



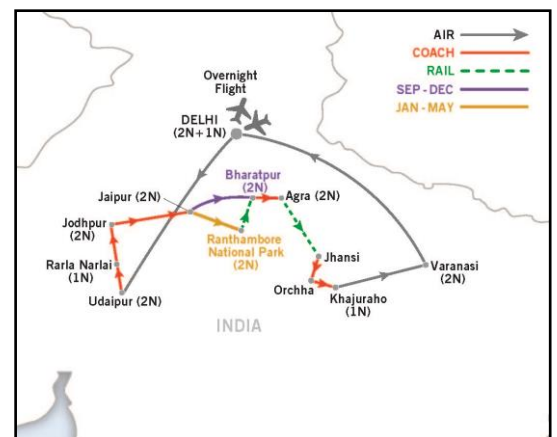
Essence of India Tour Dossier

Deluxe Tour | 19 Days | Moderate

Travel through history, discovering ancient sites and learning about royal traditions. Journey through Rajasthan, filled with magnificent forts and palaces. Discover the beauty of the unique temples and have a spiritual experience in Varanasi.

Tour Highlights:

- **Delhi** - India's capital consisting of a lively mix of historical monuments, modern day sky scrapers and colourful local bazaars
- **Udaipur** - Lake Pichola with its floating Lake Palace is the centrepiece among many treasures
- **Rawla Narlai** - A spectacular 17th century fort converted into a heritage hotel located in Ranakpur
- **Jodhpur** - Majestic Mehrangarh Fort dominates this busy city
- **Jaipur** - Capital of the Rajasthan State and often referred to as the 'pink city' due to pink sandstone used in the old quarter
- **Ranthambore National Park** - 1334 sq. km of national park that is a prime example of Project Tiger's conservation efforts OR **Bharatpur Keoladeo National Park** - A well-known bird sanctuary, where 364 species of birds, including the rare Siberian crane, have been recorded
- **Agra** - Home to the magnificent Taj Mahal, the famous monument to love
- **Khajuraho** - Home to the erotic Western and Eastern group of Khajuraho Temples
- **Varanasi** - Religious capital of the Hindi religion in India and home to the holy Ganges River



Essence of India tour inclusions

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- Deluxe accommodation
- Meals as stated in the itinerary
- 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

Personal expenditures e.g. meals not stated in the itinerary, drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary are at your own expense.

Deluxe Tours

These tours have been meticulously designed with the more discerning traveller in mind. Our deluxe journeys through India feature distinctive and exclusive experiences which bring the region to life. Our exclusive collection tours include:

- Unique experiences
- Small group sizes
- Porter service to and from your hotel rooms
- A mid-tour laundry service

Moderate

'Essence of India' is a **moderate** tour. Moderate tours require a higher level of fitness and may include standard activities and longer periods of sightseeing. Easy walking, high altitude and overnight train journeys may feature. Anyone with a good level of fitness should be able to complete this itinerary.

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.

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.

Itinerary Changes

1. 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 whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.
2. 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.
3. 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.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 19 days in duration including international flights. Travellers booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the starting point. Join the tour on Day 1 in Delhi and end the tour on Day 18 in Delhi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Important Information Regarding Flight Delays

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our India office on **+91 98 1899 0222/+91 98 1048 8398** (outside India) or **98 1899 0222/98 1048 8398** (within India) to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in India. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival. There is also a dedicated duty officer available 24 hours a day at the international airport, who can be contacted on **+91 81 3039 1236** if required upon arrival in Delhi.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in India as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival time.

Essence of India Itinerary

DAY 1: AUSTRALIA TO DELHI

Fly with Singapore Airlines to Delhi for a two-night stay. Your National Escort/Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the Delhi International Airport in the Arrivals Hall tonight. Together with other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer (45 minute drive) to your hotel and check-in. *In the event of flight delays or changes to arrival times, please see the details above as to what to do in this circumstance.*

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 2: DELHI

This morning a tour introduction will either be held in the hotel or on the coach. Food and drinks will not be served at this meeting. It is simply an opportunity for your group to meet and learn more about travelling in India. Today is a full day of sightseeing around Old and New Delhi, involving approximately four hours on foot. Your exploration of Delhi begins with a drive past the Red Fort, before a walk through the fascinating Chandni Chowk Bazaar to Jama Masjid. Visit

the Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple before stopping briefly for a photo opportunity at India Gate. Continue to Gandhi Smriti, drive by Rashtrapati Bhanvan and end the day at Qutab Minar. Dine at Olive & Kitchen restaurant, located in an ancient Mughal house.

