

# EXPLORE!

**BEST SELLER**

**Rajasthan - Land of the Maharajahs**  
16 days

India - Trip code RD



## Rajasthan - Land of the Maharajahs

On this memorable journey we trace the old camel caravan routes through Rajasthan, discovering magnificent forts, temples and market towns. We travel to the ancient 'Golden City' of Jaisalmer, the 'Pink City' of Jaipur and visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise. On this departure we also spend time at the annual Pushkar Camel Fair.

### Trip highlights

- ★ **Delhi** - Take a rickshaw through the winding streets of Old Delhi
- ★ **Agra** - Visit the magnificent Taj Mahal at sunrise
- ★ **Jaipur** - Test the accuracy of the sun dials at the observatory
- ★ **Pushkar** - Experience the spectacle of thousands of camel traders at Pushkar Fair
- ★ **Bikaner** - Explore the colourful bazaar in this ancient trade centre
- ★ **Jodhpur** - Discover the majestic Mehrangarh Fort
- ★ **Udaipur** - Relax in this historic city set on the banks of Lake Pichola.

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Premium

Our premium accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

#### TRIP PACE:

##### Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join tour in Delhi. Explore New Delhi's Qutub Minar

On arrival in Delhi we check in to our hotel and have time to freshen up. This afternoon we go on a city tour and see the main sights of New Delhi, which include the President's Palace, Lok Sabha (Parliament), India Gate, Qutab Minar and Humayan's Tomb.



**Accommodation: Royal Plaza Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Explore Old Delhi's narrow streets. Drive to Agra

This morning we explore the narrow streets of Old Delhi. We take to cycle rickshaws to explore the winding lanes of Chandni Chowk bazaar, a sprawling market where you can buy almost anything you need from household wares to souvenirs. We view the Red Fort from the outside before leaving the capital and driving to Agra. Our journey to Agra takes approximately 4 hours.



**Accommodation: Hotel Clarks Shiraz** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Watch the sun rise over the beautiful Taj Mahal

An early start this morning to one of the world's most famous buildings, the magnificent Taj Mahal. 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. Later in the day we visit Agra Fort, built by Akbar the Great, which contains the Moti Mosque, a beautiful building decorated with pearls and the Itimad-ud-daula, more commonly known as the Baby Taj.



**Accommodation: Hotel Clarks Shiraz** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Visit deserted Fatehpur Sikri en route to Jaipur

After breakfast we leave Agra and begin our drive to Jaipur. Along the way we stop and visit the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri. Founded in 1569 and abandoned just 16 years later, it is a perfectly intact example of Akbar's imperial court. Among the many noteworthy buildings is the 5-storied Panch Mahal, probably a pleasure pavilion for the ladies of the harem. In the centre of the courtyard is the Pachisi Board where the emperor played a game of chess with dancing girls as pieces. Perhaps the finest structure of all is the lotus shaped carved central pillar of the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience), its extraordinary capital supporting a vaulted roof. We continue on to Jaipur where we have time to relax on arrival.



**Accommodation: Lemon Tree Jaipur** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - View the famous facade of the Palace of the Winds

Sometimes called the Pink City, Jaipur was first painted terracotta pink by Maharajah Sawai Ram Singh to celebrate the visit of

Prince Albert in 1853. In the morning we head to the outskirts of the city and visit the dramatic Amber Fort, perched high on a hillside with impressive views back down to the city. We will make a stop on the journey to view the ornate facade of the Palace of the Winds, built to allow the ladies of the harem an opportunity to look out over the city. This afternoon we will visit the lavish and well preserved City Palace with its fine collection of textiles, costumes and armoury. Jai Singh, the great Maharajah-astronomer, built his extraordinary (and very accurate) star gazing observatory (Jantra) here. We will get an opportunity to visit the observatory and also the Old City with its fine gates set in to the pink walls.



**Accommodation: Lemon Tree Jaipur** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Travel to Pushkar

Leaving Jaipur we make our way to Pushkar, one of the oldest cities in India. The city comes alive each year with the Pushkar Camel Fair, a five day celebration where thousands of camel and livestock are traded. These days the fair also hosts competitions for the longest moustache and even cricket matches held between the local Pushkar team and tourists visiting the fair.



