

Taj and Raj

11 Days | Starts/Ends: Delhi



Discover the lofty peaks and breathtaking views of Shimla, India's largest hill station and the former summer capital of British India. Ride the narrow gauge railway aboard the Himalayan Queen Toy Train and explore Delhi, the Pink City of Jaipur and the legendary Taj Mahal in Agra.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Agra – discover the legendary Taj Mahal on a guided tour and marvel at this extraordinary monument dedicated to love
- Shimla – stroll down the Mall and explore the Viceregal Lodge in this quintessentially British city at the foot of the Himalayas
- Himalayan Queen Toy Train – ride the famous journey through picturesque countryside, over bridges and through narrow tunnels to Kandaghat
- Delhi – explore the highlights of India's capital including Jama Masjid and the ceremonial Rajpath
- Karauli – stay in the beautiful Palace Bhanwar Vilas, which remains the home of the Maharaja

- Jaipur – visit the highlights of the Pink City on our tour including the beautiful City Palace and Jantar Mantar space observatory
- Amber Fort – take a jeep to this striking 16th century fortress and enjoy the pretty lakeside views
- Fatehpur Sikri – see this fantastically preserved city, which has been abandoned for more than 400 years

What's Included

- 10 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners
- 10 nights - 3-4 star and heritage hotels
- 2 train journeys, Air-conditioned Chair Class, Delhi to Kalka and Shimla to Delhi
- Travel by jeep to the Amber Fort in Jaipur
- Touring of Delhi, Shimla, Agra, Jaipur and Karauli
- Escorted by an English-speaking Indian tour guide (for groups of 6 or more)
- Services of English-speaking Indian specialist guides at some sites
- Entrance fees to museums in Shimla
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private vehicles
- Airport arrival and departure transfers on day 1 and day 11
- Narrow gauge Himalayan Queen Toy Train journey from Kalka to Kandaghat

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$35-45pp, paid in local currency
- Entrance Fees: USD\$75-85pp, paid in local currency
- International flights and visas
- Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow \$3 - 7 USD per day per traveller. Tipping your tour guide is an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Delhi

Wednesday. Upon arrival into Delhi, you'll be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is free to relax or explore this bustling capital city.

Please note that the welcome meeting will be hosted this evening at 17:30. Entrance fees for your tour and a tip kitty will also be collected at this time. The tip kitty will cover any tipping required throughout the tour, apart from a tip for your tour guide. Should you arrive later than 17:30 then your airport representative will share the schedule for the following day.

Overnight - Delhi

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Day 2 : Toy Train to Kandaghat



Delhi - Kalka – Shimla. Bright and early this morning we board the Shatabdi Express bound for Kalka. Upon arrival travellers will transfer (independently) to the narrow gauge Himalayan Queen Toy Train to continue their journey on to Kandaghat.

The Guinness Records Book of 'Rail Facts and Feats' named the Kalka to Shimla railway as 'The greatest narrow gauge engineering feat in India'. We will enjoy the first 57km of this journey which winds around numerous curves, passes old railway stations and clatters across level crossings, each to the cacophonous symphony of greetings, tooting horns and the hubbub of Indian life. There are also many tunnels and multi-arched bridges to navigate – similar to ancient Roman aqueducts, these bridges offer spectacular landscapes of rolling hills, lush valleys and panoramic vistas.

Arriving into Kandaghat, we meet our representative on the station platform and complete the remaining part of the journey to Shimla by road. Upon arrival into Shimla the rest of the evening is at leisure.

TOY TRAIN - Upon arrival in Kalka travellers will need to independently make their way to the platform (i.e. a representative from On The Go will not be there to meet you) and board the **toy train No. 52455 - Himalayan Queen - Chair Carriage**.

The toy train departs at 12:10 and arrives in Kandaghat at 15:17, snacks/ lunch should be purchased before the journey as choice on board is limited.

Please note that on occasion other toy trains will be used on this leg of the journey. You

will be advised of the train number and details before making the journey.

Overnight - Shimla (B)

Day 3 : Shimla Sightseeing



Shimla. The most famous of the British hill stations and the former summer capital of the Raj, Shimla is set in the foothills of the Himalayas along a crescent-shaped ridge at an altitude of over 2100 metres. The famous main street, The Mall, is lined with stately English homes and retains a quintessentially British charm. Today we enjoy a guided sightseeing tour of the lofty settlement, venturing into the narrow streets, which fall steeply away from the ridge giving way to colourful bazaars and fine views of the surrounding valley and snow-capped peaks.

