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**Global trips for women**

## India – 21Days

### **DAY 1 –DELHI**

Welcome to India! Arrive Delhi Airport where our local guide will meet us. Transfer to hotel for breakfast and tour briefing. This morning we'll visit the first of many amazing monuments. Humayun's Tomb and the surrounding monuments date back to the early 1500s and was the first garden tomb in India, the first structure to use red sandstone on a grand scale and is a UNESCO Heritage site.

We also take a drive past the Govt Buildings (President's house and Secretariat Houses) and have a photo stop at India Gate before heading back to our hotel to check in and have a rest before our Welcome Dinner. Accommodation: Oberoi Maidens 4\* (2 nights)

### **DAY 2 - DELHI**

This morning, we drive to bustling Old Delhi, past the Red Fort to visit the Jama Mosque, India's largest mosque and one of the finest examples of Mughal architecture. It was built by Emperor Shah Jahan, who also commissioned the Taj Mahal.

We then venture into the energetic market of Chandni Chowk. A thrilling rickshaw ride will whizz us down narrow lanes deep into the colourful chaos of the old city where we disembark and take a stroll through the largest spice bazaar in Asia. Watch wily men with gnarled hands and strong backs, unload spices of many different colours. Pop into any of the many spice shops and take in the amazing aromas. Learn about the fascinating Sikh religion at Gurudwara Temple. Within the temple, sit and take in the richly decorated walls and ceiling whilst listening to prayers and chanting. In the temple kitchen you can join a voluntary group cooking for thousands of devotees.

Time and traffic dependent, we may also visit Raj Rhat (Gandhi Memorial) and do some shopping. A good opportunity to buy something special to wear for Diwali and to the Taj Mahal.

### **DAY 3 –DELHI | KHAJURAHO | PANNA**

This morning, we head back to Delhi airport for a flight to Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh. On arrival, transfer to our hotel. Rest of day at leisure. Our hotel has a lovely pool and a great spa to make use of. Later in the day, we will go out for a roam around town and see how the locals prepare their homes for Diwali, and this evening take in the Sound & Light Show at the temples.

Accommodation: Ramada 4\* (2 nights)

### **DAY 4 –KHAJURAHO TEMPLES & DIWALI CELEBRATIONS**

We beat the crowds with a dawn start to see the magnificent Khajuraho temples. With a specialist guide, we explore the UNESCO World Heritage site viewing the artistically carved temples with spiritual teachings and erotic relationships dating back to 950AD - the history and architectural craftsmanship are quite astounding. Back to hotel for late breakfast and rest of day at leisure.

This evening, we celebrate Diwali! Across India, this 5-day Festival of Light is celebrated with great enthusiasm by millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Jains. It coincides with harvest and symbolises the victory of good over evil. Families come together, candles are lit and placed throughout homes, in streets, places of worship and floated on lakes and rivers. Fireworks ward off evil spirits, Indian sweets are savoured, and new beginnings are celebrated. Join the crowds as they flock to the temple. Inside the temple witness fervent praying, symbols clashing, bells ringing, and candles everywhere – a religious

spectacle not to be missed.

#### **DAY 5 –PANNA TIGER RESERVE**

Check out after breakfast and take a short drive to Panna. Our unique accommodation is located right on the Ken River. Later today we'll set off on our first wildlife safari by open jeep with a specialist nature guide. Panna Tiger Reserve is in the Vindhyan mountain range with a terrain of extensive plateaus and gorges. The Ken River flows through the reserve, attracting a large variety of animals and birds. Ancient rock paintings can also be found here. Eyes peeled for the elusive Bengal tiger! These mighty creatures are often lazing under bushes and hard to spot, but if we're lucky we could see one in the river or walking along a track. We're not guaranteed to see any tigers of course, but there will be plenty of other wildlife to spot.

Accommodation: Ken River Lodge 3.5\* (1 night)

#### **DAY 6 –PANNA | JHANSI | AGRA**

Rise early for another chance to spot wildlife in the Panna Tiger Reserve.

