

In-depth Cultural Tour:

Sample Itinerary: Highlights of Northern India



India offers perhaps the most intense cultural experience anywhere in the world. If you can look beyond the dirt, pollution and poverty, India delivers a challenging and eye opening opportunity for pupils and teachers alike. From snake charmers and Sadhus to farmers and high-tech engineers there is contrast every where you turn.

On this short trip we will be visiting the classic travel destinations of Delhi, Jaipur and Agra - home of the famous Taj Mahal. We will also spend time wildlife watching in the reserves of Sariska and Bharatpur, travelling by train (itself an experience) and visiting the famous markets, palaces and temples of the "Land of the Maharajahs".

Cost & Inclusions

Our tour operator for this trip has been operating in India for many years and has excellent contacts throughout the region. This means we can deliver an in-depth immersion into this fascinating country.

The cost for the trip is estimated at **£1,374 per person**. It is not expected that this cost will rise, but it is subject to sufficient group numbers and any increase in airport taxes of fuel surcharges.

Price Includes: 2 free teacher places, all flights & transport, airport taxes, accommodation, guides, activities as mentioned in the itinerary, all food when in India, travel insurance.

Excluded: Drinks, spending money, optional excursions, tips (approx £30), visas and vaccinations.

Passport & Visas: All pupils should have a full passport valid for at least 6 months after your return. British Citizens do need a visa - currently £30.

Carbon Offset Option

If you would like to offset the emissions from the international flights associated with this trip, then the cost will be £9.20 per person. This relates to 50% of the cost to offset the emissions. The Specialist Travel Consultancy will contribute the other 50% for those that choose this option.

Day 1: Depart UK, evening flight with Jet Airways at 2235, direct to Delhi.

Day 2: Arrive Delhi (1150) and check into hotel. Mid afternoon briefing and orientation stroll round Connaught Circus.

Day 3: This morning we have a tour of Old and New Delhi by bus and cycle rickshaw. Highlights will include Raj Path, India Gate, Parliament, Jami Masjid and the bustling Chandni Chowk Bazaar, a jamboree of deafening barter. We then transfer to New Delhi station for the train journey to the Pink city of Jaipur.

Day 4: In Jaipur we'll take an excursion to the nearby hill fortress of Amber, ascending to the Palace on elephant back. The palace contains an amazing chamber of mirrors and affords spectacular views across the surrounding plains. In the afternoon we will have a sightseeing tour of Jaipur visiting the lavish City Palace with its fine collection of textiles, costumes and armoury and the Palace of the Winds with its famous 5-storied facade which has been the subject of countless Indian posters.

Day 5: Morning drive to Sariska. This well known wildlife reserve holds leopard, caracal, mongoose, hyena, porcupine and many other species. Bird enthusiasts may see white-backed vulture, quail and bee-eater among the many species that are known here. A late afternoon game drive is included.

Day 6: Depart Sariska in the morning and drive to a school mid-way between Sariska and Bharatpur. Spend the day with the school in classes. Afternoon drive to Bharatpur.

Days 7: We take an early morning bird watching tour of Keoladeo Ghana National Park in Bharatpur by cycle rickshaw. Formerly a royal duck-shooting reserve and now an ornithologist's paradise, the park is best visited either at dusk or dawn. Late morning drive to the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri for a tour with a local guide. Founded in 1569 and abandoned scarcely 16 years later, it is a perfectly intact example of Akbar's imperial court. Evening drive to Agra.

Day 8: Today we will have an early morning visit to the Taj Mahal, the world's most perfect and poetic building. Over 300 years have elapsed since its construction, yet it stands today unscarred by age, its beauty and symmetry seemingly beyond man, time and space. Created by Shah Jahan as a funerary monument to his favourite wife, Mumtaz, it took 22 years to build (1630-52). The Great Moghul lies beside his beloved under the white marble dome. Inlaid with precious gems, the building cost a fortune and later Shah Jahan moved his capital to Delhi before being overthrown by his son, Aurangzeb. After breakfast back at the hotel, we'll also visit the Agra Fort, built by Akbar the Great, which contains the incomparable Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque). Rest of the day is free in Agra. The group can visit I'timad-ud-Daulah (baby Taj) on the east bank of the river or revisit the Taj Mahal (optional).

Day 9: Morning Drive to Delhi, afternoon in Delhi.

Day 10: Morning in Delhi. Afternoon transfer to the airport for flight with Jet Airways at 1455, arriving London Heathrow at 1935.