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

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

Destination Information

Delhi - Delhi is split into two main sections; Old Delhi and New Delhi. Old Delhi is the area defined by the old city wall and is a maze of small alleyways and side streets. Old Delhi's bazaars are legendary; today the great wholesale bazaars of Chandni Chowk retain a souk-like quality. Their narrow streets are lined with shops, whose goods spill out onto the pavements. New Delhi grew under British colonial rule and is characterized the grandeur of 19th-century buildings and wide, tree-lined boulevards.

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. 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.

Lakshmi Narayan Hindu Temple - One of Delhi's major temples, the temple was built in 1939 and is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi.

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 Bhanvan - The official residence of the President of India.

Qutub 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 3: DELHI TO UDAIPUR

Transfer to the airport early this morning to board your onward flight to Udaipur (flight duration 1.5 hours). Upon arrival check into your hotel and enjoy the remainder of day free at leisure.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

Destination Information

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. Today, the City Palace of Udaipur is still home to Maharaja Udai Singh's descendants who remain rulers of this independent state. We will be able to tell if

the Maharaja is in residence by the flag hanging from the palace wall.

DAY 4: 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. This morning will include easy sightseeing of approximately 12-2 hours. 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 Pols, also known as gateways. The group will exit at a different gate to that which they entered (entry gate will be Bara Pol (Great Gate) while the exit gate will be Tripolia Pol (a triple arched gate). Later, enjoy a cruise along Lake Pichola where you can view the Lake Palace. In the evening transfer to the Fateh Prakash Palace and dine at the Sunset Terrace.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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 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 is 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 Dilkush 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.

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 5: UDAIPUR TO RAWLA NARLAI

This morning depart Udaipur and commence the 3-4 hour (135km) drive to Rawla Narlai for an overnight stay. Later take a leisurely walk into the village with a member of the shepherd community, where you can catch a glimpse into the everyday life of the local people. In the evening, enjoy a unique experience, a stepwell diner!

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Destination Information

Rawla Narlai - Located on the edge of a small Rajasthani village halfway between Jodhpur and Udaipur. Once a hunting lodge owned by the Jodhpur Royal Family dating back to the 17th century, Rawla Narlai which has been converted into a wonderful heritage hotel.

DAY 6: RAWLA NARLAI TO JODHPUR

After breakfast, begin the 4 hour (139km) journey to Jodhpur, the second largest city in Rajasthan. This afternoon visit Mehrangarh Fort for an extraordinary experience. Enjoy a champagne welcome drink on arrival before commencing a personalised tour of the fort with a curator. Dinner will be served in an exclusive venue in the fort not opened to the general public. Touring at the fort involves 1 hour on foot and some steps of varying difficulty.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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.

DAY 7: JODHPUR

Begin you a leisurely tour of the blue city this morning. The first stop is Jaswant Thada before strolling through the museum located in the Umaid Bhawan Palace. 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. Dine this evening at Hanwant Mahal, a former royal residence.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Destination Information

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, Umaid Bhawan Palace now houses a remarkable museum.

DAY 8: JODHPUR TO JAIPUR

After breakfast drive approximately 7 hours (338KM) to Jaipur, stopping to have lunch en route. Upon arrival check into your hotel and later 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, jewelry, clothing, shoes to spices. In the evening enjoy a cooking demonstration and dinner at Ikaki Niwas, a local Rajasthani home.

Please note: Jaipur is a larger city where it would be unwise to wander around without your National Escort/Local Guide at night, as there have been reports of pickpockets, etc. Always speak to your National Escort/Local Guide before making your own arrangements in Jaipur.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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 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 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.

Ikaki Niwas - Ikaki Niwas is a beautiful local home, decorated in the Rajasthan style with motifs and wall frescos. Dr. Thakur G S Rathore, who was Chief Medical officer in Jaipur and is now retired, owns the house. His son Jaideo Rathore and his wife Mrs Devika organise family dinners and will demonstrate how to make Indian bread and dishes.

