



## GRAND TOUR OF INDIA

### Classic Tour | 29 Days | Physical Level 2

Delhi – Varanasi – Khajuraho – Jhansi – Agra – Ranthambore – Jaipur – Pushkar – Khmisar – Jaisalmer – Jodhpur – Udaipur – Aurangbad – Mumbai – Kochi – Houseboat – Kovalam - Trivandrum

Become acquainted with one of the most vibrant countries in the world. Embark on a journey from the deserts of Rajasthan in the north, to the backwaters of Kerala in the south, to experience this land of extraordinary contrasts.

- Discover the colourful bazaars of Delhi
- Marvel at the magnificent Taj Mahal
- Witness holy puja ceremony
- Meet the local Bishnoi Tribe
- Visit vibrant Mumbai
- Cruise the backwaters like a local

## TOUR MAP



## GRAND TOUR OF INDIA 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
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) and Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants

The only thing 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 check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

## CLASSIC TOURS:

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These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures 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 Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

## PHYSICAL LEVEL 2:

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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. Grand Tour of India 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 at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- You will be required to get on and off various sizes of boats and rickshaws throughout the tour

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.

## JOINING YOUR TOUR:

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The tour is 29 days in duration including an overnight international flight in one direction as this is the most likely flight option from Australia.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours. Please email your international flight times to [info@wendywutours.com.au](mailto:info@wendywutours.com.au) so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 1 in Delhi and end the tour on Day 28 in Kovalam with a transfer to Trivandrum airport, the main airport for the Kovalam area. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

## ITINERARY CHANGES:

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It's 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'll make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrive Delhi

Meals: D

Fly to Delhi for a two-night stay. 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 45 minutes to your hotel and check-in.



### Destination Information

**Delhi** - As the capital of India, Delhi is the third largest city with a population of approximately 18million people. 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

Meals: B, L, D

This morning the tour introduction will either be held in the hotel or on the coach. After your breakfast we will embark on a full-day of sightseeing around Old and New Delhi, involving approximately 3-3.5 hours on foot. Travel approximately 30–40 minutes to Khari Baoli Spice Market and enjoy a rickshaw ride before visiting Jama Masjid.

Next, head for a brief photo stop at India Gate.

Continue to Gandhi Smriti and drive past Rashtrapati

Bhavan and Parliament House. End your day with a visit to Qutub Minar and the Iron Pillar.



### Destination Information

**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 I.

**Ghandi 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.



**Quatab Minar** – Built in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, this tower of victory is gracefully hand-carved along its entire height of 73m.

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**Day 3: Delhi to Varanasi**

Meals: B, L, D

In the morning, transfer 45 minutes to the airport to board your onward 1-and-a-half-hour flight to Varanasi. On arrival, you will be met and transferred to your hotel, approximately 45 minutes' drive. This afternoon travel to Sarnath to visit the Buddhist sacred sites.



*In Varanasi, it would be unwise to wander around without your National Escort or Local Guide at night as there have been several reports of pickpockets.*

**Destination Information**

**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. Colourful 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.

**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.

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**Day 4: Varanasi**

Meals: B, L, D

Rise early this morning for a 1-2 hour cruise 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. The rest of the day's sightseeing is leisurely, involving a couple of hours walking. Enjoy a tour of Varanasi, visiting the Bharat Mata Mandir and Durga Temple.



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.

*Please note: The Ganga Aarti takes place most evenings, so please be prepared for many crowds through the streets, especially leading up to the ghats. 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.*

### 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.

**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.

**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.

### **Day 5: Varanasi to Khajuraho**

Meals: B, L, D

Today fly to Khajuraho. Upon arrival drive 15 minutes to the Khajuraho temples, spending approximately 2 hours exploring the Western and Eastern groups of temples. You will see the Vamana Temple, dedicated to the 'Vamana' or dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu as well as the Javari Temple. Sightseeing here involves walking with little shade, so make sure you bring sun protection.

This evening enjoy a cultural dancing performance.



### Destination Information

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

**Western Group of 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 Mahadevo Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva.

**Eastern Group of Temples** - The Eastern group represent some of the finest Jain temples including Parsvanatha which is known for its carvings of celestial beauties (sura-sundaris), along with the Adinath and Ghantai temples. We also see the Hindu temples including the Vamana Temple, dedicated to Lord Vamana, the dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu, as well as the Javari Temple.