Offering cool respite from the heat of the lower plains, Shimla served as the summer capital of the British Raj from 1819 until India's independence from Britain in 1947. To this day the city retains much of its British colonial architecture, such as Christ Church, the Viceregal Lodge and the town's many cottages which line the famous main street, The Mall. This avenue joins the Ridge, which runs all the way up to Christ Church – the second oldest church in northern India. To the south, the Ridge falls away to the colourful Lower Bazaar, a place where local people gather for their daily shopping.

The Viceregal Lodge was formally the residence of the British Viceroy Lord Dufferin, and it was here that many decisions affecting the destiny of the subcontinent were made. Built in English Renaissance style and possessing one of the most commanding positions in Shimla, this imposing six storey building boasts beautifully manicured lawns and botanical gardens, and functions today as an institute for advanced studies.

About four kilometres from the Ridge, a stream flows through the Glen forests at an altitude of 1830 metres. The Glen is a delightful secluded picnic spot and just beyond here is Annandale. Once the playground of Shimla, where racing, polo and cricket entertained the 'sahibs and memsahibs' of the Empire, Annandale still attracts picnickers. On our sightseeing tour today we'll have the opportunity to visit many of these highlights.

Overnight - Shimla (B)

Day 4 : Free time in Shimla



Shimla - Kalka - Delhi. Today offers free time for you to independently explore Shimla. You can opt for a stroll around the town, drop by the colourful Lakkar Bazaar or hike to the summit of Jakhoo Hill, Shimla's highest point. Here visitors are rewarded with panoramic views of snow-capped peaks set as a glorious backdrop to the sleepy township of Shimla below. Hotel check-out is at noon, opt for some lunch and pack an evening picnic meal before boarding the Kalka Shatabdi Express and arriving into Delhi late this evening.

Overnight - Delhi (B)

Day 5 : Delhi sightseeing



At a welcome meeting this morning you will meet your tour guide and new members of the group who are joining the tour in Delhi.

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Following the welcome meeting we set off for a sightseeing tour of Old Delhi. This 17th century walled city of Shahjahanabad was the erstwhile capital of Mughal India, with city gates, narrow alleyways, bazaars, mosques and other historic monuments. Today Old Delhi is still a hive of activity, and the Chandhi Chowk bazaar is a colourful place to people watch.

Sightseeing highlights of Old Delhi include:

- 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. This part of the city 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 the India Gate.

Sightseeing highlights of New Delhi include:

- Humayun's Tomb - the magnificent tomb of the Mughal Emperor Humayun
- 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 the India Gate
- India Gate - The 42 metre 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 our hotel.

Overnight - Delhi (B, D)

Day 6 : The Taj Mahal



Delhi - Agra. Departing Delhi, we make our way to Agra, the erstwhile capital of the Mughal empire. Our first stop here is the impressive Agra Fort, which boasts some of India's finest Mughal buildings behind its fortified walls. Construction of the fort began 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 became a palace.

From the Agra Fort we make a short journey to the legendary Taj Mahal. Built by the order of Emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century in affectionate memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz, the Taj Mahal is perhaps one of the most extravagant monuments to love ever built and has no peers. A staggering total of 20,000 workers contributed their skills in the construction of this unique mausoleum.

Overnight - Agra (B)

Day 7 : The princely state of Karauli



Agra - Karauli. Bright and early this morning we leave Agra and drive to the ghostly former Mughal city of Fatehpur Sikri, which has been deserted for over four centuries after it was allegedly abandoned due to a lack of water. Thanks to the very durable red sandstone from which it was built, Fatehpur Sikri still

remains well-preserved and is a fascinating place to explore.