DAY 9: JAIPUR

Sightseeing today begins with a photo stop at Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) - Hawa Mahal is viewed from the street side opposite, as entrance is not granted to tour groups. Continue to the impressive Amer Fort, where you will ride jeeps to and from the bus park and palace entrance. We have not included the elephant ride up to the palace in your itinerary because of the unreliability of this service; visitors usually need to queue for 2-3 hours and the service is often shut down without notice by local tourism authorities due to safety concerns. There are a number of steps within the fort and sightseeing overall this morning involves 2-3 hours on foot.

Visit a nearby craft centre where you will have the opportunity to try your hand at the local handicraft before continuing to the Maharaja's City Palace and Jantar Mantar Observatory. In the evening, dine at 1135 AD, located in the highest ramparts of Fort Amer.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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.

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, we visit the Hall of Victory, which houses the famed Sheesh Mahal.

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 10:

JAIPUR TO RANTHAMBORE (JANUARY TO MAY)

Leave Jaipur and head south for four hours (184km) to Ranthambore National Park. This afternoon enjoy a canter (jeep like vehicle) safari before returning to your hotel for the night. Please remember to bring your passport to allow entry. Please remember to bring your passport to allow

entry and please keep in mind during the canter safari there are no bathrooms.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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.

OR

JAIPUR TO BHARATPUR (SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER)

Depart Jaipur and drive 4-5 hours (180km) east to Bharatpur. Upon arrival in Bharatpur, check into your hotel and enjoy the afternoon free at leisure.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Destination Information

Bharatpur - Located 180km 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 11:

RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

Today enjoy morning and afternoon canter safaris in the national park, involving 2-3 hours of driving through the park in canters, on uneven and unsealed tracks, returning to the hotel for lunch. Please remember to bring your passport to allow entry.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OR

BHARATPUR

This morning drive to a Keoladeo National Park and enjoy a rickshaw safari for approximately 3 hours (rickshaws are used so the birds are not scared off by the noise a jeep may make). During the rickshaw safari there are no bathrooms, please keep this in mind. Later visit a nearby village where you will have the chance to view the everyday life of the local people.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 12:

RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK TO AGRA

Early this morning transfer 10km to the nearby train station in the nearby town of Sawai Madhopur and board your train to Bharatpur (journey takes approximately 2.5 hours).

Upon arrival disembark and continue by road 1.5 hours (40km) to Agra, stopping at Fatehpur Sikri en route. This evening enjoy the 'Mohabbat the Taj Show at Kalakriti'.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

OR

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, we 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 mediaeval 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. Upon arrival, we will proceed to our hotel and check-in for a two-night stay.

BHARATPUR

Drive approximately 2-3 hours (65km) to Agra, stopping en route at Fatehpur Sikri. This evening enjoy the 'Mohabbat the Taj Show at Kalakriti'.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 13: 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 almost no 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 1.5 hours on foot and climbing of stairs. Later enjoy an auto-rickshaw tour of the city. The tour will take you through old bazaars, Jama Masjid and the spice and Ayurveda market.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

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.

Auto-Rickshaw Tour - Explore the old bazaars, traditional eating joints and places of worship of Agra on an auto-rickshaw tour. Agra is a melting point of three cultures – Hindu, Muslim, and Christian. The tour takes you to such sites as Hazuri Bhawan, the headquarters of the Radhasoami faith, the ancient Mankameswar temple, Jama Masjid, one of the largest Mosques in Agra and to the Spice & Ayurveda market.

DAY 14: AGRA TO KHAJURAHO VIA ORCCHA

Rise early and transfer to the railway station to board the Shatabdi Express train to Jhansi (train duration approximately 2.5 hours). Continue by road a further 4.5 hours (178km) to Khajuraho, visiting Orchha en route. Sightseeing in Orchha is easy with a few steps and may take up to an hour. Enjoy a cultural dance performance this evening.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

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.

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

DAY 15: KHAJURAHO TO VARANASI

This morning explore the Western group of temples. Usually 2 hours is spent here; sightseeing involves walking with little shade, so make sure you bring sun protection. Later transfer to the airport for the onward flight to Varanasi (flight duration 50 minutes), where upon arrival you will be met and transferred to the hotel. 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. The Ganga Aarti takes place most evenings, so please be prepared for many crowds through the streets, especially leading up to the ghats. Please 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.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

Please note: It would be unwise to wander around Varanasi without your National Escort/Local Guide at night as there have been several reports of pickpockets, etc. Always speak to your National Escort/Local Guide before making your own arrangements in Varanasi.

