

# INDIA AT IT'S BEST - EXTENSIVE TOUR

FROM Raja Hoon at **HERITAGE GETAWAYS**

E-21 ANAND NIKETAN, NEW DELHI-110021

PHONE; 001-41662199

[e-mail-heritagegetaways@airtelmail.in](mailto:e-mail-heritagegetaways@airtelmail.in)

[e-mail-heritagegetaways@hotmail.com](mailto:e-mail-heritagegetaways@hotmail.com)

[www.heritagegetaways.net](http://www.heritagegetaways.net)

**16 nights / 17 days covering**

*Delhi \* Agra \* Jaipur \* Mandawa \* Bikaner \* Jaisalmer \* Jodhpur \* Udaipur \**

*\* Cochin \* Periyar \* Kumarakom \* \* Alleppey \* Cochin \**

## **DAY 01 ARRIVE DELHI**

Arrive Delhi and meet the representative at the arrival hall. Transfer to the hotel for overnight stay

## **DAY 02 IN DELHI**

Morning tour the capital city. In Old city visit Red Fort built by Emperor Shah Jahan; Jama Masjid, one of the largest mosques in India; Raj Ghat- the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi and walk around Chandni Chowk- the silver street of Delhi bustling with activity. In the New city 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 at the hotel

## **DAY 03 TO AGRA**

After breakfast depart for Agra - a 3 ½ hours drive through the beautiful country side. Arrive and check in at the hotel

Agra replaced Lahore as the capital of the Mughal Empire in 1599, and the city contains some of India's most superb monuments, including the Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort. You will tour both of these magnificent structures. One of the world's most beautiful monuments, the Taj took 18 years to construct and was an expression of Emperor Shah Jehan's love for his wife.

In the afternoon proceed with a tour of Agra city. Visit the red sandstone Agra Fort, which stands 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. Then proceed for the famous white marble mausoleum, which was built in the middle of the 17th century by the Moghul emperor Shah Jehan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal. Visit the Taj Mahal surely the greatest monument to love and one of the wonders of the modern world. Completed in 1652, skilled craftsmen from Persia, Turkey, France and Italy and some 20,000 labourers worked for 17 years to build this edifice, constructed by emperor Shah Jehan as a mausoleum for his beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal. Marble was brought from Makrana, near Jodhpur and precious stones of onyx, amethyst, malachite, lapis lazuli, turquoise, jade, crystal and mother of pearl were carried to Agra from Persia, Russia, Afghanistan, Tibet, China and the Indian Ocean. Rest of the day is at leisure. Overnight is at the Hotel

## **DAY 04 AGRA - JAIPUR (DRIVE - 264 KMS)**

This morning you will drive to the pink city of Jaipur and the Capital of Rajasthan visiting the ancient Moghul capital of FATEHPUR SIKRI. This 16th century capital of Moghul emperor Akbar is a complex of forts, palaces and mosques built in sandstone. The city had to be deserted because of lack of water. The white marble Tomb of Sheikh Salim Chisti, Akbar's spiritual adviser, is now observed as a Muslim pilgrimage spot here.

Continue your drive to Jaipur and check in at the hotel upon arrival. Founded in 1728 by warrior-astronomer Maharaja Jai Singh, Jaipur is known as the 'Pink City' for the rose-colored buildings of its historical district. The city is surrounded by rugged hills crowned with forts. Rest of the day is to relax by the poolside at your hotel.

#### **DAY 05**                      **IN JAIPUR**

This morning, enjoy an easy elephant ride up to the Amber Fort, followed by a tour of the City Palace, Palace of the Winds, Jantar Mantar Royal Observatory, and Central Museum. You may also have time to observe Jaipur's craftsmen, who are renowned for their skill in cutting precious stones, as well as for their brass inlay and laquer work. Tonight, you will stay at one of India's premier palace hotels.

#### **DAY 06**                      **JAIPUR - MANDAWA**

This morning we will drive to Mandawa, often referred to as Rajasthan's open art gallery. Mandawa is a sleepy little typical Rajasthani town, which is deep rooted with culture. Stay here in your heritage hotel, Castle Mandwa. Later enjoy a walking tour of Mandawa, which includes the medieval fort that gradually rises on the horizon like a mirage. A painted arched gateway adorned with Lord Krishna and his cows leads to the bazaar. A breathtaking view of the town can be seen from the terrace of Castle Mandwa. The Mandwa family has a collection of traditional ceremonial costumes. Overnight at hotel.

#### **DAY 07**                      **TO BIKANER**

Morning leave for Bikaner, which was once a major trading post between Africa, West Asia and the Far East. The arts prospered receiving the patronage of a wealthy merchant community. The city is renowned for the best riding camels in the world. This afternoon during your tour you will visit Camel Breeding Farms; Junagarh Fort, a formidable structure encircled by a moat and having some beautiful palaces within. Situated at a height of above seven hundred feet above sea level, it towers over the city and can be seen from a distance. The fort and its palaces are profusely decorated with magnificent stone carvings. 30 kms south of Bikaner is the village of Deshnoke, where the famous Mata Karni Temple is situated. The 600-year-old temple is dedicated to Karni Mata, an incarnation of Goddess Durga. The temple plays host to thousands of rats that form the major attraction here. The rats are considered sacred and worshipped accordingly. You have to be very careful while entering the inner sanctum, because it is believed that if you accidentally step on a rat, a gold replica has to be made to compensate for the lost life.

