

The Golden Triangle & Varanasi – 9 Days

Day 1 Departure

Enjoy full-meal service on your scheduled flight to Delhi.

Day 2 Delhi

You will be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel.

After time to settle in we will spend the afternoon on a leisurely introductory sightseeing tour of Delhi, India's capital city, which is divided into two parts: New and Old Delhi. With a thousand years of history, Delhi is a city of contrasts that combines a unique ambience of the ancient and the modern. An orderly plan of wide roads lined with sturdy colonial buildings was established soon after the imperial capital of British India moved here from Calcutta in 1911. This afternoon we will visit **Old Delhi** and drive past Chandni Chowk, the crowded bazaar and see the dramatic Red Fort. Built in 1648, this sprawling fort of red sand stones along the river Yamuna is surrounded by a wall of about 2.4 km in circumference. The **Jama Masjid Mosque** is the largest and one of the most magnificent mosques in India, built in 1658 with a capacity to hold over 20,000 people. We will step inside for a mesmerizing look around. We will also have a chance to view Raj Ghat memorial of Mahatma Gandhi (Father of the Nation) before returning to our hotel.

Day 3 Delhi – Jaipur

We will spend this morning sightseeing in **New Delhi**. Some of the famous sights included in the sightseeing tour will include **Qutab Minar**, at 234 feet the highest individual tower in the world. We will have a chance to view Parliament House as we drive past, and stop at India Gate for an introduction and photo. Time permitting, we can visit Birla Mandir (Hindu Temple), the Sikh Temple or Lotus Temple.

This afternoon we depart Delhi for Jaipur. We will stop en route in a small Indian village to see the culture and lifestyle of the villagers. This evening we arrive in Jaipur and check into our hotel.

Day 4 Jaipur

This morning we will have an early breakfast and then our first visit will be to the **Amer Fort**, the former capital of the Kachhwaha Rajputs. This monument was originally conceived with the aim of enabling ladies of the royal household to watch the everyday life and royal processions of the city. Amer Fort is situated on a hillside overlooking Maota Lake and you will have the unique experience of traveling on **elephant back** to the top of the hill on which the fort is situated.

Next, we will stop for a photo at Hawa Mahal or Palace of Winds. We will spend the afternoon visiting the **City Palace**. This is in the heart of the old city and is the former royal residence built in a blend of the Rajasthani and Mughal styles. Even today the City Palace is the principal residence of the ruling family. Afterwards we will make a fascinating visit to Jantar Mantar, the largest of Jai Singh's five remarkable observatories. Later this afternoon we will visit the main local bazaar.

Day 5 Jaipur - Fatehpur Sikri - Agra

After an early breakfast we will depart for Agra, stopping en route to visit **Fatehpur Sikri**. Built during the second half of the 16th century by the Emperor Akbar, Fatehpur Sikri (the City of Victory) was the capital of the Mughal Empire for only some 10 years. The complex of monuments and temples, all in a uniform architectural style, includes one of the largest mosques in India, the Jama Masjid.

This afternoon we arrive in Agra and transfer to our hotel. The remainder of the afternoon will be free to spend at our leisure.

Day 6 Agra – Delhi

This morning we will visit the **Taj Mahal**, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, built by Shaha Jahan (Mughal Emperor) for his beloved wife Mumtaz. The monument took 20,000 workmen 22 years to build and cost 41 million rupees and 50 kilos of gold. The Taj Mahal sits on a high red sandstone platform topped with a marble terrace.

After plenty of time to explore the premises, we will proceed to **Agra Fort**, built by the great Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1565 A.D. The fort itself is a masterpiece of design and construction and within the fort are a number of exquisite buildings.

This evening we will transfer to the train station for an overnight journey in soft sleepers on the Marudhar Express to Varanasi.

Day 7 Varanasi - Sarnath

This morning we arrive in Varanasi and transfer to our hotel.

We will have the morning free to settle in before and then this afternoon we will take a short excursion to **Sarnath** where Buddha chose to deliver his first sermon after attaining Nirvana. Our local guide will escort us around the site and explain the concepts of Buddhism from its early founding. Presently located at Sarnath, the Tibetan Institute has a rare collection of Buddhist texts, Tibetan manuscripts and other journals. The only institute of its kind in the world imparting education in the Tibetan language, it was established by the Dalai Lama in 1971.

Day 8 Varanasi – Fly To New Delhi

We will have an early morning start today and will transfer for a **Boat Ride on the River Ganges** to see the sunrise and witness the local people worshipping and bathing at the Ghats, including the burning funeral pyres. We will also walk through the narrow, ancient lanes of the city. We will return to the hotel for breakfast and then the **city tour** will also visit different temples and places of spiritual significance.

At midday we will transfer to the airport to catch the flight to Delhi. Upon arrival in Delhi this evening we will transfer to our hotel for the final evening.

Day 9 Delhi To London

We transfer to the airport for the flight back to London, which arrives the same evening.