

Highway to Himalayas - 18 Days

go guide

don't leave home without it



A World Of Discovery



Combining an intoxicating mix of culture, incredible wildlife, exceptional sights and unsurpassed scenery. A road less travelled, the Highway to Himalayas is our definitive group tour of the North of India and Nepal.



HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Delhi - Old Delhi - Red Fort, Jama Masjid and Raj Ghat.
- New Delhi - India Gate, Rajpath, Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar and a carpet emporium with demonstration
- Jaipur - Amber Fort, Jantar Mantar, City Palace and visit to a cotton trader/tailor
- Abhaneri - Chand Baori 9th century step well
- Bharatpur and Perharsar Village
- Keoladeo Ghana National Park - UNESCO site
- Agra - Taj Mahal (entrance fee included), Agra Fort and a visit to a marble craft shop
- Fatehpur Sikri - ancient Mughal city
- Orchha - temples of the Bundelas (entrance fee included)

- Khajuraho - Chandela dynasty temples and Jain temples
- Varanasi, Mother India site, local temples, mosques and the holy River Ganges
- Lumbini - birthplace of Lord Buddha. City and Ashokan Pillar
- Royal Chitwan National Park - Nepal
- Pokhara and the Himalayas, Lake Phewa - Nepal.
- Kathmandu - the city, Durbar Square, Pashupatinath Temple and various other temples and shrines - Nepal

What's Included

- 17 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 4 dinners (including Namaste Dinner in Delhi)
- 17 nights - 3-4 star and heritage hotels
- Elephant ride to Amber Fort - Jaipur (*Subject to Government regulations and availability)
- Horse and cart/buggy ride to Taj Mahal - Agra
- Bicycle rickshaw ride in Keoladeo Ghana National Park
- Sunrise boat cruise on the holy Ganges - Varanasi
- Economy class flight - Khajuraho to Varanasi
- Entrance fees for the Taj Mahal, Jaipur City Palace, Jantar Mantar and Bundela Temples
- All relevant transfers and transportation
- Airport arrival and departure transfers on day 1 and day 18
- Touring of Delhi, Jaipur, Perharsar, Chand Baori Step Well, Agra, Orchha, Khajuraho, Varanasi, Chitwan National Park, Pokhara and Kathmandu
- English speaking Indian tour leader for groups of 6 or more
- Specialist guides at local sights

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: \$35-40 USD
- Entrance Fees: \$105-115 USD
- International flights and visas
- Tip for your tour leader. We suggest \$13-\$20 USD per person for this tour.

Tipping your leader is an entirely personal gesture.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : New Delhi

Saturday. Welcome to India and the start of your holiday! Arrive Delhi, included transfer to hotel.
Overnight - New Delhi

Day 2 : Old Delhi

Delhi. Before the tour commences, we hold an early breakfast welcome meeting. Here, you'll meet the tour leader and the rest of the group.

Setting off, we begin our sightseeing of Delhi – the nation's capital and India's third largest city. Today's tour will offer a fascinating insight into India's principal capital city.

Old Delhi is the 17th century walled city of Shahjahanabad (capital of Muslim India between the 17th and 19th centuries) with city gates, narrow alleyways, bazaars, many mosques, monuments, forts and other buildings relating to India's Muslim history. The main street in Old Delhi is Chandni Chowk – a colourful, if hopelessly congested shopping bazaar.

Sightseeing of Old Delhi - highlights:

- Red Fort- The red stone walls of the fort extend for 2kms and vary in height from 8m on the riverside to 33m on the city side. Built by Shah Jahan started construction of the massive fort in 1638 and it was completed in 1648.
- Jama Masjid- The largest mosque in India and the final architectural extravaganza of Shah Jahan.
- Raj Ghat- on the banks of the Yamuna River lies a marble memorial marking the spot where the great leader- Mahatma Gandhi was cremated after his assassination.