We drive on to Bharatpur where we'll enjoy lunch before continuing our journey to Karauli, arriving mid afternoon. The total drive time today will be approximately 4-5 hours. The rural village of Karauli was a princely state of India from 1348 until 1949. The current Maharaja (181st in the Royal Dynasty) and Maharani of Karauli have recently opened the doors of their stately Palace Bhanwar Vilas, built in 1938, as a 3-4 star heritage hotel and we'll spend the night here. During our stay we can explore the palace, guest quarters, banquet and reception halls, stables and grounds at leisure. The sovereigns, continue to reside at the palace and the young princess often gives guided tours of the palace, which we will take part in, if the opportunity arises. The family is also lovingly restoring the Karauli City Palace, which we visit later this afternoon. Tonight there is the opportunity to attend the evening Aarti (prayer) taking place nearby.

Overnight - Karauli (B, L, D)

Day 8 : Jaipur

Karauli - Jaipur. This morning we stop briefly to visit the children and teachers at a local school (if open), where we operate our 'Change for Children' programme. If you have bought any educational items with you to hand out to children this would be the time to do so. You can also make a donation to the school if you choose via our Change For Children project. Your guide will hand out envelopes to those interested.

Then we drive on to UNESCO-listed Jaipur (approximately 5 hours), the bustling capital of the state of Rajasthan. Upon arrival the rest of the day is free for you to spend at your own leisure. **Overnight - Jaipur (B)**

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Day 9 : Jaipur sightseeing



Jaipur. Early this morning there is the opportunity to see Jaipur from high above with an optional hot air balloon ride. We then travel just outside of Jaipur to the stunning 16th century Amber Fort where we enjoy a tour of its interior and grounds. Later we visit a cotton weaving house to see a demonstration of fabric dying and block printing.

En route to the City Palace, we pass Hawa Mahal – the Palace of the Winds. Although little more than an impressive façade, it is one of the city's landmarks and a stunning example of Rajput architecture. Next we visit the City Palace, a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture, which is still the residence of the Maharaja - if the flag is flying, it means he is home! A part of palace has also been converted into a museum, which has an impressive collection of arts, carpets, enamelware and weaponry.

Just over the road from the City Palace is Jantar Mantar, an observatory of astronomy built by Jai Singh in 1728. On our way up here be sure to keep an eye out for the snake charmers, fortune tellers and astronomers lining our pathway. Of the five observatories built by Jai Singh, 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!

Later this evening you can also opt to explore the Johari Bazaar in the Old Pink City which is a great place to pick up some souvenirs. Top choices include jootis (traditional Rajasthani curled shoes), Jaipur's famous blue pottery,

textiles and handicrafts around the City Palace or Hawa Mahal. Our vehicle will be available to drop you to the market, and it is easy enough to grab a rickshaw on the way back.

Note: On departures prior to 01 October 2016 there will be the option to reach Amber Fort by elephant rather than jeep. **Overnight - Jaipur (B)**

Day 10 : Return to Delhi

Jaipur - Delhi. Leaving Jaipur we return to Delhi. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is free for you to explore the capital. Opt for a meal in the heart of the city or simply relax and chat with group members at the hotel. **Overnight - Delhi (B)**

Day 11 : Delhi

Saturday. Our touring arrangements come to an end after breakfast. Following hotel check-out an included transfer will take you to the airport for your onward travel. (B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Hotel Willow Banks

Established in 1871, the Willow Banks is a colonial-style hotel boasting fantastic views of the Shimla valley and surrounding mountains. Each inviting guestroom features elegant furniture and a private balcony, alongside free WiFi, tea and coffee making facilities and a TV. As well as the gym and pool, the hotel offers a steam room and sauna, jacuzzi and Ayurvedic massages, so guests can truly relax and rejuvenate amongst the stunning mountain scenery in comfort. To top it off, the hotel features two restaurants serving a range of cuisines and refreshing beverages.



East Bourne Hotel

Situated on a forested hillside in the Himalayan mountains, the East Bourne is a smart and modern hotel. It was the former home of Colonel Auchenlock who later became the commander in chief of the imperial British Army. Heated guestrooms feature wooden floors and floor-to-ceiling windows, with modern amenities such as a minibar, tea and coffee making facilities and flat-screen TVs. Guests can take advantage of the fitness centre and games room or unwind in the heated indoor pool and spa. The Vertigo restaurant serves a selection of local, Thai and Mediterranean cuisine and you can enjoy a drink or two with your fellow travellers in the Zanee Bar.