**Day 6: Khajuraho to Agra**

Meals: B, L, D

Depart Khajuraho and drive approximately 4 to 5 hours to Jhansi, visiting the medieval city of Orchha en route. Sightseeing in Orchha is easy with a few steps and may take up to an hour. Continue to the railway station to board the Shatabdi Express train for approximately 2 and a half hours to Agra, where, upon arrival, you will transfer to your hotel and check-in.

*Please Note: As our train is a day train the seats will be in an AC Chair Car. More than likely you will not be able to purchase any food or drink on the train, so if you need snacks make sure to pre-purchase them before boarding. The train carriages are shared so always be aware of your belongings.*

**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.

**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 7: Agra**

Meals: B, L, D

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). Disembarking the coach, you will 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 without 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 approximately 1 and a half hours on foot and climbing of stairs.

**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.

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**Day 8: Agra to Ranthambore**

Meals: B, L, D

Today drive approximately 5 hours to Ranthambore, visiting Fatehpur Sikri en route. Enjoy lunch in Bharatpur before continuing your journey. Upon arrival in Ranthambore, check into your hotel, the remainder of the day is at leisure.

**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.

**Bharatpur** - Located 184km 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.

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**Day 9: Ranthambore**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning and afternoon you will have safaris in the park. The time in between these safaris will be at leisure. *Please note: You will need your passport to gain entry to the national 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 10: Ranthambore to Jaipur**

Meals: B, L, D

Today drive approximately 4 to 5 hours to Jaipur. Upon arrival check into your hotel.

This afternoon explore Maharaja's City Palace and Jantar Mantar, the UNESCO World Heritage listed ancient observatory.

**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 Amber 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.

**Day 11: Jaipur**

Meals: B, L, D

Sightseeing today begins with a photo stop at the Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds) in downtown Jaipur.

Tourists are unable to enter, so you will view it from the busy road opposite. Tour members are asked to be careful when crossing the road for a closer photo.

Continue to the impressive Amber Fort, where you will ride jeeps to and from the bus park and palace entrance. Elephant rides up to the palace have not been included in your itinerary because of the concerns to the animals and the unreliability of this service.



Sightseeing this morning involves 2 to 3 hours on foot and there are a number of steps within the fort. Later, experience block printing and carpet weaving.

*Please note: Jaipur is a larger city where it would be unwise to wander around without your National Escort or Local guide at night, as there have been reports of pickpockets.*

### 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.

**Amber Fort** - Built from yellow and pink sandstone and white marble, Amber Fort was built in the 16th century by Raja Man Singh. Inside the fort the Hall of Victory houses the famed Sheesh Mahal.

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#### **Day 12: Jaipur to Pushkar**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, drive approximately 3 to 4 hours to Pushkar, where, on arrival, you will check in at your hotel. Later this afternoon, visit Pushkar Lake and the temple of Lord Brahma, the creator according to Hindu mythology. In the evening, enjoy a camel cart ride to watch the sunset in the desert.

### Destination Information

**Pushkar** – According to Hindu scripture, Pushkar was created when Lord Brahma dropped a lotus flower and where the petals landed a lake was formed. One of the oldest cities in India, it is surrounded by hillocks on three sides.

**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.

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#### **Day 13: Pushkar to Khimsar**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, drive around 3 to 4 hours to Khimsar, on arrival check in at hotel. Here, you will overnight at the 15th-century fortress which is now converted into a heritage hotel. Later explore the local area in Khimsar to get a glimpse of life in rural India.

### Destination Information

**Khimsar** – A small village perched on the edge of the great Thar Desert in the heart of rural India.

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#### **Day 14: Khimsar to Jaisalmer**

Meals: B, L, D

Depart Khimsar and travel 5 to 6 hours to Jaisalmer, where you will proceed to your hotel for check-in. Later enjoy an evening visit to Sunset Point to take in the views.



### Destination Information

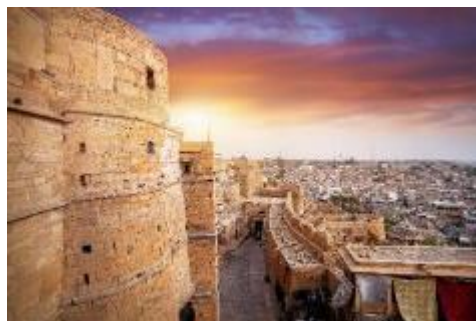
**Jaisalmer** - Founded by Prince Jaisala in 1156, it is dubbed the 'Golden City' because of the honey-coloured sandstone walls, emphasized by the setting sun. It was once a flourishing trade centre, strategically located on the busy caravan trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Jaisalmer's wealthy 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 enjoy a spectacular view of the city, including the fort.

