

# BEST OF NORTH INDIA

FROM Raja Hoon at **HERITAGE GETAWAYS**

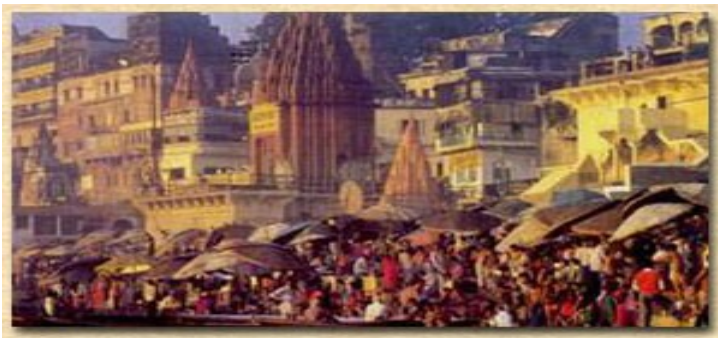
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## Day 01 ARRIVE DELHI

You will be met and assisted on arrival in Delhi and transferred to your hotel for overnight stay.

## Day 02 IN DELHI

After breakfast in the morning proceed with a full day city tour of Old and New Delhi. In Old Delhi visit the Red Fort built by Emperor Shah Jahan; Jama Masjid, one of the largest mosques in India; Raj Ghat- the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi and enjoy a walking tour in Chandni Chowk- the silver street of Delhi bustling with activity.

In the afternoon, visit New Delhi. Visit Qutab Minar, the tallest stone tower in India; Humayun's Tomb built in the Indo Persian style and a predecessor to The Taj Mahal in Agra; India Gate - A War Memorial Arch. Also drive past the President's house, Parliament house, Government secretariat buildings and Connaught place - the heart of New Delhi and a busy shopping center.

Overnight is at the hotel

## Day 03 TO JAIPUR (258 kms - 4 ½ hours)

This morning you are picked up from your Delhi hotel and travel by private car to Rajasthan and the famous city of Jaipur. Jaipur is known as the "pink city" with its buildings of pink and orange hues and it's a wonderful place to see the colour of Rajasthan and its people. The palaces and forts of yesteryear that witnessed royal processions and splendor are now integrated into the daily life of Jaipur.

Rest of the afternoon is at leisure. In the evening proceed for dinner at "Chokhi Dhani" - a tasteful and authentic symbol of ethnic village life of this most colorful state in the country. Spread over 10 acres of beautifully landscaped area for a rustic look, it is dotted with machaans & platforms where different folk artists perform concurrently. A village fair is created every evening as an ongoing celebration of the rich & vibrant cultural heritage of Rajasthan.

Return to the hotel for overnight stay

**Day 04**                      **IN JAIPUR**

This morning you will drive 11kms in the outskirts of the city to visit Amber Fort, the ancient capital of the State until 1728. Visit the Temple of Kali, the Hall of Victory or Jai Mahal and Jagmandir. You can have the unique experience of traveling on elephant back to and from the top of the hill on which the fort is situated.

Afternoon sightseeing tour of Jaipur includes visits to City Palace in the heart of Jaipur, known for its blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture. Not far away is the Central Museum with its large collection of woodwork, another monument near the City Palace, Jantar Mantar, is the largest of the five observatories built by Sawai Jai Singh. The Hawa Mahal or the Palace of Winds was constructed for the royal ladies to watch the royal processions without being seen.

Return to the hotel for overnight stay.

**Day 05**                      **TO RANTHAMBORE (161 kms / 3 ½ hours)**

This morning we will drive 160kms, roughly 4 hours to Ranthambore National park. You will stay here in a lodge or camp for two nights. Enjoy an afternoon safari in the park known for its tiger sightings. The park is quite famous for good population of Tigers, which can be encountered in broad daylight, quite unperturbed by the human presence. Following dinner there may be a slide show and an orientation talk about the park and its wildlife by the lodge staff.