New Delhi, in contrast to Old Delhi is a city of wide tree-lined streets, parks, fountains and roundabouts – designed by Edward Lutyens and

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www.onthegotours.com
uk 020 7371 1113 info@onthegotours.com
aus 1300 855 684 aus-info@onthegotours.com
nz 0800 44 77 69 can 1 866 890 7038
usa 1 866 377 6147 sa 0800 982 686

This Go Guide has been compiled with care and good faith. It gives an accurate illustration of the proposed arrangements for this holiday. Circumstances beyond our control such as changes in local conditions, inclement weather or other reasons could force us to make changes to this itinerary. This document does not form part of a contract between the traveller and on the go and their affiliates. Any costs shown are subject to change though are an accurate reflection of costs at time of writing. Please also note that visa requirements are subject to change and are the responsibility of the traveller and not that of on the go

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built as the imperial capital of India by the British. Connaught Place (Rajiv Chowk) with its outer circle Connaught Circus (Indira Chowk) forms the business and tourist centre. New Delhi also houses many government buildings including Rashtrapati Bhavan – the official residence of the President of India which stands at the opposite end of the Rajpath from India Gate.

Sightseeing of New Delhi – highlights:

- Rajpath – an immensely broad boulevard flanked on either side by ornamental ponds. The Republic Day parade is held here every 26 January, drawing millions of people to this spectacle. It is at the eastern end of Rajpath we'll see India Gate.
- India Gate - The 42m high stone "Arch of Triumph", erected in memory of Indian soldiers who died in the First World War.

Tonight, we enjoy a Namaste Dinner at a restaurant specialising in Indian cuisine. **Overnight - New Delhi (B, D)**

Days 3-4 : Jaipur

Delhi - Jaipur. Today we travel by road, to the Pink City of Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan. The journey takes approximately 5 - 6 hours. Upon arrival, we'll embark on some sightseeing taking in the Old City and City Palace. In 1876, Maharaja Ram Singh had the entire old city swathed in pink paint! Not as mad as it seems, as pink is a colour in India associated with hospitality. The new paint job was completed in time for a regal visit by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), a tradition that has been maintained, hence Jaipur's name - the Pink City.

En route to the City Palace, we'll pass Hawa Mahal – the Palace of the Winds. Although little more than an impressive façade it is one of the city's landmarks. The 5-storey building which overlooks the main street of the bustling old city is a stunning example of Rajput architecture with its pink, delicately honeycombed sandstone windows.

We visit the City Palace, a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture. If the flag is flying, the Maharaja is in residence. A part of palace has been converted into a museum, which has an impressive collection of arts, carpets, enamel ware and weaponry.

Just over the road from the City Palace (with snake charmers and fortune tellers lining the route) is Jantar Mantar, an observatory of astronomy built by Jai Singh in 1728. Of the five observatories he built, this is the largest and best preserved. At first glance, Jantar Mantar resembles a sculpture park, though in fact, each construction has a specific scientific purpose. Some measure the positions of stars, whilst others calculate eclipses, the lunar calendar and simply the time of day. Even today, most of the constructions remain accurate!

Jaipur is the place to shop until you drop, so if you fancy a bit of retail therapy, be sure to do it here. Shop for jootis (traditional Rajasthani curled shoes) Jaipur's famous blue pottery, textiles and handicrafts around the City Palace or Hawa Mahal.

Day 4, Opt for an early morning hot air balloon flight over Jaipur! After we travel just outside Jaipur to the Amber Fort. Once the ancient capital of Jaipur State, construction of the fort/ palace was started in 1592 by Maharaja Man Singh, the Rajput commander of Akbar's army. The fort is a superb example of Rajput architecture, stunningly situated atop a hill. We'll ascend the road leading to the palace in princely style, aboard Indian elephants, - subject to regulations/availability as the elephants are limited to the number of trips that can make up the fort each day. Richly decorated, exploring inside its expansive walls will give you an idea of just how 'the other half' once lived. **Overnight - Jaipur (B:2)**

Day 5 : Abhaneri Stepwells & Rural India



Jaipur - Bharatpur via Abhaneri and Peharsar. Our first stop is Chand Baori, a famous 9th century stepwell in the village of Abhaneri.