**Day 15: Jaisalmer**

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a full day of sightseeing in Jaisalmer. Explore Jaisalmer Fort, built atop the 80-metre-high Trikuta Hill, before continuing to the beautifully carved Jain temples and Badal Vilas Palace. The mornings activities will involve 2 to 3 hours of walking. After lunch visit the opulent Patwon Ki Haveli mansion. Finish the day with a trip to the Sam Sands Dunes in the Thar Desert.



### 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 seven yellow intricately carved sandstone Jain temples date from the 15th and 16th centuries.

**Havelis** - Jaisalmer is home to some impressive merchant mansions (havelis) including the Patwon Ki Haveli, a five-storey mansion with carved pillars and murals.

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

**Day 16: Jaisalmer to Jodhpur**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning, depart Jaisalmer and commence the drive to Jodhpur, the second largest city in Rajasthan. Drive approximately 6 to 7 hours to Jodhpur. Upon arrival transfer to your hotel for a two night stay. Later, explore the imposing Mehrangarh Fort, which involves 2 hours of sightseeing over steps of varying heights. Visit Jaswant Thada and stroll through the museum located in the Umaid Bhawan Palace before enjoying some free time to wander Subzi Mandi, a local vegetable and spice market.

**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.

**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, it now houses a remarkable museum and luxury hotel.

**Day 17: Jodhpur**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast this morning, drive by jeep to Rohetgarh to meet the people of the Bishnoi Tribe. Stop for lunch, followed by your return to Jodhpur where you have the rest of your day at leisure.

**Destination Information**

**Bishnoi Tribe** - The Bishnois' follows 29 principles of a non-violent Vaishnavas sect and was founded in the 15th century by Jambeswarji.



**Day 18: Jodhpur to Udaipur**

Meals: B, L, D

Depart Jodhpur and begin the drive to Udaipur, stopping to explore the Jain temple complex of Ranakpur en route. The drive to Ranakpur is approximately 4 hours and sightseeing here involves 30 minutes of easy walking.

Drive approximately another 2 to 3 hours to Udaipur. Upon arrival, proceed to your hotel for a two night stay.

**Day 19: Udaipur**

Meals: B, L, D

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. Later, explore the City Palace, which involves approximately 2 hours of sightseeing on foot. At the palace there are many Pols, also known as gateways. Some stairs at this location are without handrails, so please be cautious.



This afternoon, take a relaxing cruise on Lake Pichola, passing the Lake Palace.

**Destination Information**

**Fateh Sagar Lake** - An artificial lake built in 1678 embellished with 3 islands, one 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's 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 Dilkhush 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. Today, the City Palace of Udaipur is still home to Maharaja Udai Singh's descendants who remain rulers of this independent state. It is possible to tell if the Maharaja is in residence by the flag hanging from the palace wall.

**Day 20: Udaipur to Aurangabad**

Meals: B, L, D

After checking out of your hotel, you will be transferred approximately 45 minutes to the airport for your 1-and-a-half-hour flight to Mumbai where you will connect with an onward flight to Aurangabad. Due to flight schedules, there will be a long transit in Mumbai airport between flights.

*Please note that any time at leisure you have this morning is dependent on your flight departure time from Udaipur. This will be communicated to you in your final documentation.*

**Destination Information**

**Aurangabad** - Founded by Malik Ambar in 1610, Aurangabad was formerly known as Khirki, meaning 'window', because of its strategic position that provided a window view of the Deccan Plateau. The town was an important seat of the Mughal Empire and holds a good number of Mughal architectural marvels making it an important historical destination of Maharashtra. The town is situated on the banks of the Kham River with mediaeval monuments, cultural heritage, silk and cotton textiles, and is also within proximity to the famous UNESCO World Heritage listed sites of Ajanta and Ellora.

**Day 21: Aurangabad**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning drive 4 hours to the UNESCO World Heritage listed Ajanta Caves. Sightseeing here involves climbing a short but steep hill to enter the first cave, then 2 to 3 hours walking with few stairs. Please note that flash photography is not allowed here, so it is a good idea to bring a small flashlight.

Return to Aurangabad and this evening enjoy an Indian Tandoor BBQ for dinner.