Dinner and overnight stay at the Camp / Lodge

**DAY 06**                      **IN RANTHAMBORE**

Early morning a Jeep safari into the park - one of the finest tiger reserves in the country. Spread over an area of 392 sq. km, the park is characterized by dry deciduous forests sprawling over the Aravalli and Vindhyan ranges. If you are fortunate enough you can also see the tiger strolling in the jungle or near any of the three lakes namely, the Padam Talab, Raj Bagh Talab and Milak Talab. The park also houses some of the rare species of desert creature like the sambhar, chital, nilgai, chinkara, langur, wild boar and peafowl. Return to the hotel for a late breakfast. Your car is at your disposal hence you may like to spend the afternoon visiting nearby temples and sites. Also visit the Ranthambore fort built by the Chauhan rulers in the 10th century and is regarded as one of the oldest forts of Rajasthan. Due to its strategic location, the fort was ideal to keep the enemy at bay. The fort is also related to the historical legend of the royal women performing jauhar (self immolation) when the Muslim invader Ala-ud-din Khilji laid siege on this fort in 1303. Its temples, tanks, massive gates and huge walls characterize the fort. You will have another opportunity in the afternoon for tiger spotting during your second safari of the day.

Overnight is at the lodge / camp.

**Day 07**                      **IN RANTHAMBORE**

Morning and evening Jeep safaris into the National park for tiger spotting

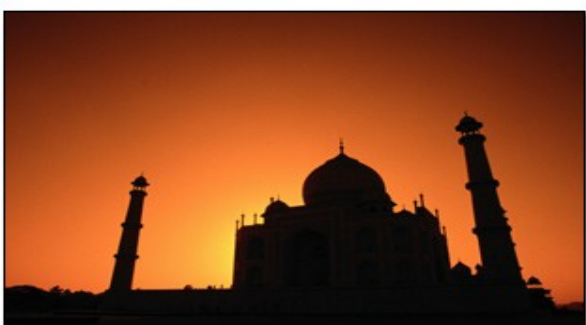
Overnight at the lodge / camp

### Day 08 TO AGRA (251 kms / 6 ½ hours)

Driving from Ranthambore to Agra you break the journey at **Fatehpur Sikri**, an amazing ghost town that was once the capital of the Mughal Empire. This was the capital city of Akbar but was abandoned later due to scarcity of water. This complex in red sandstone is considered to be more beautiful than TAJ MAHAL by many visitors. Then continue your drive of approximately 45 min. to Agra. In Agra unwind in the hotel by the poolside after a hectic and long drive. You can also visit the local Market for some souvenir hunting

Overnight at the hotel

### Day 09 IN AGRA



Today proceed for a half day guided city tour of **Taj Mahal**. In particular, Agra has its magnificent fort and the building which many people have visited India solely to see - the Taj Mahal. This morning tours visit this white marble mausoleum, which was built in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Moghul emperor Shah Jehan for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. On the banks of river Yamuna stands the Taj Mahal, the epitome of love is today the source of attraction for millions of tourists from all over the world. The Taj is made

entirely of white marble and its walls are decorated with exquisite pietra dura (stone inlay) work. It is said that different types of precious and semi precious stones were used in the intricate inlay work done on the interiors. His magnificent monument is set around a Charbagh or 'four garden', which is spilt by watercourses - a reflection of Persian style.

In the afternoon visit the red sandstone Agra Fort - standing like a crescent on the banks of the Jamuna River enclosed by forbidding 20-meter high walls, with a 12- meter moat between them. Three successive Mughal emperors - Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan - helped create this massive structure which contains Hindu and Muslim architecture

Overnight at the hotel

### Day 10 AGRA - KHAJURAHO VIA JHANSI & ORCHA

In time transfer to Railway Station in the morning to board Shatabdi Express train for Jhansi.

Arrive Jhansi and drive to Khajuraho, which is an interesting drive of 190 kms taking roughly 4 hours. Enroute stop at Orchha. Its grandeur has been captured in stone, frozen in time, a rich legacy to the ages. In this medieval city, the hand of time has rested lightly and the palaces and temples built by its Bundela rulers in the 16th and 17th centuries retain much of their pristine perfection.