#### **DAY 08**                      **TO JAISALMER**

Today drive to Jaisalmer - a fairy-tale town in the Thar Desert founded about 800 years ago by Rajah Jaisal. The town is surrounded by mighty walls, which seem to grow up out of sun bleached desert sands. In the town center the buildings provide evidence of the Indian stonemasons' unsurpassed art. In narrow, twisting streets you can visit havelis, the houses of rich merchants with their finely carved filigree facades. On arrival check in at hotel Afternoon is free to walk around in the colorful and bustling bazaars.

#### **DAY 09**                      **IN JAISALMER**

Visit the famous Havelis (mansions) known for their frescoes. Jaisalmer's strategic position on the camel terrain route brought it great wealth. The merchants grew prosperous and commissioned great havelis, or mansions, to flaunt their ever-growing status in society. Made of local golden-yellow sand stone and wood, some of the havelis are still in excellent condition. The most elaborate and magnificent of all the Jaisalmer havelis is the Patwaon Ki Haveli. Five Jain brothers built the haveli between 1800 and 1860. Salim Singh Ki Haveli and Nathmal Ki Haveli are the other two havelis that are opened to visitors. Built in 1156 by the Bhatti ruler, Jaisala, The fort here stands atop the 80 m high Trikuta hill. 3 walls and features 99 bastions surround the fort. Over the centuries, the golden sand stone fortress witnessed many battles between the Bhattis, the mughals and the rathors of Jodhpur. Within the fort complex lie the beautifully carved Jain Temples built between the 12th and 15th centuries. The Maharawals (rulers) of Jaisalmer were devout Hindus but were tolerant of Jainism, and encouraged art and religion. There are 7 temples in the complex - Chandraprabhu, Parasnath, Shitalnath,

Sambhavnath, Shantinath, Kunthunath and Rikhabdev Temple. The temples are all connected by a series of corridors and walkways. Closeby is the Gyan Bhandar, a library founded in 1500 A.D. This house is priceless ancient manuscripts and other exhibits like astrological charts, besides the Jain equivalent of the Christian Shroud of Turin. Overnight is at hotel.

#### **DAY 10 TO JODHPUR**

Today, drive 330kms to Jodhpur. Jodhpur is known for its striking forts, stately palaces and gracious buildings. An oasis in the arid Thar Desert, Jodhpur is the second largest city in the state of Rajasthan. Representing this colorful city with shades of blue, Jodhpur has a history that is rich and a present that beckons strongly to the discerning tourist. Forts and palaces, temples and havelis, culture and tradition, spices and fabrics, color and texture, Jodhpur has them all and in plenty.

In the afternoon visit the Mehrangarh Fort. Considered one of India's best forts, this invincible stronghold of the Marwars sits on a steep hill lording over a wonderful view of its surroundings. It is also a beautiful fort and undoubtedly, the jewel of Jodhpur. Intricate latticed windows, elaborately carved panels and elegantly curved porches speak of beauty and taste. No matter what part of the fort you are in, its ambience will leave you in awe and your senses reeling. Take in the sight high up on the rampart where the second largest cannon in Asia rests, the recoil of which requires an area as large as a football field! Return to your hotel for overnight stay. Overnight is at hotel.

#### **DAY 11 TO UDAIPUR**

This morning we'll drive through valleys in the remote and peaceful Aravalli Range to Ranakpur to visit one of the most important Jain temples in India. This marble complex is noted for the 29 halls supported by 1,444 pillars, each adorned with hundreds of carved figures, no two alike. We'll continue south, arriving Udaipur, described as the "City of Sunrise" in the evening. Rest of the day enjoy the views from your hotel and admire the beauty of the city. You may take a walking tour on your own through the narrow lanes and back streets of Udaipur up to the Washing Ghats at the lake Pichola. Return to your hotel in the evening or visit one of the local downtown restaurants for an optional dinner.

#### **DAY 12 IN UDAIPUR**

Drive around the Fatehsagar Lake, built by Maharana Fateh Singh in 1754 A.D. Visit the Jagdish Temple, the largest and most venerated temple of Udaipur; Sahelion-Ki-Bari, consisting of an ornamental pool with delicately carved cenotaphs of black and white marble and soft stone. Also visit the Maharani's City Palace, an imposing edifice of granite and marble. Later in the day you can enjoy a two-hour boat-ride on Lake Pichola visiting many Ghats (banks) of washing, bathing etc and enjoy excellent views of the Lake Palace and City Palace.

#### **DAY 13 To COCHIN VIA MUMBAI**

In time, transfer to the airport to board your flight for Mumbai. Upon arrival connect flight for Cochin. Meet and assist upon arrival and transfer to the hotel.