Jaypee Siddharth Hotel

The luxurious Jaypee Siddharth is a stunning property located just five kilometres from the New Delhi Railway Station. Guestrooms are exquisitely decorated with a blend of cream and brown tones and benefit from air conditioning and complimentary WiFi. If you have free time, guests can indulge in one of the rejuvenating treatments available at the spa, take a dip in the outdoor pool or work up an appetite in the gym. A range of cuisines are served in the various restaurants found within the hotel complex.



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Vivanta by Taj Dwarka

Vivanta by Taj Dwarka is a modern, luxury hotel located in Dwarka, on the outskirts of New Delhi, just a 15-minute drive from the airport. Spread over 7 acres, this striking hotel has a unique angular design and offers 250 luxurious rooms and suites. All tastes are catered for at the hotel's multi-cuisine restaurant, while the Indus Express restaurant serves mouth-watering Punjabi cuisine. Head to the popular Tipple bar for a delicious array of heady cocktails or relax by the poolside with a refreshing smoothie from the Celsius Pool Bar. The nearby Sector 21 Metro station provides direct access to the heart of the city and after a day of sightseeing you can cool off with a refreshing dip in the outdoor pool or relax in the sauna and massage parlour.



Hotel Jivitesh

The Jivitesh Hotel is centrally located in the heart of Karol Bagh, a popular neighbourhood of Delhi renowned for its excellent shops and vibrant street markets. The Jivitesh offers comfortable and spacious guest rooms, with modern amenities such as free WiFi, and you can be assured of a warm welcome and excellent customer service from the hotel staff. Enjoy authentic Indian vegetarian cuisine at the hotel's restaurant and take a refreshing dip in the outdoor swimming pool after a day of sightseeing in the capital.



Hotel Royale Residency

Situated a stone's throw away from the legendary Taj Mahal, the Royal Residency Hotel is perfectly located for anyone

wanting to immerse themselves in Agra's famous monuments. Each comfortable air-conditioned room features a minibar with tea and coffee making facilities, satellite TV as well as excellent en-suite facilities. Guests can enjoy an array of flavours around the world in the multi-cuisine restaurant, or perhaps sip on a cocktail next to the outdoor pool.



Bhanwar Vilas Palace

Built in 1938, this stunning property is the residence of the Maharaja (181st in the Royal Dynasty) and Maharani of Karauli. Both the architecture and furniture have been designed in fitting with colonial styles and the property offers a fantastic insight into the history and elegance of a bygone era. Rooms are split between deluxe rooms and luxury suites, each including a range of modern amenities such as a mini bar, a well-appointed ensuite and a plush king-sized bed. In the evenings, guests can tuck into an array of regional specialties as well as cuisine from around the world in the hotel's restaurant. The hotel is just 7km from the nearest train station.



Mandawa Haveli

Made of pink and red sandstone, the beautiful heritage-style Mandawa Haveli is a fine example of typical Rajasthani architecture. All rooms are well appointed with intricately carved wooden beds and king-size royal portraits, with modern amenities such as free WiFi and ensuite bathrooms. Spend an evening dining on continental, Indian or Rajasthani cuisine on the outdoor terrace or request a private,

candlelit dinner on the rooftop under a star-studded sky. Well located in the heart of Jaipur city on Sansar Chandra Road, this hotel is just a few minute's drive from the Palace of the Winds.



Confirming Your Trip

At time of booking please provide us with YOUR FULL NAME and DOB, 120 days prior to departure to secure train tickets. If booking less than 120 days, every effort will be made to secure seats in the same carriage as the others in your tour group, though this may not be possible.

Guides & Groups

Our longest group tour in India is our Passage to India tour – 14 day tour. All other group tours that we offer are sectors of this larger tour. As such on your holiday you may have travellers join you part way through your tour or end their holiday when you continue on. Whenever there is 6 persons or more on your holiday you will have a tour guide escorting/ travelling along with you. Your guide will conduct the sightseeing arrangements, or accompany you where the local law dictates that a local guide must conduct the sightseeing in this region. Where the group number is less than 6 persons you will travel from place to place with a driver and meet a local guide at each new destination that will conduct your sightseeing arrangements in this location.