Orchha was founded in the 16th century by the Bundela Rajput chieftain, Rudra Pratap, who chose this stretch of land along the Betwa River as an ideal site for his capital. Of the succeeding rulers, the most notable was Raja Bir Singh Ju Deo who built the exquisite Jehangir Mahal, a tiered palace crowned by graceful chhatris. From here the view of soaring temple spires and cenotaphs is spectacular. Complementing the noble proportions of their exteriors are interiors which represent the finest flowering of the Bundela School of painting. In the

Laxminarayan Temple and Raj Mahal, vibrant murals encompassing a variety of religious and secular themes, bring the walls and ceilings to rich life. Arrive Khajuraho by afternoon and check - in at hotel for overnight stay.

### **Day 11**                      **IN KHAJURAHO**

Today you will enjoy a sightseeing tour of Khajuraho Temples. The Western Group, has 14 temples. The Chaunsath Yogini, Lalguan Mahadev, Parvati, Varaha, Matangesvara, Lakshmana, Vishvanath and

Nandi, Chitragupta, Devi Jagdamba and Kandariya Mahadeo. The Eastern Group consists of seven temples (four Jain and three Hindu). The Parsvanath, Adinath, Shantinath, and Ghantai temples belong to the Jains while the Vamana, Javari and Brahma are Hindu temples. In the temple architecture of India, the Khajuraho complex remains unique. One thousand years ago, under the generous and artistic patronage of the Chandela Rajput kings of Central India, 85 temples, magnificent in form and richly carved, came up on one site, near the village of Khajuraho. The amazingly short span of 100 years, from 950 AD - 1050 AD, saw the completion of all the temples, in an inspired burst of creativity. Today, of the original 85, only 22 have survived the ravages of time; these remain as a collective paean to life, to joy and to creativity; to the ultimate fusion of man with his creator. Why did the Chandelas choose Khajuraho or Khajirvahila - garden of dates, as it was known then - as the site for their stupendous creations? Even in those days it was no more than a small village. It is possible given the eclectic patronage of the Chandelas and the wide variety of beliefs represented in the temples, that they had the concept of forming a seat of religion and learning at Khajuraho. It is possible that the Chandelas were also believers in the powers of Tantrism; the cult which believes that the gratification of earthly desires is a step closer to the attainment of the infinite. It is certain however, that the temples represent the expression of a highly matured civilization.

Yet another theory is that the erotica of Khajuraho, and indeed of other temples, had a specific purpose. In those days when boys lived in hermitages, following the Hindu law of being "brahmacharis" until they attained manhood, the only way they could prepare themselves for the worldly role of 'householder' was through the study of these sculptures and the earthly passions they depicted.

### **Day 12**                      **KHAJURAHO - VARANASI**

Morning is free to cycle around in this quiet town and pay another visit to temples.

In time, transfer to the airport to board flight for Varanasi. From airport, straight proceed for a guided excursion to Sarnath - where Lord Buddha preached his first sermon. A major Buddhist centre, Sarnath lies 10 kilometres north east of Varanasi. It was here that Buddha preached his message of the 'middle way' to nirvana after achieving enlightenment at Bodhgaya. In around 234 BC, Emperor Ashoka, a great follower of Buddhism, erected a stupa here. Between the 3rd century BC and the 11th century AD, several Buddhist structures were built here in Sarnath. Most of the Sarnath's monuments are set in large gardens making it quite pleasant for a visitor to spend some time here.

### **Day 13**                      **VARANASI - DELHI & DEPART DELHI**

Early in the morning, enjoy a boat ride on the River Ganges. The most important facet of this holy city is the river and the ghats lining its southern bank in the city. From dawn to dusk, the

ghats are thronged by thousands of devotees, who perform their holy rituals in the hope of attaining salvation, the "Nirvana" Also visit temples like Kashi Vishwanath temple - dedicated to Lord Shiva; Bharat Mata Mandir - dedicated to Mother India; Durga temple - dedicated to Goddess Durga; Alamgir mosque - originally a temple dedicated to Vishnu but now an odd mixture of Hindu and Muslim architectural styles. Later you will be transferred to the airport for return flight to Delhi.

On arrival in Delhi you will be transferred to an airport hotel for a couple of hours, where you will be given a room for wash-n-change, have a farewell dinner and then you will be taken to the International airport for your return flight.