Destination Information

Khajuraho 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 Mahadeo Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. We also see the Vamana Temple, dedicated to the 'Vamana' or dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu as well as the Javari Temple.

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. Colorful 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.

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 16: VARANASI - SARNATH

Rise early this morning to commence a cruise (approximate duration 1-2 hours) 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 before commencing a brief tour of Varanasi, visiting such sites as the Bharat Mata Mandir and Durga Temple. Drive through the largest residential university in Asia - Banaras Hindu University. This afternoon travel to Sarnath to visit the Buddhist sites. This afternoon's sightseeing is leisurely, involving approximately 1 hour of walking. You will be visiting Buddhist sacred sites at Sarnath – refer to the **Appropriate Dress** section below.

Meals included: Breakfast and Lunch

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.

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 17: VARANASI TO DELHI

Enjoy this morning free at leisure. After checking out of the hotel, you will be transferred (45 minute drive) to the

airport for the onward flight to Delhi. Upon arrival in Delhi you will be met by a local guide and transferred to your hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is free at your leisure.

Meals included: Breakfast

DAY 18: DEPART DELHI

Enjoy the day at leisure with some last minute shopping or simply relax at the hotel. After a late check-out and dinner, transfer to the airport to board your flight home. (Due to

flight schedules, Canberra and Adelaide passengers may depart on a morning flight.)

Meals included: Breakfast

DAY 19: ARRIVE HOME

Arrive home today.

ESSENCE OF INDIA 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 a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least 6 months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Please be advised that all Visa Applications for India MUST be completed on-line at the VFS website: www.vfsglobal.com/india/australia. Wendy Wu Tours will assist you with instructions. Once the form is completed, the application and passport must be sent to Wendy Wu Tours. Visas are valid for 6 months from the date of issue and allow you to stay in the country for up to 6 months. Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office 70 days prior to departure. Applications will not be accepted within 50 days of departure. Passports will be returned with your final documentation 2-3 weeks prior to your group tour's scheduled departure. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a \$15 courier fee will apply.

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.

Eating in India

Indian cuisine is one of the most influential, diverse and flavorful 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 Australia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. Meals as listed on the itinerary (excluding drinks) are included in our Essence of India deluxe group tour, from the groups' arrival until the groups' 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 be seated around a circular 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 top. 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

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/Local Guide.

Your accommodation is 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 all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local deluxe 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 meet your needs. Please note double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

Alternative Accommodation: 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.

Early Check-In/Late Check-Out

Early check-in is not included in our Indian group tours. If you wish to add early check-in to your booking, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel. Late check-out until 1800hrs is included in this group tour for passengers travelling on our Essence of India tour in the last hotel of stay.

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.

Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in India and therefore people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

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

Trains: This trip involves 1 day journey in AC class cars – refer to your Travel Guide's TRANSPORT section for more information. Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered and amusing 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 National Escort/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 18 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 a firm and expected element in the tourism industry and India is no exception. To remove the uncertainty and stress of not knowing how much is appropriate to tip or to whom, Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy for our group tours where a nominated tipping amount is paid upon commencement of the programme by each tour member. This amount is stated in all group pricing, however it is not collected in your final payment received by Wendy Wu Tours.

This nominated tipping amount is to be given to your National Escort at the beginning of your tour, who will then distribute it amongst your main service providers – guides, drivers and coach attendants – on your behalf during the tour. Any other tipping, such as tips for camera and video fees, bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion as are gratuities for additional requested special services. We encourage passengers to have a supply of small denominations of local currency to distribute for personal tipping.

The tipping amount is determined based on the total number of passengers travelling in the group. 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. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation, which is distributed 2 weeks prior to your tour's departure.

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 travellers 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 7kgs. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that Indian 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

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 AU\$350 per week should be sufficient; however for those that cannot resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

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.

Cultural Differences

India has many religions, cultures and histories. Foreign tourists, particularly female travellers, 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 pants 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. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

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.

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 with deposit documentation via email. This includes important information and links to access the visa application form and instructions sheet online (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

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