Packing for Shimla

If you are carrying a heavy load you may wish to consider leaving your large bag in Delhi and taking a smaller day pack to Shimla (days 2 - 4). Baggage (please ensure that it is properly locked) not needed for the Shimla trip will be stored in the the hotel luggage store room, awaiting your return on the evening of day 4. Taking all luggage with you or leaving some in Delhi, is an entirely personal choice.

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Taj and Raj

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Entrance Fees

On our India group tours, selected entry fees are included, however all others must be budgeted for by you. The total cost of the entrance fees which need to be paid locally, as noted under 'Exclusions' on the first page of this document. Entrance fee amounts can change and as such upon arrival to India your tour leader will highlight the exact total entrance fee cost for your tour. PLEASE NOTE: Entrance fees are to be paid in INDIAN RUPEES (INR) and they will be collected on day 2 of your tour.

If travelling on our Railways of the Raj tour, entrance fees will not be collected and are payable by you at each site. If travelling to Sri Lanka on our Delhi to Colombo tour, entrance fees for that section of your tour will be collected by your guide in Sri Lanka and payable in Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR).

Language

While English is not the first language in India, it is the most important language for national, political, and commercial communication. Hindi is the national language and primary tongue of 30% of the people and there are 22 official languages in addition to Hindi, including: Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Sanskrit, Dogri, Santali, Bodo, Maithali, Manipuri, Nepali and Konkani. Hindustani is a popular variant of Hindi/Urdu spoken widely throughout northern India but is not an official language.

Taxis & Rickshaws

Taxis are cheap and readily available in most of the bigger towns in India. Most of them possess metres, although taxi drivers who use their metre are rare! Try and get an idea of the likely fare before you leave your hotel. The front desk staff or your tour guide should be able to assist you. Then negotiate with the driver before departure.

Motorised three-wheel rickshaws are available for hire throughout the country. Powered by a 2-stroke motorcycle engine with a driver upfront and seating for 2 - 3 at the

rear, with no doors and a canvas roof, these rickshaws weave their way speedily through oncoming traffic. The ride will be fast, efficient and certainly an experience! Always negotiate the price you want to pay before setting off. Offering around 50% of the asking price is the general rule of thumb, though you'll always pay more than the going rate for a local!

A cycle rickshaw is a 3-wheeler bicycle with a seat for passengers behind the rider. Although not often seen in big cities, you'll find them in Old Delhi and all the smaller towns, where they are a common mode of transport. Again, negotiate the fare before departure.

Begging

With more than 350 million people in India living on less than USD\$2 per day, inevitably you will come across many people begging for money. Begging has a legitimate place in Indian society. Even poor people give to beggars or charities to earn religious merit. The Indian government, however, would like to regulate begging more stringently. Though begging is common, you are not under obligation to give money. If you choose to give money to beggars, we advise you to do this from the vehicle and not on the street. Alternatively, consider donating pencils, pens or modest educational supplies to village schools.

Religion

More than 80% of the country practice Hinduism. The remaining 20% comprise followers of Islam (12%), Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism and other minority beliefs.

System of Government

India is a constitutional democracy. There are 29 states and 7 union territories. Parliament is bicameral; the lower house is known as the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the upper house is known as the Rajya Sabha (Council of States).

Not like Home

Travelling to far-flung corners of the earth often involves encountering lifestyles and conditions that are very different from what you are used to back home. As such it is important to come prepared for

unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned, as things can and do change in foreign countries.

The people, customs, creed and languages of India are different from one region to the next. It is as vast as it is crowded, and as opulent as it is squalid. India is exciting, intense and diverse - an all-embracing experience, a veritable assault on the senses. Sometimes the poverty will get you down, Indian bureaucracy can test your patience and facing another traffic jam will seem almost too much to bear. Yet, it's all worthwhile. While India is far from the easiest country in the world to travel around, On The Go will try their best to make your tour as seamless as possible. Our holidays combine comfortable transportation, comprehensive sightseeing and good hotels, allowing you to concentrate on getting the most out of your stay.

India is a country of unparalleled contrasts, a destination where you'll be afforded plenty of unique encounters, and if you can travel with an open mind you will have a wonderful time here. In return, please remember to demonstrate sensitivity and respect for local customs.

Tipping Kitty

Tipping is not a natural part of many Western cultures and many of us feel uncomfortable, or unsure about when or how much to tip. However, in India tipping makes up a significant part of many people's wages so it's important that we get it right. For this reason, we've developed a very simple system to take all the hassle out of tipping.

