

Taj Express - 8 days

go guide

don't leave home without it



A World Of Discovery



Experience the richness of Indian culture and colour on this classic short tour that takes in Delhi, both old and new, the famous Taj Mahal and the stunning Pink City of Jaipur.



WHAT YOU SEE AND WHAT YOU GET

Trip Highlights

- Delhi - Old Delhi - Red Fort, Jama Masjid and Raj Ghat.
- New Delhi - India Gate, Rajpath, Humayun's Tomb, Qutab Minar and visit a carpet emporium with demonstration
- Agra - Taj Mahal (entrance fee included) and Agra Fort
- Fatehpur Sikri - ancient Mughal city
- Jaipur - Amber Fort, city palace, Jantar Mantar and visit to a cotton tailor for tailored garments
- Shekhawati region - Rajasthani architecture, havalis and village walk

What's Included

- 7 breakfasts, 1 lunches, 2 dinners (including Namaste Dinner in Delhi)
- 7 nights - 3-4 star and heritage hotels (hotel upgrade available in Delhi)
- Horse and cart/buggy ride to Taj Mahal - Agra
- Elephant ride to Amber Fort - Jaipur (*Subject to Government regulations and availability)

- Airport arrival and departure transfers on day 1 and day 8
- Touring of Delhi, Jaipur, Agra and Shekhawati region
- English speaking Indian tour leader for groups of 6 or more
- Specialist local guides at some sights
- Taj Mahal, Jaipur City Palace & Jantar Mantar entrance fees.
- All relevant transfers and transportation

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: \$15-20 USD
- Entrance Fees: \$45-55 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.

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 extravagance 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 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)**

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : New Delhi

Saturday. Welcome to India and the start of your holiday! Arrive Delhi, included transfer to hotel. The remainder of the day offers free time. **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. Entrance fees and tipping kitty will be collected at this time. The tip kitty will cover all the tipping throughout the tour, except a tip for your tour leader.

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

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updated on 13-01-2012



Day 3 : Taj Mahal



Delhi - Agra. Departing Delhi, we drive to Agra, once India's Mughal capital. The Taj Mahal, described as the most extravagant monument ever constructed for love, is a fine example of Mughal architecture 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 visit to the Taj Mahal, we head to Agra Fort for a short tour. 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 our touring there is a visit to a visit a marble craftshop before time to relax back at the hotel. **Overnight - Agra (B)**

Day 4 : Agra



Agra - Jaipur. En route to Jaipur, we visit ghostly former Mughal city of 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.

Upon our guided tour we'll explore the women's quarters; the emperor's quarters; a quarter for princes and noblemen; and weapons housing. We see various temples, places of worships, 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.

We continue to Udai Vilas Palace for lunch, followed by a visit to the rural town of Perhersar. After a walk through the village, we continue to the Pink City of Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan and a top spot for having tailored clothes made. **Overnight - Jaipur (B, L)**

Day 5 : Jaipur



Jaipur. Opt to see the pink city from high above with our early morning balloon flight. After we embark on excursion to Amber Fort, before taking in some sightseeing within the Old City and City Palace.

An early start takes us to the Amber Fort, located just outside the city limits. 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 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. We explore the richly decorated palace admiring how kings and queens once lived.

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 the palace has been converted into a museum, which has an impressive collection of arts, carpets, enamelware and weaponry.

Just over the road, (look out for the snake charmers that dot our route) from the City Palace 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. Be sure to explore the Johari Bazaar in the Old Pink City which are great for shopping. 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. **Overnight - Jaipur (B)**

Day 6 : Village life, rural India

Jaipur - Surajgarh/ Shekhawati. After breakfast, we travel by road in a due westerly direction to the semidesert Shekhawati region, which lies in a triangular area between Delhi, Jaipur and Bikaner. Starting around the 14th century, a number of Muslim clans moved into the region of Shekhawati. Towns were developed and subsequently became important trading posts on the ancient caravan routes emanating from the coastal ports of Gujarat. With large amounts of money coming from intensive trade, the merchants of Shekhawati were keen to erect mansions known as havelis, on a large scale, as glittering testimony to their newfound wealth. The region is now justly famous for its fine painted havelis.

Havelis are courtyard-style mansion homes that were built by these wealthy merchant families. Unremarkable from the outside, their courtyards are often painted and decorated with quite remarkable designs. The largest mansions had as many as 4 courtyards and were up to 6 stories in height. Having a house of such grand proportion prompted families to decorate the interior walls quite lavishly with Hindu related themes acknowledging mythology. Afternoon taking a walk through the local village and touring a wealthy merchant haveli there is time to relax at our hotel. **Overnight - Surajgarh (B, D)**

Day 7 : Surajgarh to Delhi



Shekhawati region - Delhi. Returning to Delhi, the latter part of the afternoon is free for you to relax or independently explore more of Delhi. **Overnight - New Delhi (B)**

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Day 8 : New Delhi

Saturday. Hotel check out and included onward departure transfer to airport.(B)

22 Oct 2011 - Diwali departure

Arrangements for our Taj Express tour departing 22 October 2011 are as follows:

- Days 1 - 4 – as standard
- Day 5 - Diwali lights up Jaipur

Maybe opt for an early morning balloon flight over the pink city of Jaipur. Look out for the snake charmers that dot our route, as we travel to the 16th century Amber Fort. An exotic elephant ride transports us to the lofty fort, where we'll enjoy a tour of this Rajput extravaganza. Later in the afternoon we tour the City Palace, which boasts an interesting museum of regal attire and Jantar Mantar, an ancient astronomical observatory.

Tonight we make our way to the Julelal Temple located in the heart of Jaipur beautifully decorated with lights for our Diwali celebrations. This pretty white washed temple is located dedicated to the local deity Jhulelal in addition to Lord Shiva, Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha.

Of all the festivals celebrated in India, Diwali is by far the most glamorous and important. The five day celebration commemorates the return of Lord Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, from his fourteen years of exile and vanquishing the demon king Ravana. The people of Ayodhya, the Capital of Rama, overwhelmed with joy illuminated the kingdom with earthen oil lamps and set firecrackers ablaze to welcome the return of their king

Today, Diwali involves the lighting of small clay lamps filled with oil signifying the triumph of good over evil. During Diwali, all the celebrants wear new clothes and share sweets and snacks with family members and friends. Believing in good luck and good fortune associated with the events most Indian business communities choose to begin the financial year on the first day of Diwali.

Our evening commences with the Lakshmi Puja Ceremony conducted by the temple priests where worship and offerings of food and money are given to Lakshmi the goddess of wealth (by those who wish to attain it or preserve it) and oil lamps are lit to light up her path into your pocket or to your home. The goddess also likes all things to be clean and tidy, in some homes the household broom may also receive a special offering on such an auspicious day.

After an outdoor musical performance of traditional Diwali song and dance we sit down to a vegetarian buffet dinner hosted in the temple garden. As firecrackers light the balmy, autumn night sky we too continue to celebrate Diwali with, and alongside the colourful and high spirited people of Rajasthan. Dinner and Overnight - Jaipur

- Days 6 – 8 - Arrangements as per our standard itinerary

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 in 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 mosquitos
- 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 is 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.

IMPORTANT:

Due to security reasons for the upcoming Republic Day of India on the 26th January 2012, our airport representatives are not be allowed to enter the International Airport at New Delhi from 14th January to 30th January 2012.

If you are travelling with us between now and 28 Jan Please exit the airport via GATE NUMBER 05. Our representative will be waiting here (outside the airport) for you holding an On The GO Tours sign.

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.

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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.

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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