Kochi has one of the finest harbors on the Arabian Sea coast and has been a port of call for foreign traders for centuries. Its cosmopolitan character is reflected in the buildings and structures representing various regions of the world. As we explore the streets and backwaters, we will see Chinese, Jewish, Portuguese, Dutch and English architectural styles as a result of the settlement of different nationalities in the city. The city was founded in 1341 following a flood that created a natural and safe harbor and quickly became the chief port on the Malabar Coast. From the 1400's it attracted Jewish, Arab and Christian settlers from the Middle East as a result of the Royal Family's move to the city from Muziris, 50kms north. The Europeans began settling from 1500's as the Portuguese, Dutch and English competed to control the port and the lucrative spice trade.

Following our arrival in Cochin, we will spend today walking through the old sections. Our walking tour will take us to; Jew Town, including the Pardesi Synagogue; the Mattancherry

Palace, known locally as the Dutch Palace; Fort Cochin, reminiscent of European streets and houses; the Chinese Fishing Nets on the northern shore of Fort Cochin; and St Francis Church, near to a typical English village green. A highlight is watching the fishermen working the nets (which operate on a weight system) as the sun is setting.

In the evening you will be taken for one hour show of KATHAKALI- the ancient dance form of KERALA.

#### **DAY 14 TO PERIYAR (192 KMS)**

This morning you travel approximately 4 hours by private vehicle to Thekkady, the main entrance to Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. Upon arrival check-into your cottage. The name Thekkady, for those who have already visited this place, brings to mind images of elephants, unending chains of hills and spice-scented plantations. Moreover, the flora and fauna of the Periyar wildlife sanctuary is absolutely thrilling. The wildlife sanctuary here is the natural habitat of a wide variety of animal species. The Periyar Lake is a paradise for the nature lovers. It gives you an opportunity to observe the wild animals roaming in the jungle. The lake is also a birdwatcher's delight. The greatest attraction of Periyar Lake, however, is the herds of wild elephants that come down to play in the lake. Moreover, the Sanctuary Watch Tower situated in the forest interior gives you a panoramic view of the park.

#### **DAY 15 TO KUMARAKOM (114 KMS)**

What an idyllic way to start the day, an early morning boat ride on Lake Periyar! Covering an area of 300 square miles Periyar is one of the largest and most frequently visited wildlife reserves in India. It is part of the Project Tiger campaign and animals inhabiting the area include elephant, deer, pig, tiger, leopard, bison, monkeys and malabar squirrel. Whilst actually spotting an illusive tiger or leopard could prove difficult, the mix of wooded hills and valleys make it a wonderful place to enjoy the greenery.

Return to your resort for breakfast then a local guide takes you to view spice plantations of cardamon, pepper and other local specialties. Later drive approximately 3 hours to Kumarakom. An old rubber plantation set around the Vembanad Lake has been sensitively developed by the Kerala Tourism Department into a bird sanctuary. The Vembanad Lake with its majestic canals, streams and distributories along its banks weaves an intricate and beautiful web. This area is a winter home for many migratory birds and species include the darter, little cormorant, night heron, golden-backed woodpecker, white-breasted water hen and many more wonderful birds. After lunch you visit the bird sanctuary with a local naturalist and if possible do your wildlife viewing by boat.

After lunch you visit the bird sanctuary with a local naturalist and if possible do your wildlife viewing by boat. Your overnight stay is at your backwater resort.

#### **DAY 16 TO ALLEPPEY (50 KMS)**

After breakfast you make a short trip to the ferry point where you board your houseboat. For you we have reserved a private, one room houseboat that travels until sunset when it then anchors for the night, at Alleppey. Your boat has a private balcony with comfortable chairs (perfect for that G&T while the sun goes down!). The rooms are fully furnished with attached bathrooms. The boat has a fully equipped kitchen and an experienced cook to prepare authentic Kerala cuisine with seafood specialties and fresh vegetables. This is your chance to pick up some fabulous cooking tips!

The entire state of Kerala is blessed with plenty of rivers and the resources of many are still untapped. The waterways of Kerala play a major role in the economy of the state as they link remote villages and islands with the mainland. It is an incredibly different experience to cruise in the backwaters in country boats, absorbing the beauty of Kerala's villages. Houseboats, also known as kettuvallam or rice boats, are today one of the major tourist attractions in Kerala, but these boats were used to carry rice bags in their earlier days. These houseboats are uniquely designed using local materials like bamboo poles, coconut fiber ropes, bamboo mats, carpets

etc. and are a fabulous way to enjoy exploring the fascinating beauties of backwaters. Their languid grace and quaint design adding another dimension to your cruise in the shimmering blue waters. Overnight onboard the houseboat.

**DAY 17**                      **TO COCHIN & DEPART FOR ONWARD DESTINATION**

You will get up early today by chirping of birds and occasional ripples in the water. Your breakfast will be cooked before your eyes by your expert boat-crew. Enjoy a sumptuous breakfast while cruising quietly on the unending stretches of these backwaters.

Later check out of the houseboat and switch over to your car for for a short drive to the Cochin airport and connect flight for onward destination