With our 'tipping made easy' policy, a nominal pre-determined amount is collected from all group tour participants to cover tips en route. This then saves you the hassle of when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, local guides and other support staff through the tour. The tipping kitty amount is noted under 'Exclusions' on the first page of these Trip Notes. PLEASE NOTE: The tipping kitty is to be paid in INDIAN RUPEES (INR) and it will be collected on day 2 of your tour.

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If travelling onto Sri Lanka on our Delhi to Colombo tour, the tipping kitty for that section of your tour will be collected by your guide in Sri Lanka and payable in Sri Lankan Rupees (SLR). If travelling on our Railways of the Raj tour, a tip kitty will not be collected and we ask that you independently manage tipping along the way.

Our 'Tip Kitty' doesn't include a tip for your group tour guide, where we suggest an amount of approx USD\$3 - 7 per day multiplied by the duration of your tour. Naturally though, the amount is up to you. The tip for your guide is an entirely personal gesture.

If travelling on a group tour with less than 6 participants or on a tailor-made holiday, in place of 'tipping made easy' we recommend the following amounts per person per day be allocated to cover tips paid directly by you to - bellhops, luggage handlers, your driver and local guides - USD \$9 if the day includes a local guide & sightseeing and USD \$4 if the day excludes a local guide and sightseeing.

Visas

All foreign nationals must obtain a visa for a visit to India and it is essential the visa be procured prior to travel.

UK, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and USA passport holders can take advantage of India's online visa service (subject to eligibility). Information about the e-Tourist Visa (eTV) process can be found at: <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>

The online application should be submitted a minimum of 4 working days and a maximum of 120 days in advance of proposed date of arrival. Entry to India must be within 120 days of the eTV approval date and the visa is valid for 60 days from arrival. Please visit the website noted above for more info.

The e-Tourist Visas are 60 day, double-entry visas. You cannot obtain an e-Tourist Visa if you plan to stay in India for more than 60 days or if you require more than 2 entries. A six month multiple entry visa can be obtained from the embassy in advance of travel.

If you're a resident of the UK and would like someone to handle your visa application for you then we recommend CIBTvisas. Please visit <http://www.cibtvisas.co.uk/onthego> for more details on how to start your visa application with them.

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 Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of return from India.

Currency

The currency of India is the Indian Rupee.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars or other major currencies can be exchanged only in India, as the Rupee is presently exchangeable only in destination. The Rupee is non-exportable, so spend it all before you leave! Exchange facilities are available at major airports and bureau de changes and to a lesser degree, ATMs/cash machines exist in larger towns. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Domestic Flights - Baggage Allowance

If your tour includes a domestic flight or you have independently booked domestic flights separate to that of your international flights, please be mindful that that free baggage allowance for **Economy Class travel on flights within India is near always 15kg, with 5 - 7kg for hand luggage**. Additional weight is charged per kilo and is payable by you directly to the airline at check-in. If you will be travelling with more than 15kg on a flight included within our tour, please contact us so we can confirm the exact luggage allowance for your flight and give you the per kilo cost for any additional weight.

ATMs & Credit Cards

Exchange facilities are available at various bureau de changes, banks and at most hotels. Bring clean, unmarked cash in US

Dollars (not USD 100 bills as these are hard to change), Euro or Pound Sterling. Commission charges vary from place to place and bank to bank. ATMs are available in all major towns and cities. We recommend you take a mixture of cash and credit/debit cards (for ATM usage). Please avoid bringing Travellers Cheques as they can sometimes be difficult to change. Credit cards are an acceptable means of payment in most major tourist centres, including larger shops and businesses.

TOP TIP: Before leaving home inform your bank that you will be travelling to India, as otherwise your bank may think that your transaction made in India is fraudulent and withhold funds until you contact them.

Train Travel In India

Travelling by train in India is an unforgettable local experience where you will get to meet Indian people and experience daily life as they do. The Indian Railway system is the world's second largest, with over 108,706 km of track, connecting more than 7000 stations. Every day, more than 7000 trains run, carrying some 14 million passengers, including us. Several of our group tours and add-ons include train journeys, some by day and others overnight. If your tour does include train travel, we have noted within the itinerary the coach/class of travel that will be booked. Below is some further information that may assist you in planning for your journey.