Then we travel to the small rural village of Peharsar, where we walk the backstreets discovering local life, traditions and (if open) visit the village school where we operate our 'Change for Children' programme. Here, we'll also visit a charming haveli with small courtyard, lawned gardens and rustic 'shabby chic' appeal carefully being restored to glory of better farming years.

After hotel check in at Bharatpur and time to freshen up we visit Keoladeo Ghana National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where we'll enjoy a leisurely bicycle rickshaw ride through the park. **Overnight - Bharatpur (B, D)**

Day 6 : Agra Fort & the Taj Mahal

Bharatpur - Agra. En route to Agra, we visit Fatehpur Sikri; this magnificent fortified city was the capital of the Mughal Empire from 1571 until 1585, when it was abandoned dramatically due to a lack of water to support the peoples who resided in the city. Thanks to the very durable red sandstone, from which it was built, Fatehpur Sikri remains fantastically preserved.

Fatehpur Sikri is divided into four main parts: the women's quarters; the emperor's quarters; a quarter for princes and noblemen; and weapons housing. We see various temples, places of worship, pavilions, public areas and examples of everyday living such as areas from where ablutions were performed, to an ancient aqua cooling system

and marvel at how life must have been for the inhabitants of this old city.

Continuing on to Agra, we embark on a short tour of the Agra Fort. Behind its colossal walls are some of the finest Mughal buildings in India. Construction of the fort was commenced during the reign of Emperor Akbar and additions were made until the rule of his grandson Shah Jahan. During Akbar's time, it was primarily a military fort though later the focus shifted and it partially became a palace.

After visiting Agra Fort we take a short motorised buggy ride to reach the legendary Taj Mahal. Described as the most extravagant monument ever built for love, this fine example of Mughal architecture was built by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved second wife-Mumtaz Mahal, who died tragically during childbirth.

Built entirely of white marble, construction began in 1631, the year in which Mumtaz died, and was not completed until 1653. A staggering total of 20,000 workers contributed their skills, in the construction of this unique mausoleum.

After our touring there is a visit to a marble craftshop before time to relax back at the hotel. **Overnight - Agra (B)**

Day 7 : Orchha

Agra - Orchha. Today we travel to Orchha. Once the ancient capital of the Bundelas, Orchha is now just a village. The attraction here is that the village is set amongst an impressive complex of well-preserved palaces and temples upon the banks of the Betwa River. The Jehangir Mahal, a 17th century palace is a stunning and rambling complex, offering great views of the countryside from its upper levels. We'll explore some of the temples in Orchha. **Overnight - Orchha (B)**

Day 8 : Khajuraho

Orchha - Khajuraho. Travelling south-east, we arrive in Khajuraho - home of the resplendent Hindu temples which were built during the Chandela dynasty over a 100 year burst of creative genius from 950-1050 AD. Immortalised in stone, the carved temples display exceedingly artistic aspects of Indian life a millennium ago. Famed above all for their delicate sensuality and forthright eroticism, how and why they were built still remains a mystery.

Indeed, the Chandelas appear to have forgotten about the temples soon after they were completed and it took 'rediscovery' by the British before these awesome masterpieces were fully appreciated in India. Though we won't be able to dispel the mystery, we've plenty of time to see the temples including the various acts from the famous Kamasutra depicted on these monolithic temples for ourselves! The incredible skill of the artisans is evident throughout. Adding to the beauty, these amazing temples subtly change hue as the day progresses, passing from a warm pink at sunrise to white under the midday sun and back to pink at sunset. **Overnight - Khajuraho (B)**

Highway to Himalayas - 18 Days



Day 9 : Varanasi



Khajuraho - Varanasi. This morning we offer our Wildlife Safari bolt-on with a jeep safari in Panna NP. After forgoing a long drive, we fly east to Varanasi. Note: there are 2 scheduled flights from Khajuraho - Varanasi each day. Restricted by seat availability and class of travel our tour group will often be spread across both flights. As such you may be required to depart for Khajuraho airport an hour early or wait in Varanasi airport for an hour upon arrival till all tour members arrive. Once our tour party has regrouped, together we transfer to our hotel.