This afternoon we travel by road (approx. 3 hours) to Jhansi and board a train bound for Agra. Travelling by train is a great people-watching exercise and one of the most popular modes of transport in India. It's a change from travelling by road and a new experience to tick off.

Accommodation: Trident 4\* (2 nights)

#### **DAY 7 –AGRA**

A leisurely start to the day with a visit to the Agra Fort – one of the grandest forts in India and a pleasant place to roam around taking in the astounding history, buildings and views.

Later we'll visit Mehtab Bagh – the gardens located on the banks of the Yamuna River for a different view of the Taj Mahal.

Whilst in Agra, we will visit an emporium where you can watch artisans working on the complex process of inlaying precious stones into marble. There will be a chance to purchase products here.

#### **DAY 8 –AGRA | JAIPUR**

Rise early for a much-anticipated visit to the Taj Mahal. We aim to be one of the first groups to enter to capture the beautiful monument without the crowds. Watch as the sun rises and starts to kiss different aspects of the building making it shimmer and sparkle. We'll be taken to the best photography and viewing sites to make sure our experience of visiting the Taj Mahal is as fulfilling as possible. There will be plenty of time to wander at leisure to explore all the impressive buildings within the complex and to go inside the Taj and get up close to the intricate marble inlay and architecture of one of the most photographed buildings in the world. Return to hotel for late breakfast and check out.

Spend the afternoon watching a live movie from your coach seat – colourful, crazy India! The drive to Jaipur will take around 5 hours and we'll have some comfort stops along the way. On arrival in The Pink City, we check into our hotel. This evening you might like to cross the road and view the Water Palace in the night light. Accommodation: Trident Hotel 5\* (2 nights)

#### **DAY 9 –JAIPUR**

This morning, we explore the Amber Fort also known as Amer Palace. This is a fabulous place to wander around the different courtyards and view the architecture, which is a fusion of Rajput (Hindu) and Mughal (Islamic) styles. The handsome pillars and delicate floral designs in the Hall of Mirrors are particularly gorgeous.

After lunch, visit the City Palace, the principal residence of Jaipur's current ruling family. Time to explore the museums - full of ancient weaponry, art, exquisite royal attire, and jewellery. Also, see Hawa Mahal - a fabulous structure with its 953 windows.

Later visit Jantar Mantar. This UNESCO World Heritage site will amaze you with its astronomical and astrological tools used by researchers of ancient India. There will be a chance for shopping whilst in Jaipur - beautiful hand-made carpets and jewellery are excellent buys.

### **DAY 10 –JAIPUR | PUSHKAR**

Early this morning we stop by the Milk Market to see milk sellers, dressed in their traditional white dhotis and kurtas. Then take a stroll through the Flower Market awash with huge mounds of bright marigolds and other flowers. Afterwards, sit back and relax and watch that continual colourful movie out the coach window as we drive to the sacred Hindi city of Pushkar (approx. 3.5 hour drive).

Check into our tented camp and have lunch.

Later this afternoon we head into the Pushkar fairgrounds to revel in the festivities – your head will be swivelling frantically, as every which way you look is an amazing spectacle! Hundreds of camels, horses and cattle, along with their owners, camp in the dunes. Brisk trade goes on day and night, deals are sealed, and animals are exchanged. It is a gathering of men with large colourful turbans, women wrapped in gorgeous saris and exquisite jewellery, and children dressed in beautiful traditional attire. Back to camp for a performance from Kalbelia gypsies followed by Dinner.

Accommodation: Deluxe tents with ensuite bathroom (2 nights)

### **DAY 11 –PUSHKAR FAIR**

Early morning visit to Pushkar Fairground – a photographer's delight. Capture herds of camels coming over the dunes as the sunrises creating fantastic silhouettes. Watch the camp come to life, fires lit, tea brewed, smoke drifts lazily out of mouths as pipes are puffed, chapatis are slapped into shape, kids run amuck, camels are led to water troughs, stallions prance down the street, camels are carefully clipped and then gaily dressed for dancing competitions. Return to camp for breakfast and a rest.

After lunch return to Pushkar Town which will be buzzing with many visitors and different tribes here to celebrate the fair and to worship in the temple and lake. After a blessing beside the Lake, there will be time for shopping.