**Destination Information**

**Ajanta Caves** - As Buddhism slowly declined, the Ajanta Caves were abandoned and gradually forgotten. But in 1819 a British hunting party stumbled upon them and their remote beauty was soon unveiled. Their isolation contributed to the fine state of preservation in which some of their remarkable paintings remain to this day. Within the 30 rock-hewn caves, the murals show scenes from the Buddha's life and from the Jataka Tales, which recount stories of Buddha's previous incarnations as an enlightened being or Bodhisattva. The magnificent, detailed compositions include depictions of court scenes, princes and musicians and offer fascinating glimpses of daily life dating back to the 2nd century.

**Day 22: Aurangabad to Mumbai**

Meals: B, L, D

Travel 2 hours to the Ellora Caves, another UNESCO World Heritage listed site. Sightseeing here involves approximately two hours walking with some stairs.

Later, return to Aurangabad where you will be transferred to the airport to board your 1-hour onward flight back to Mumbai. Transfer to the hotel and check-in for overnight stay.

**Destination Information**

**Ellora Caves** - Ellora Caves encompass 34 rock-cut shrines representing Buddhist, Hindu and Jain art dating from the 4th-9th century AD. The caves are carved into the side of a basaltic hill 30km from Aurangabad. The most remarkable among them is the Kailash Temple, meant to be a replica of Lord Shiva's celestial abode, Kailash. It is the best example of rock-cut architecture and the engineering skills of that era.

**Mumbai** - Mumbai is home to the world's biggest cinema industry, popularly known as 'Bollywood'. Some 15 million people, from billionaire tycoons to homeless pavement dwellers, live in this teeming megalopolis.

**Day 23: Mumbai to Kochi**

Meals: B, L, D

Tour the thrilling city of Mumbai today. Drive past the Gateway of India, the Afghan Church and along Marine Drive. Visit the Hanging Gardens, Chowpatty Beach, Kamalala Nehru Park and Mani Bhavan, where Mahatma Gandhi stayed during his visits to Mumbai in 1917 to 1934. Stop to view the Dhobi Ghat and the colourful Crawford Market and Flora Fountain.

This evening transfer to the airport where you will board the onward 1-and-a-half-hour flight to Kochi for a two-night stay.

**Destination Information**

**Gateway of India** - One of the most unique monuments in Mumbai, the Gateway of India was built to commemorate the 1911 royal visit of King George V, but was not completed until 1924.

**Afghan Church** - Commissioned by the East India Company, the Afghan Church was built as a memorial to those of the British and Company Armies who died in the first war in Afghanistan.

**Hanging Gardens** - Stroll the terraced gardens, located on the top of Malabar hill, while admiring the view over the sea.

**Chowpatty Beach** - One of the most famous beaches of Mumbai, Chowpatty beach is a favourite picnic and dining spot for local people.

**Kamala Nehru Park** - Situated on the top of Malabar Hill, Kamala Nehru Park is one of the oldest children's park in Mumbai and covers an area of 4,000 square feet.

**Dhobi Ghat** - Dhobi Ghat, Mumbai's largest outdoor laundromat, has been operating for over 100 years. Every day over 100 people wash hundreds of kilograms of clothes and linen in open-air troughs.

**Kochi** - Better known as Cochin, Kochi is Kerala's most cosmopolitan city. It is also its main trading centre for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Kochi is in fact a collection of narrow islands and peninsulas.

**Day 24: Kochi**

Meals: B, L, D

Today tour the satellite towns around Kochi and Ernakulam, visiting sites such as the Dutch Palace, the Santa Cruz Basilica and St. Francis Church. While driving along the coastline near the harbour, view the unique cantilevered Chinese fishing nets.

End the day exploring Fort Kochi and this evening enjoy a Kathakali dance performance.

Sightseeing today involves approximately 2 to 3 hours of walking.

### Destination Information

**Dutch Palace** - The Palace was built in 1545 AD by the Portuguese and presented as a gift to the Raja of Kochi. Originally called the Mattancherry Palace, it became known as the Dutch Fort when the Dutch renovated the building in 1663.

**Santa Cruz Basilica** - One of the eight basilicas in India. The Santa Cruz Basilica has an eventful history, which originates back to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1500.

**St. Francis Church** - St. Francis Church is thought to be the first European church built in India, constructed by the Portuguese in 1503.