AC CHAIR CAR

If travelling on a daytime journey, you will travel in an air-conditioned seated carriage (called AC chair car), similar to that of a standard city trains in most western countries. When travelling to loftier destinations where the weather is cooler, air-conditioning may not be provided.

2nd AC COACH/SLEEPER

If travelling overnight, we accommodate passengers in the 2nd class sleeper air-conditioned category (unless otherwise indicated at a higher level). 2nd class sleeper air-conditioned cabins consist of 2 upper and 2 lower bunks, plus a double-decker set of bunk beds on the opposite side of the cabin shared by you and other Indian travellers. You

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can sit up on your bench seat during the day and simply lie down once you are ready to go to sleep.

All cabins are mixed sex. Your cabin is not self-contained as such. 'Cabins' are separated from the carriage corridor by curtains, serving as an artificial barrier that can be drawn at night. Luggage, including hand luggage should be locked (as you would do when travelling on any overnight train anywhere in the world) and can be stored underneath the lower bunks or on the floor. The carriage is manned by an attendant who will distribute linen, free of charge. Dependent upon the service, a variety of snacks and drinks or full dinner service can be ordered at an additional cost (except for the Shatabdi Express and Rajdhani Express where meals are included within your fare). Food aboard the Shatabdi Express train is most often exceptionally good, though on many other train services it is probably best to buy snacks, fresh fruit that can be peeled or meals prior to the start of your journey. In addition, there are WC facilities (European and 'squat-style') at each end of the carriage. Cleanliness varies, so be prepared and take your own anti-bacterial hand wipes and toilet paper.

1st AC COACH/ SLEEPER

All Indian trains offer 2nd and 3rd AC coaches, but only a handful of trains offer 1st AC coaches, which can accommodate a tiny total of 18 people. 1st AC coach/ sleepers only have berths on one side of the train hence making the cabin more spacious. The cabin may have 2 berths or 4 which seat/sleep 2 or 4 persons. You can sit up on a bench seat during the day, which is folded into bunk beds at night. The 1st AC coach also has a door making it fully closed and lockable for 2 or 4 persons. Beds are a tad wider and mattresses more cushioned. Each cabin has a 'bell' switch, which when pressed summons the attendant of the coach.

3rd AC COACH/ SLEEPER

We do not include 3rd AC coach travel within any of our tours, though if you were considering it for personal arrangements a description can be given as follows. 3rd AC coach is very similar to 2nd AC coach with the only difference being that there is a middle

berth ie not just a 2 bunk bed but a triple bunk bed, hence making it possible for 6 people to be accommodated within the space. Like the 2nd AC coach there is also another set of bunk beds on the opposite side ie running parallel with the length of the train. Like 2nd AC, there's no door just curtains and again you sit up on your bunk bed during the day and lie down to sleep.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to India from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Tetanus, Typhoid, Hepatitis A and Polio are strongly recommended. You are also advised to take anti-Malarial medication.

Water

As tap water is not safe to drink in India, only drink bottled mineral water which is readily available in hotels, shops and restaurants. You should also avoid salads which may be washed in unhygienic water.

Climate

India has a three-season year known as the hot, the wet and the cool. The best time to visit is between 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 September. Although the weather is humid, the days are punctuated by intermittent rainfall and the monsoon in India is actually quite spectacular and refreshing.

Time & Voltage

India is 5 hours 30 mins ahead of GMT. Standard voltage is 230-240V (usually 240V). Pack a universal travel adaptor that will allow you to use a hairdryer, electric shaver, charge a mobile phone and other electrical items. Take care with your choice of adaptor. Be sure that it is suitable for India, as Indian sockets accept round 3 pin plugs that are similar but not identical to European plugs.

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 mosquitos
- Spare camera batteries/memory card
- Consider packing some pencils, pens or modest educational supplies that can be given to village schools or street children
- Buy some Indian Rupees at the airport on arrival
- Keep a supply of small notes for local transactions

Arrival Transfers

If your tour or short stay includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the 'Inclusions' section of these Trip Notes) 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 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. Please do not leave the airport or go to the hotel on your own. Call our emergency contact number and follow the advice given by our local team.