### **DAY 12 –PUSHKAR | DEOGARH**

Last opportunity to get your fill of the action-packed Fairground with an early morning visit (or you may prefer to have a sleep-in). After breakfast, we have another fascinating drive through to Deogarh (approx 4 hours).

Along the way you will spot flashes of colour as we pass locals dressed in colourful saris and turbans. Hard workers in the fields, women baking dung patties, drawing water from wells and carrying water pots seemingly effortlessly on their heads.

After the craziness of the cities and fair, you will find the pace of Deogarh much slower. We are staying in a 17th century mahal (palace) now converted into a heritage hotel. The Maharaja and Maharani also live here.

Later this afternoon we board a classic jeep for a drive into the countryside – it's a great time of day to see hardworking farmers coming in from the fields with their flocks.

Accommodation: Deogarh Palace Heritage hotel (2 nights)

### **DAY 13 –DEOGARH | ARAVALI HILLS TRAIN JOURNEY**

This morning, we visit a small country school to meet the children and teachers. Continue to a quiet rural train station and board a local train running on a 1930's British track. We rumble through the Aravali Hills through tunnels and across bridges enjoying the scenery and mingling with the locals. A magical experience.

We'll disembark after a few hours and drive to Jojawar. After lunch at a stately mahal, there's free time to explore the village where you will find small shops selling unique jewellery to tribeswomen, sacred cows wandering among the narrow streets, and a general simplicity to life in the country. Return to Deogarh by road (approx. 1 hour drive).

### **DAY 14 –DEOGARH | RAVLA KHEMPUR | UDAIPUR**

We depart early to arrive in Ravla Khempur in time for lunch. Time to explore the hotel made famous by the popular movie Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.

It's a short drive to the charming white city of Udaipur. This afternoon, enjoy a boat ride on Lake Pichola to view the magnificent buildings including the Lake Palace built with marble and sandstone

and seemingly floating on top of the lake. Accommodation: Trident hotel 4\* (1 night)

#### **DAY 15 –UDAIPUR | JODHPUR**

After breakfast, we visit one of the largest royal complexes in Rajasthan for a tour through The City Palace - an elaborate web of palaces, temples, courtyards with artistic gardens and mosaics, and the beautiful man-made lake, Fateh Sagar Lake.

Sit back and relax for an interesting drive to The Blue City of Jodhpur (approx. 6 hour drive). On arrival you can view the imposing Mehrangarh Fort and blue buildings from our hotel's rooftop bar & dining area – a stunning backdrop to sit as the sun sets.

Accommodation: Pal Haveli Heritage hotel (2 nights)

#### **DAY 16 – TUE 12 NOV JODHPUR**

Early this morning we will walk through the Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park for panoramic views and a chance to capture the Mehrangarh Fort and the city of Jodhpur as the sunrises – totally worth the early wakeup call. Back to hotel for breakfast.

At Jaswant Thada, marvel at the architecture and beautiful jalis (carved-marble lattice screens) of the cenotaph and cremation grounds of the royal family of Marwar. Stroll around the pretty gardens and soak up the serenity.

Time to explore the mighty Mehrangarh, one of the grandest forts in India. This impregnable fort rises perpendicular on a rocky hill above the city and is still run by the Jodhpur royal family. Stroll, at your own pace, through the buildings which are packed with legends and history dating back to 1459.

Jodhpur is renowned for silver, silk and textiles and there will be a chance to purchase exquisite scarves, bedlinen, and jewellery. Our accommodation is directly across from the Clock Tower market – a great place for people-watching and making a few purchases.

#### **DAY 17 –JODHPUR | VARANASI**

We have a travel day, flying from Jodhpur via Delhi to Varanasi. If you thought you'd seen it all, wait till you get to Varanasi! Your eyes will be popping as we make our way from the airport by vehicle and then boat to our accommodation located on the Ganges River. This is the perfect location to step out anytime you like and explore the ghats or just sit and people-watch.

