half hours. This afternoon, explore the striking Maharaja's City Palace and the UNESCO World Heritage listed ancient Jantar Mantar Observatory. Sightseeing this afternoon involves approximately two hours on foot and climbing of steps in the City Palace.

Jaipur is a larger city where it would be unwise to wander around without your Local Guide at night as there have been reports of pickpockets.

Destination Information

Jaipur - Jaipur was founded in 1727, at a time when Mughal power within India was declining. At this time, the then Maharaja Jai Singh moved his capital from Amer 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 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.

Maharaja's City Palace - A former royal residence located in the heart of the old city. Part of the building has been converted into a museum, while the royal family of Jaipur still uses the remaining sections of the palace as a private residence.

Jantar Mantar Observatory - The largest stone and marble crafted observatory in the world is located just outside the City Palace. The observatory has 17 large instruments, many of them still in working condition.

Day 14: Jaipur

Sightseeing this morning involves 2 to 3 hours on foot. Today's explorations include a photo stop at Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds), which is viewed from the street side opposite, as entrance is not granted to tour groups. Continue to Amer Fort and board a jeep to ride from the bus park to the palace entrance. Inside the fort explore the Hall of Victory. There are a number of steps within the fort. Later try your hand at the local handicraft at a printing and carpet weaving textile workshop and enjoy some time to shop at the lively bazaar in Choti Choper.



Sightseeing this afternoon involves approximately two hours on foot and climbing of steps. Later, have dinner at a local restaurant and enjoy live music and traditional entertainment.

Destination Information

Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) - Hawa Mahal is 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.

Amer Fort - Built from yellow and pink sandstone and white marble, Amer Fort was built in the 16th century by Raja Man Singh. Inside the fort visit the Hall of Victory which 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 produce.

Days 15 – 16: Ranthambore National Park

Leave Jaipur and head south for 5 to 6 hours to Ranthambore National Park. This afternoon, will be free for you to relax in the resort. The following day you will enjoy morning and afternoon canter (jeep-like vehicle) safaris for the chance to spot the local wildlife, returning to your hotel for lunch in between. The safaris involve 2 to 3 hours driving on uneven and unsealed tracks. During the canter safaris there are no bathrooms, please keep this in mind.



Please note: You will need to bring your passport to allow entry into the 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 17: Ranthambore – Fatehpur Sikri – Agra

After breakfast drive to Agra, stopping en route at Fatehpur Sikri to visit the ancient capital city. Sightseeing involves up to one hour of easy walking. Continue driving 1 and a half hours to Agra and check into your hotel.

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. While here, visit the remarkably well-preserved and graceful buildings within the Ghost City including the Jama Masjid, tomb of Salim Chisti, Panch Mahal Palace and other palaces that speak of the grandeur and splendour of the Mughal Empire at the height of its power.

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 18: 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). No polluting vehicles are allowed within a 500m radius of the Taj Mahal complex. At a designated point the group will disembark the coach and 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 with not 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 a couple of hours on foot.



Please note: The Taj Mahal is currently undergoing renovations to its exterior. The work is done in phases so that visitors to the Taj will still be able to experience the beauty of this architectural wonder. The walls and minarets have already been restored to their earlier state of glory, but the work continues on other parts of the building.

Destination Information

Taj Mahal - One of the most recognizable 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 19: Agra - Delhi

This morning say goodbye to Agra and commence the 4 hour drive to Delhi. This afternoon, visit Qutab Minar and Lotus Temple (from the outside), and end the day at Connaught Place Markets where you can enjoy some shopping. Sightseeing in the afternoon involves approximately 2 to 3 hours of easy walking.



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.

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

Lotus Temple - Completed in 1986, the lotus shaped temple is set amongst pools and picturesque gardens; people devoted to all faiths gather here to pray or meditate in silence.

Day 20: Delhi

Discover Old Delhi this morning. Drive past the Red Fort, walk through the fascinating Chandni Chowk Bazaar to Jama Masjid and have a photo stop at India Gate. Sightseeing will take approximately 1 to 2 hours, followed by lunch. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Destination Information

Red Fort - Home of the Mughal emperor for many years, the fort is located in the center of Delhi and houses a number of museums. View the fort as you drive past.

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 Shah 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.

Days 21-22: Depart Delhi

Today any time before your flight will be at leisure. You will then be transferred to the airport according to the departure time of your flight to Australia, arriving home the same or following day.

Late check-out is not included in our India group tours. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day in India, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

Rajasthan Panorama Travel Information

Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to India and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining an E-Visa and will submit the application on your behalf. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Please be advised that all E-Visa Applications for India will be completed by Wendy Wu Tours. The information is available from <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/before-you-go/passports-visas-travel-health/> - Wendy Wu Tours requires the information sheet, a clear colour photo in JPEG format and clear colour passport copy emailed through to documentation@wendywutours.com.au. Visas are valid for 120 days from the date of issue and allow you to stay in the country for up to 60 days. Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office 75 days prior to departure. Applications will not be accepted within 30 days of departure. E-Visas will be included with your final documentation approximately three to four weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your E-Visa organised earlier, please contact us.

Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

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 flavours. Though Indian cuisine can vary greatly from the Indian food we get in Australia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our private 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 nonspiced 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!

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 Australia 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. Please note double bed requests can be made at time of booking but can't be guaranteed.

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.

Manvar Desert Camp: The Indian Tourism Authority classes this as a 'deluxe-tented camp'. There are 30 permanent tents with simple but very comfortable accommodation. Each has two single beds or a double bed, a private bathroom with western toilet and shower (hot and cold water) and a veranda. There is no air-conditioning. Meals are served in the nearby dining tent. Tents will have generator supplied electricity, usually restricted to a few hours in the evening and morning. Please note: The camp is open from October to mid-April. You will stay in the nearby Manvar Resort if you are visiting at other times of the year

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. Due to Indian Government regulations the use of curtains, tinted glass windows are prohibited across India. 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.

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 Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; 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 Local Guides.

Public Holidays in India

If you are travelling within the below Indian Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed, and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. India Republic Day is on 26th January, the Holi Festival 20th – 21st of March 2019 (The Hindu 'Festival of Colours' can include locals smearing coloured powder on one another. Every effort will be made to minimise the effect on passengers whilst touring). Diwali Festival is on 27th of October 2019.

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 28 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

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

Cultural Difference

India has many religions, cultures and histories. Foreign tourists, particularly female travelers, may be stared at as Indian women in some areas generally do not go out without their father or husband. Please be considerate of this, the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration and modesty.

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.

Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Safari Bookings in 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 a deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot confirm your safari arrangements without this information.

Packing list and Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

Luggage

All travelers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 15kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside of Delhi and other main cities that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout India however, other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort/Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of \$250AUD per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. In your Final Documentation an Optional Excursion Sheet will be included outlining the activities available in each city and local cost associated. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

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 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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