If travelling on our Captivating Kerala tour (with arrival via Kochi Airport), Railways of the Raj tour (with arrival via Kolkata) 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.

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Pre-Tour Accommodation

If arriving on day 1 of a holiday that includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the 'Inclusions' section of these Trip Notes) 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) consider purchasing a night of pre-tour accommodation to save you waiting until hotel check in time, which is generally 2pm.

Shopping

India is a virtual Aladdin's Cave. At the many bazaars known as 'chowks', the cardinal rule is to bargain hard. State run craft emporiums that stock the best of what a state has to offer can give you a reasonable idea of what is acceptable in terms of price and quality. You'll find carpets of quality equal to those of Persian origin, Rajasthani pottery and metalwork, embellished slippers known as jootis, jewellery in breathtaking designs. Likewise, leatherwork, silks and saris in spectacularly colourful designs, paintings and clothing make excellent souvenirs.

IMPORTANT: Set your budget and don't be swayed, remember the caveat – 'Let the buyer beware'. Any purchases made whilst on holiday with us, irrespective of whether the store is recommended by us or other, are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with the product you are purchasing and the delivery arrangements (we would recommend you take away with you any purchases rather than rely on shipping services). On The Go cannot be held responsible or accountable for items bought in country or shipping arrangements. We will not become involved later in your holiday or once you return home should your purchase not live up to your expectations. Proceed with caution.

Fabulous food!

India's vast range of climates, cultures and peoples has produced a very diverse culinary repertoire. Curry is the word that springs to mind when people think of Indian food. Believe it or not, there is no such thing as

'curry' in India. It's an English invention, an all-purpose term to cover the whole gamut of Indian spicing. Although all Indian food is certainly not curry, this is the basis of Indian cuisine. For the most part Indian food is very, very aromatic, since the spices used by Indian chefs and cooks in India don't arrive in the cooking pot via a pre-packed tub of spice. Indian chefs and cooks have about 25 spices on their regular list and it is from these that they produce the curry flavour. Normally spices are freshly ground with a pestle and mortar, and blended in certain combinations to produce varying flavours and heat. It is the freshness of the spices that transform the dish. Curries can be vegetable, meat, lamb, mutton or chicken in content, though never beef. The cow is sacred to the Hindu people and India in general, so it is extremely rare to see beef on any menu across the country. Lamb also substitutes beef at McDonalds in India. Ask for a Maharajah Mac!

Street Food

Street food, although tasty and fabulous looking, cannot always be relied upon to have been safely and hygienically prepared, so to this end, we suggest you sample 'street style' food from an established restaurant or from somewhere recommended by your tour leader.

Western Food

If Indian food becomes too much and you wish to escape to something familiar, Western-style food is available. Many menus in hotels and restaurants will feature dishes loosely based on Western recipes with perhaps just a hint of curry flavouring or spice. Indians like to experiment with other cuisine as well. Chinese cuisine in India is often very good. In the bigger cities, you'll find restaurants specialising in international cuisine, not to mention American fast food chains.

Change For Children

On many of our Group Tours we stop at one of two Village Schools where we operate our 'Change for Children' programme. If travelling via Karauli you will meet the children at Nishabd local school (supporting deaf and blind children), and if via Bharatpur, Adarsh Vidya Mandir local school. If you have bought

any educational items with you to hand out to children, this would be the time to do so. You can also make a donation to the school if you choose via our Change For Children Project. Your guide will hand out envelopes to those interested.

All schools are closed from mid May through till the start of July for the Summer Vacation and then in December for Winter Vacation. Additionally, they may be closed throughout the year during festival weeks such as Holi, Diwali and others - including teacher training days which only tend to be announced a day or two prior. Accordingly, it will not be possible to visit the school during these times and should you have bought along items for the school, your guide will be happy to pass them on to the school when it re-opens on your behalf.

Some suggestions of what you may like to bring are:

- Wall charts – map of the world, numbers, letters, multiplication tables.
- Any visual teaching resources, coloured cardboard, junior scissors, rulers, sharpeners, lead pencils
- Reading books – suitable for any age between 4 – 12 yrs
- Sporting equipment – cricket bat, tennis balls, soft balls, skipping ropes, elastics
- Toothbrushes, toothpaste, liquid soap for washrooms

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