We'll have an orientation walking tour along the river ghats and the oldest and most famous narrow lanes of Varanasi, past the endless human panorama - pilgrims, worshippers, sadhus, the burning ghat, children selling flowers and floating lights. Accommodation: Ganpati Guest House 3\* (2 nights)

#### **DAY 18 – THU 14 NOV VARANASI**

An early wake-up call to see the rising sun as we gently glide along the Ganges by boat whilst listening to the sweet sounds of a sitar player. Witness the Hindi rituals, hundreds of people taking a bath in the holy river and offering flowers and water to the Sun God.

This evening, see the incredible Aarti Ceremony which is part of the evening pooja (prayers). During the ceremony deepas (oil lamps) are offered to Mother Ganga with thanks and devotion for the light of the sun and for her divine light. As the fire ceremony takes place, bells are rung and chanting and singing provide a fascinating, magical, and spiritual conclusion to the day's end.

#### **DAY 19 –VARANASI | MUMBAI**

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for flight to Bombay/Mumbai, located on the Arabian sea.

Time permitting we'll visit a market this afternoon. By now your bargaining skills should be sharp!

Accommodation: Trident hotel 4\* (2 nights)

#### **DAY 20 – SAT 16 NOV MUMBAI**

Our last day of sightseeing starts with a photostop at the Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus, a UNESCO world heritage site and beautiful example of Victorian-Gothic style architecture from a by-gone era. Also, visit the Gateway of India overlooking the Mumbai Harbour and view the beautiful Taj Hotel.

Unique to Mumbai is a dabbawala (food delivery person). There are over 5000 dabbawalas in the city

distributing some 200,000 meals by bicycle and train. The lunchboxes are collected from the clients' home in the morning, delivered to the workplace, then returned empty in the afternoon. It is the most efficient delivery system in the world and seeing the dabbawalas in action is a spectacle – Uber Eats have nothing on these guys!

Another unique feature of Mumbai is the dhobi - a traditional laundryman, who will collect your used linen, wash it, and return it neatly pressed to your doorstep. We will see Dhobi Ghat where around 200 dhobis and their families work together.

We end the day in Mumbai's beating heart - Dharavi Slum. More than one million people live and work here and its industries have an annual turnover of around US\$665 million. Our walking tour introduces us to a way of living that is staggering.

It's our last night in India and that calls for a grand finale dinner

#### **DAY 21 –MUMBAI**

Your incredible India odyssey is sadly over! With a bag full of treasures, and head full of wonderful memories, it is time to say goodbye! This morning, transfer to Mumbai airport for flight home.

#### **YOUR LOCAL GUIDE – HARSH AGARWAL**

Harsh (pronounced Hersh) is the Co-founder of Maharaja Tours based in Agra. He is a qualified tour guide and award-winning photographer.

Harsh's focus is on quality, exploration and experience and he is happy to assist you to improve your photography skills (with Iphone or DSLR). As an extra bonus, Harsh is also a qualified Yoga teacher. Time permitting, there will be the option to practice Yoga on this trip.

#### **INCLUDES**

- Qualified English-speaking Local Tour Guide & Photography Expert
- 20 Nights accommodation
- Daily Breakfast + Dinners (all meals are included in Pushkar)
- Transportation in private air-conditioned vehicle, air-conditioned train & planes
- All activities and visits specified in the itinerary
- Entrance fees to all the monuments mentioned as per the itinerary
- Two Jeep safaris in Panna Tiger Reserve (4 people per jeep)
- Rickshaw ride in Old Delhi
- Puja ceremony as per Hindu rituals in Pushkar
- Jeep safari & Rural train ride in Deogarh
- Boat ride on Lake Pichola
- Unlimited drinking water on coach
- Tips for Porters, Waiters, Washroom Attendants, Drivers & Guides
- All applicable current taxes and Government Service Tax
- Internal domestic airfares within India as per itinerary
- Early morning boat ride on Ganges in Varanasi with live performance by Sitar player
- Visit to a rural school
- Tuk Tuk rides in most cities

#### **EXCLUDES**

- International Airfares
- Indian Visa
- Meals not mentioned as being included
- Personal extras, such as drinks, laundry, telephone, etc

- Optional tours
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Any other item not mentioned as included

Accommodation indicative – some changes made be made but standard will stay same