Perhaps the holiest city in India; Varanasi, also known as Benares or the city of Shiva, is also one of the oldest cities on earth. Sitting on the banks of the holy River Ganges, it has been a centre of learning and civilisation for more than 2000 years and is a place of Hindu pilgrimage. **Overnight - Varanasi (B)**

Day 10 : Boat Ride on the Ganges

Varanasi. Early this morning we take a boat trip along the holy Ganges River. Hindu pilgrims come to bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges at the ghats (river side steps), a ritual, which washes away all of their sins. Equally, Varanasi is an auspicious place in death. As a Hindu, expiring here in Varanasi involves cremation at one of the 'burning' ghats, from where the ashes are later committed to the waters of the holy Ganges. Hindus believe that in dying here, it ensures release from the cycle of rebirths and an instant admission to heaven. There are a long string of ghats that line the Western bank of the river. Although most are used for bathing and cleansing the soul, there are several dedicated to cremation. Not only will you see the ritual bathing but a host of other fascinating scenes. You'll see people performing yoga, offering blessings, selling flowers, playing cricket, getting a shave and a host of other things!

Later in the day we embark on a tour of India's spiritual city. At sunset consider re-visiting the ghats for the evening pilgrimage, a little different from the dawn ritual. **Overnight - Varanasi (B)**

Day 11 : Lumbini - birthplace of Lord Buddha



Varanasi - Lumbini. Driving north, we cross the border into neighbouring Nepal. At this point we say goodbye to our Indian Tour Leader, cross the border then meet our new Nepali Guide on the other side. Our destination is Lumbini, birthplace of Lord Buddha in 623BC. Nestling peacefully in the southern plains of Nepal, we enjoy Lumbini's attractions which are interwoven with the Buddhist faith. The Lumbini Garden is famous for the Ashokan Pillar, which offers epigraphic evidence of Lord Buddha's birth. Free time upon arrival to Lumbini **Overnight - Lumbini (B)**

Days 12-13 : Chitwan N. P.

Lumbini - Royal Chitwan NP. Leaving Lumbini, we drive to Royal Chitwan NP. Widely acknowledged as one of the finest national parks in Asia, Chitwan supports a population of a variety of species including Indian one horned rhino, bison, sloth bear, wild boar, deer, leopard, antelope, langur and rhesus monkey, amazing bird life and of course the magnificent, if elusive, Bengal tiger.

On day 13, we enjoy morning and evening game drives (by elephant back or jeep) in the park. The resort at Chitwan runs on a generator (1-2 hours in the evening) and offers buffet style meals. **Overnight - Chitwan N. P. (B:2, L:2, D:2)**

Days 14-15 : Pokhara

Royal Chitwan NP - Pokhara. On day 14, we drive to Pokhara. Perhaps the most stunning of Pokhara's sights is the spectacular backdrop panorama of the Annapurna range. Although the highest among them is Annapurna (8091m), it is the fish-tailed summit of Machhapuchhre (6977m) spectacularly rising behind Lake Phewa that completes the vista. Around Lake Phewa is the heart of Pokhara where sail boats can be hired.

The eastern shore, popularly known as Lakeside or Baidam is a favoured base for travellers. We enjoy a sightseeing tour on day 15 and an evening sail boat trip. Free time in Pokhara - hike, bike, shop or relax - the choice is yours! **Overnight - Pokhara (B:2)**

Days 16-17 : Amazing Kathmandu



Pokhara - Kathmandu. Driving north, we arrive in Kathmandu. Resembling a medieval city of temples, shrines and living gods, Kathmandu is Nepal's biggest and most cosmopolitan city, a meeting place of a dozen ethnic groups and once one of the most important points on the caravan routes between Tibet and India. We spend some time exploring this amazing city and surrounds over the next few days.