**Accommodation: Royal Desert Camp** (or similar)



Simple Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 7 - Spend a full day exploring the Pushkar Camel Fair

Today we spend a full day visiting the festival. There is plenty to see from the highly decorated camels to traders bartering for livestock. There are food stalls, handicrafts and musicians throughout the festival ground and plenty of chances to chat with locals who have travelled to enjoy the celebrations.



**Accommodation: Royal Desert Camp** (or similar)



Simple Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 8 - Travel to Bikaner and visit Junagarh Fort

This morning we leave Pushkar and drive to the desert city of Bikaner. Situated directly on the ancient camel caravan routes that came from Africa and West Asia, Bikaner was once a great trading centre. Its colourful bazaars and buildings of reddish-pink

sandstone still suggest its ancient wealth. We take a tour to the Junagarh Fort built by Raja Rai Singh (1571-1611) which is distinguished by its high defensive light red sandstone walls. The well preserved palaces within the fort area are noted for their fine stone carvings. Bikaner still remains a defensive town, and was the home of the famous Camel Corps. We will also take the opportunity to visit the Old town and Bhandasar Jain Temple.



**Accommodation: Gajner Palace** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Drive to the golden city of Jaisalmer

Today we make our way to Jaisalmer. The city is set in the vast Thar Desert and today still retains much of the medieval atmosphere as camel carts pass through the narrow streets alongside rickshaws. The fort is a lively hub of activity, with shops and restaurants, and well worth a wander through. The city is famous for handicrafts in particular stone carvings, leather ware and brass items and the bazaars are packed with stalls offering almost everything you can imagine.



**Accommodation: Gorbandh Palace** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Explore Jaisalmer's Fort and Jain Temple

After breakfast we will explore Jaisalmer on foot visiting the Gadi Sagar Tank, Jaisalmer Folklore Museum. We will also visit the fort and some of the many elaborately carved Jain Temples and havelis including the Patwon-ki Haveli considered to be the finest in Jaisalmer.



**Accommodation: Gorbandh Palace** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - Transfer to Jodhpur

This morning we drive to Jodhpur, where the impregnable fortress commands a superb panorama of the surrounding countryside (approximately 6 hours). The city itself has a unique atmosphere, with many fine old buildings and temples. Jodhpurs, those trousers-cum-riding breeches, are named after the horsemen of this city. Arriving mid-afternoon, the rest of the day is free to wander the atmospheric streets of the Old City.



**Accommodation: The Fern Residency** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Discover the dramatic Mehrangarh Fort

The majestic Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur is built across the top of a steep escarpment 125m above the plains below. It has a huge, sheer drop to the south where it overlooks the city. Our visit this morning affords wonderful views, not only across Jodhpur, but also way into the distance across the surrounding desert plains. The Rajput palace buildings within the fort are typically Mughal - very ornate and flamboyant, but also very practical and as always, built with defence in mind. This afternoon there is the chance to make an optional visit to some nearby Bishnoi villages. The Bishnoi are renowned for their protection of wild animals and trees.



**Accommodation: The Fern Residency** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Visit Ranakpur Temple on the way to Ghanerao

Our morning's drive takes us on to the temple town of Ranakpur, one of Rajasthan's gems (approximately 4 hours). Little visited, it is home to some of the most beautifully sculpted Jain Temples in India. Situated in a wooded valley the temples date back to the 15th century with the carvings depicting scenes from the lives of the Jain Saints at that time. We visit the Adinath temple, which contains 1444 exquisitely carved pillars, with no two alike. Continuing we then drive to Ghanerao (approximately 1 hour) where we will spend the night.



**Accommodation: Ghanerao Royal Castle** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Explore Kumbhalgarh Fort en route to Udaipur

This morning we drive to visit Kumbhalgarh's imposing 15th century fort - one of the finest examples of defensive architecture in Rajasthan. Lying 1,100m above sea level, the fortified ramparts protected palaces, temples and even farms, ensuring that the complex was self-contained and able to withstand a long siege. After lunch we drive to the beautiful lakeside city of Udaipur where we spend the next two nights. The city is dominated by Lake Pichola, its island palace (now a hotel) and Jag Mandir Island. Here the future Shah Jahan sought sanctuary from his father after he had been found guilty of plotting against him.