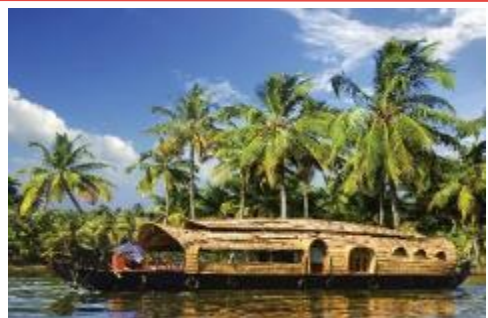
**Cantilevered Chinese fishing nets** - A relic from the 14th century traders, the Chinese fishing nets are still in use today.

**Day 25: Kochi to Nedumudy**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning visit the Jewish Synagogue (closed on Fridays and Saturdays) before driving 1 and a half hours to Nedumudy to board your overnight houseboat, a converted rice barge known as a 'Kettuvallam'.

Enjoy lunch on board as you cruise past Kerala's exceptional scenic beauty. The boat docks for the night at sunset as the fishermen cast their nets in the backwaters and therefore boats are not allowed to cruise.





### Destination Information

**Jewish Synagogue** - Constructed by the Kochi Jewish community in 1568, the Synagogue is the oldest synagogue in the Commonwealth nations.

**Kerala Backwaters** – A stretch of waters parallel to the coast of the Arabian Sea traditionally used for transportation; nowadays the backwaters attract tourists to a unique experience travelling along a mixture of manmade and natural canals, lakes and rivers.

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#### **Day 26: Alleppey to Kovalam**

Meals: B, L, D

Disembark your houseboat this morning and drive 5 to 6 hours to Kovalam.

Upon arrival in Kovalam, proceed to your hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.



### Destination Information

**Kovalam** - Until the 1960s, Kovalam was just a sleepy fishing village with narrow lanes and thatched dwellings with wide courtyards for drying fish. Now Kovalam is a charming resort town with a popular beach.

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#### **Day 27: Kovalam**

Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a full day of sightseeing in Trivandrum today. Tour the Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple before continuing to the Sri Chitra Art Gallery and the Museum. Later visit the Observatory, the Kanakakunnu Palace and Sree Moolamthirunal Shastri Purthi Memorial (State Handicraft Institute).

### Destination Information

**Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple** – Built in a fusion of Keralan and the neighbouring Dravidian styles, the temple is thought to be the richest Hindu temple in the world.

**Days 28-29: Depart Trivandrum**

Meals: B

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You will be transferred to the airport for your overnight flight, according to the departure time of your flight today. Any time before your flight will be at leisure.

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.

## GRAND TOUR OF INDIA TRAVEL INFORMATION

### VISAS:

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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 six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

For the latest information on visa procedures, processing times and requirements, please kindly refer to our website <https://www.wendywutours.com.au/help-and-advice/passports-and-visas/>

Please note, the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa. Wendy Wu Tours does not accept responsibility for lost or undelivered items.

### INSURANCE:

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We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance. We also 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 original.

### EATING IN INDIA:

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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 the Australia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our classic 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 non-spiced 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!

### **RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK SAFARI:**

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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 your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot confirm your safari arrangements without this information.

### **DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA:**

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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 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 guide.

### **ACCOMMODATION:**

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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.

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.

### **GROUP SIZE:**

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Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by both a National Escort and local guides. There will be no more than 28 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu our 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 only.



## SOUVENIRS:

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We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions that 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 that hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

## TIPPING POLICY:

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Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and India is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. 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. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

## TRANSPORT:

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**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.

**Planes:** Internal flights are based on economy class with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on internal flight sectors.

**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.

**Baggage on board trains:** Carry-on Baggage: Each passenger traveling in the AC Chair Car compartment is permitted a free allowance up to 88 lbs (40 kgs). For AC-Chair-Car compartments the maximum baggage measurement is 48 inches (123 cms). If a piece of baggage exceeds any one of the dimensions, it must be booked and carried in the brake van rather than in the passengers' compartment. Luggage Handling porters will be arranged by the National Escorts who are further assisted by the local office customer care executive (transfer representatives). As this is a fully Escorted tour, the accompanying National Escort along with the local office staff would assist the group members while embarking and disembarking from the trains.

### LUGGAGE:

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All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg 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.

### PORTERAGE:

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Please be aware that portering is not included on our tours in India. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

### APPROPRIATE DRESS:

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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.

### **PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:**

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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 on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2025 & 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (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 (festival of light) is on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2025 & November 8<sup>th</sup> 2026.

### **CLIMBING STEPS:**

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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.

### **VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:**

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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](http://www.travelvax.com.au)

### **BEFORE YOU LEAVE:**

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We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://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:**

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Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including 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.

Updated: October 2024