Our sightseeing will include an overview of the city taking in Pashupatinath Temple which stands on the banks of the River Bhaginiti, Swayambhunath Pagoda and colossal Bodhnath. We'll explore Durbar Square in the heart of Kathmandu, which is home to more than 50 stunning temples and shrines. Then, there'll be free time to relax, explore and shop on your own or for the piece de resistance - opt to take an amazing scenic flight toward and up close the Mt Everest. **Overnight - Kathmandu (B:2)**

Day 18 : Kathmandu

Tuesday. Our holiday concludes after breakfast and included onward departure transfer to the airport. (B)

Local Conditions

Local conditions in Nepal may deem it necessary for us to amend the advertised route. Though a rare move on our part; through the monitoring of local conditions, should a change be necessary, you will be advised prior to departure provided such notice is possible or whilst in India.

Holi & the Elephant Parade tour - 23 March 2013

Special arrangements for our Highway to Himalayas tour departing 23 March 2013 are as follows:

Day 4 afternoon. Today its festival time for the elephants of Jaipur. Arriving at approx 4pm to the open air Rambagh Polo Ground camels and horses and lively folk dancers and musicians will proceed the stars of the show. Groomed to perfection, glittering in gold, laden with silk tassels and intricately decorated with brightly coloured motifs, row upon row of elephants will move gracefully in procession to an enthralled audience.

Highway to Himalayas - 18 Days



Hoping to be ringside, we'll witness the colourful celebrations which include the crowning of the Best Decorated Elephant, a regal match of polo played from elephant back and the comical bout of man verses elephant in a game of tug of war. Breakfast & overnight Jaipur

Day 5 - Jaipur - Bharatpur via Peharsar. It's an early start today as the Holi festivities bring thousands of devotees out onto the streets in dazzling colour and good cheer.

Celebrated all over India since ancient times, Holi is an annual festival celebrated on the day after the full moon in the Hindu month of Phalgun. Originally Holi was an agricultural festival celebrating the arrival of spring. In keeping this tradition people now a day choose to celebrate the occasion by throwing brightly coloured spices or herbal powders into the air, symbolically they are ridding the gloom of winter and rejoicing in the colours and liveliness of spring.

Today the central ritual of Holi incorporates the applying and throwing of coloured water and powders on friends and family which gives the holiday its modern name 'the Festival of Colour'. This ritual also believed to be based on events in Hindu mythology and is associated with Krishna's playful splashing of the maids with water, but most of all it celebrates the coming of spring and the vibrancy of colour that the season brings.

Arriving at the small rural village of Peharsar, we tour a charming haveli (mansion house) with small courtyard, lawned gardens and rustic 'shabby chic' appeal carefully being restored to glory of better farming years. From here its a short drive to our hotel in Bharatpur.

After checking in and time for lunch, you can pull up a chair and watch the Holi celebrations taking place out on the lawn. For those wanting to get involved we'll be providing white kurta pyjamas for you to wear and organic colours for you to throw. In this game of cat and mouse, stealth and the art of surprise will serve you well. After a bombardment of powder bombs and shower of water in every imaginable colour we'll etch an escape plan to Keoladeo Ghana National Park for a late afternoon bicycle rickshaw ride and birdwatching. Breakfast, dinner & overnight Bharatpur.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Climate

India has a three-season year known as the hot, the wet and the cool. The best time to visit is between late September and April when temperatures are cooler and therefore ideal for sightseeing. In the summer months of May to July it is less crowded and conditions are perfect for sightseeing and photography, although parts of India are extremely hot. July signals the start of the monsoon or wet season that continues until early or mid September. Although the weather is humid, the days are punctuated by intermittent rainfall and the monsoon is India is actually quite spectacular and quite refreshing.

Health Requirements

It is recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio, if you haven't had a booster in the last ten years. Food and waterborne diseases are more common, so we recommend vaccinations for Typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies). You are also advised to take anti-Malarial medication.