**Accommodation: Garden Hotel Udaipur** (or similar)

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Premium Hotel

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 15 - Take a boat on peaceful Lake Pichola

Our first stop today is the City Palace, located next to the Lake this huge Palace offers an insight in to the opulent life of the Maharajahs. We will also visit the Jagdish Mandir, a large ornately carved Hindu Temple set in the middle of the old town. In the late afternoon we will take a sunset cruise on the lake. At some times of the year the level of the water in the lake may drop or even, after a poor monsoon, dry up completely.



**Accommodation: Garden Hotel Udaipur** (or similar)

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Premium Hotel

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 16 - Tour ends in Udaipur

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.

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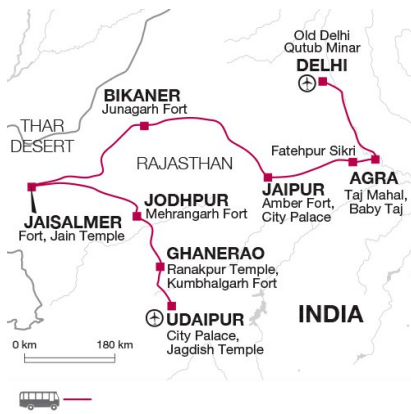


Meals Provided: Breakfast

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**Free Single Room Upgrade**

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Book any departure before the 20th December 2017 and you'll get a free single room upgrade.  
[Find out more details here](#)



## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 15  
 Lunch: 2  
 Dinner: 2



### Transport

Bus  
 4WD



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
 Driver(s)  
 Local Guide(s)



### Accommodation

2 nights simple camping  
 4 nights standard hotel  
 9 nights premium hotel

## Trip information

### Country information

### India Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June- September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop



below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

**Time difference to GMT**

+5

**Plugs**

3 Pin Round

**Religion**

Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

**Language**

Hindi and English.

## Budgeting and packing

### Clothing

Bear in mind that between November and March daytime temperatures are warm and comfortable, but evenings and nights in the desert can be extremely cold and hotels rarely have heating arrangements comparable with the UK. Lightweight clothing plus warmer garments are essential. Local people may be offended by western styles of dress. Brief shorts tight fitting clothing etc. should be avoided by both men and women.

### Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack

### Tipping

**Explore leader**

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

**Local crew**

Local Staff: In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow an additional £30 for tips during your tour. Your tour leader will account to you for any organised tipping.

**Country Information**

## India Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£6

**Dinner price**

£8

**Beer price**

£1.4

**Water price**

£0.5

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Indian Rupee Recently new 500, 1000 and 2000 rupee notes have been brought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

GBP/US\$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

**Where To Exchange**

The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

**ATM Availability**

ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

**Travellers Cheques**

Opportunities to exchange are limited.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, 4WD

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

### **Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

## **Essential Information**

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## **Visa Information**

India: Holders of passports endorsed 'British citizen' may be eligible for the e-Tourist Visa to enter India. The visa can be applied for through the official Indian government visa website only - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. Please check all eligibility criteria that can be found on the website but important points are listed below - You must be arriving into one of 24 selected entry points which can be found via the official Indian Government website link above. However, you can exit from any of the authorised immigration check posts in India. Passports must have at least 6 months validity from the date of arrival in India and at least two blank pages for stamping. The visa application will take approximately 4 days to process. It is valid for 60 days from the date of arrival in to India, and double entry is permitted on the e-Tourist visa. You can only obtain 2 e-visas for India in a calendar year. The visa costs \$75. Biometric data will be collected on arrival in India. Whilst the online form offers a relatively quick way to apply for a visa, a number of applicants have reported difficulty in completing the form. Travcour will complete the on-line visa on your behalf for a fee of £25 + the visa cost. Please contact them directly if you wish to take up this service. If you are not eligible for the e-Tourist Visa, please refer to VFS Global to apply for your Indian visa - [http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how\\_to\\_apply.html](http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/how_to_apply.html). If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

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## **Booking conditions**

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## **Transfers**

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### **Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## **India Holidays & Tours**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider.

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