Currency

The Indian Rupees (INR) is non-exportable and only available in India. Pounds Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are easily exchanged upon arrival at any major bank or your hotel. ATM's are also available in all major towns and cities.

If planning on using your ATM card whilst in India, please let your bank know of your travel plans prior to departure to avoid your bank assuming that the transaction is fraudulent and blocking your card. Exchange rates are subject to fluctuation.

USD 1 = INR 45

GBP 1 = INR 75

EURO 1 = INR 65

AUD 1 = INR 47

Time

India is 5 hours 30 mins ahead of GMT.

Essential Packing

- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs.
- A photocopy of your passport data pages.
- The voltage in India is 230-240V. Most outlets in India accept round 3 pin plugs (not a UK, European or USA plugs). You should pack a Universal Adaptor and check that it is suitable for India.
- Insect repellent to guard against pesky mosquitoes
- Spare camera batteries/memory card so you can go snap happy.
- Consider packing some pencils, pens or modest educational supplies that can be given to village schools or street children.
- If you fancy a tippie, take advantage of Duty Free buys.
- Buy some Indian Rupees at the airport on arrival.
- Buy a phrasebook and practice your holiday Hindi.
- Keep a supply of small notes for local transactions.

Holiday Money

Funds collected in India for entrance fees and tip kitty (if applicable to your holiday) or optional excursion that you may wish to participate in are payable in local currency (INR).

Pre-Tour Accommodation

If arriving on day 1 of a holiday, that includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the 'What you Get' section of this Go Guide) we will be at the airport, ready to transfer you to your hotel. Further if you are booking pre-tour accommodation with us an airport arrival transfer will also be provided. If arriving prior to 9am on day 1 (essentially on a

flight that arrives very, very early in the morning) you will need to purchase a night of pre-tour accommodation to save you waiting until standard hotel check in time, which is generally 2pm.

Arrival Transfers

If your tour or short stay includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the 'What you Get' section of this Go Guide) from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, our arrival procedure is as follows:

Arrive to Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, where after you have attended to customs and immigration formalities, please proceed to the arrival hall. Please have your tour voucher handy and make it available to our representative who will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall, holding a prominent on the go tours logo signboard, ready to escort you to our awaiting transportation and onward to your tour start hotel

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (after waiting 20 minutes in the arrival hall) or your flight to India is delayed please call the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher and our local office who will then advise on the best course of action.

If travelling on our Captivating Kerala tour (with arrival via Kochi Airport) or one of our 'Short Stays' where an airport arrival transfer is included in your holiday, the procedure for meeting you at the airport is the same as those detailed above.

Departure Tax - effective as of 01 Dec 2011

As of 01 Dec 2011, an airport development fee will be levied to all flights departing from Indira Gandhi International airport, New Delhi.

The fee will be collected directly at the airport for all international and domestic tickets issued prior to this date. For all tickets issued/ purchased after 01 Dec 2011, the cost will be included in the ticket cost.

The amount (payable to your respective airline at check in) is as follows and can only be paid in Indian Rupees (INR). It would be ideal for you to have close to or the exact amount to avoid delays.

Domestic flights: INR 221 per person
International flights: INR 1434 per person

Visas

All foreign nationals must obtain a visa for a visit to India and it is essential the visa be procured prior to travel. A 6 month single entry visa (valid from the date of issue) is issued for most nationals planning to visit India. If you are planning to visit a neighbouring country such as Nepal, Bhutan or Sri Lanka and return to India you will require a multiple entry visa which must be procured in advance of travel. In order to obtain this, you will need to provide the embassy with a detailed itinerary and full flight information, showing the dates and ports of exit and re-entry to India.

Highway to Himalayas - 18 Days



If you are a resident in the UK we offer a visa service to save you the inconvenience of having to queue at the embassy, please visit our website or contact us for further information.

Visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement prior to departure is solely the responsibility of the traveller and not of on the go. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of return from India.

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uk 020 7371 1113 info@onthegotours.com
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nz 0800 44 77 69 can 1 866 890 7038
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