

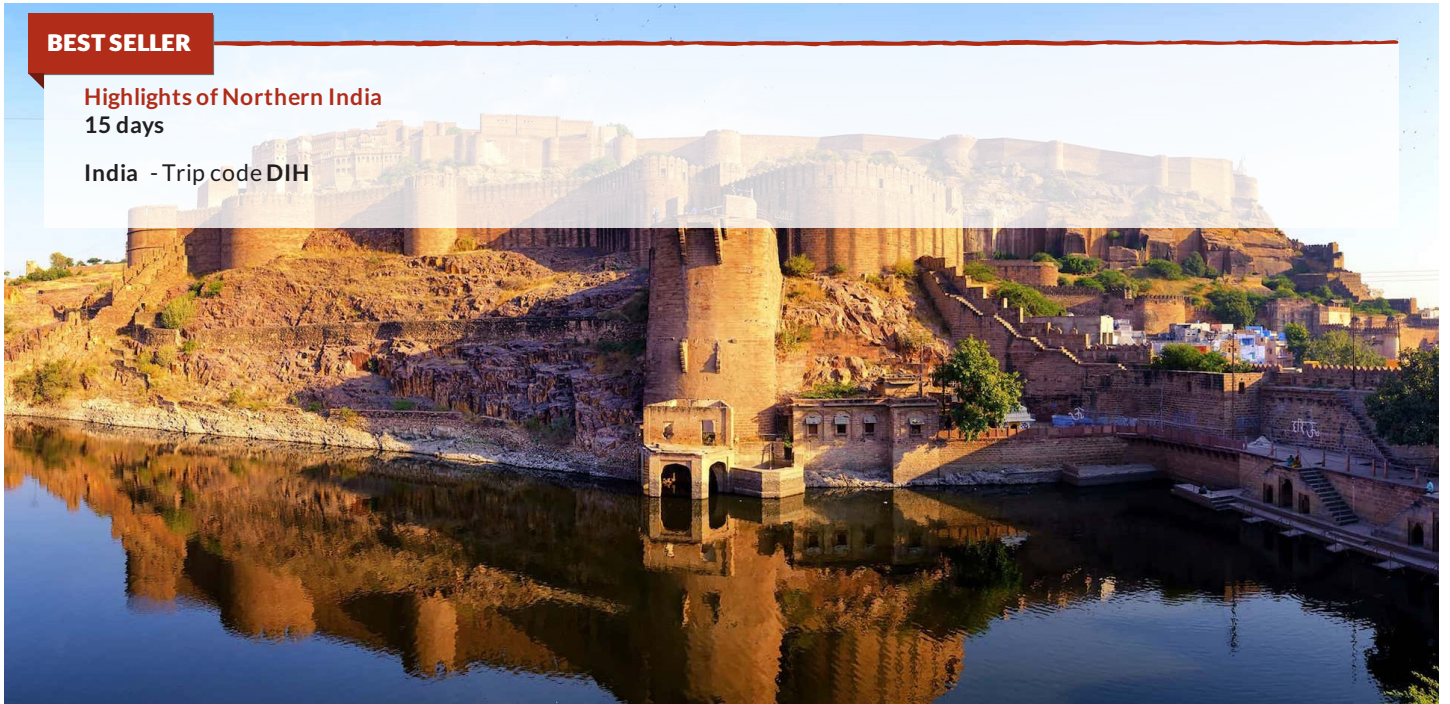
EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Highlights of Northern India

15 days

India - Trip code DIH



Highlights of Northern India

Travelling on India's incredible rail network this adventure explores the best that north India has to offer. From the dramatic Moghul architecture of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur to a camel safari in the desert at Pushkar. Search for Bengal tigers in Ranthambore National Park and take a river safari in Chambal Sanctuary on the lookout for Gangetic River dolphins, soft shell turtles and Sarus cranes. In Varanasi, India's holiest city, we take a boat trip on the sacred Ganges to witness the evening aarti ceremony.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Ranthambore** - Search for Bengal tigers in India's most famous national park
- ★ **Chambal** - Take a river safari to look for gharial and soft shell turtles
- ★ **Bateshwar** - Explore 40 Hindu temples that line the banks of the River Chambal
- ★ **Varanasi** - Float on the River Ganges and watch pilgrims bathe at holy 'Benares'
- ★ **Golden Triangle** - Discover Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, north India's three iconic cities

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 16**

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 trip in Delhi

Our journey begins in the Indian capital today, where later this afternoon there will be a briefing outlining the plans and itinerary for the coming days ahead. This afternoon we include a city tour of the sights of New Delhi. The Indian capital has long been a phoenix rising again and again out of its own ruins. New Delhi was the creation of the British Raj of the 30's and includes the Lok Sabha (Parliament) and India Gate which we will view on our way to explore the Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb.



Accommodation: Treebo Citi International (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Walk through Old Delhi's spice market before taking the train to Jaipur

Compared to New Delhi, the Old City is much closer to the image conjured up by Rudyard Kipling. This morning, a local guide will show us around Old Delhi by metro and on foot, culminating with a jamboree of deafening barter at Chandni Chowk Bazaar. A short cycle rickshaw ride then takes us to the Jama Masjid mosque. There will be an opportunity for some free time in Old Delhi in the afternoon. In the late afternoon we will transfer to Delhi Rohilla train station where we board a train to Jaipur. The journey will take approximately five hours and we will be sat in 2nd class air-conditioned carriages.



Accommodation: Mandawa Haveli (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Discover Jaipur's hilltop Amber Fort, City Palace and Palace of the Winds

The capital of the state of Rajasthan, Jaipur was India's first planned city and is considered by many to be one of the finest planned cities anywhere, the usual Indian urban chaos being replaced by wide streets and formal gardens. This morning we will visit the once mighty Rajput capital of Amber (traditionally known as Amer and its magnificent fortress. Lying at the mouth of a rocky mountain gorge, overlooking Maota Lake, the fort is a stunning creation of white marble and red sandstone that contains a dazzling mix of Hindu and Muslim ornamentation, including the breathtaking mirrored halls of the Sheesh Mahal. It was from these towering walls that the Kachchawahas ruled over their kingdom for some 7 centuries, until its importance was eclipsed by nearby Jaipur. We will also take in the unique Hawa Mahal, the famous Palace of the Winds, whose extraordinary façade of red and pink sandstone towers some five storeys above the city streets. Built at the end of the 18th century its 935 windows were designed to allow the women of the harem to gaze out on the city scene below without themselves being seen, the openings also creating a refreshing breeze (hawa), which kept the palace cool even in the hot summer months. We will spend some time exploring the lavish and well-preserved City Palace. Here, we will find a fine collection of textiles, costumes and armoury. Later this afternoon, we will visit the extraordinary Jantar Mantar - a star-gazing observatory built by Jai Singh, the great Maharajah-astronomer.



Accommodation: Mandawa Haveli (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Free time to explore Jaipur. Take a train to Pushkar

This morning has been left free to explore more of Jaipur in your own time. You may choose to visit one of the famous bazaars which are bursting with delights, from marble statues to antique textiles; traditional print blocks to local musical instruments. In the early afternoon we take a train to the city of Ajmer, a famous Muslim pilgrimage centre that is home to the tomb of a 13th century Sufi saint. Some 130km from Jaipur it lies sandwiched between the waters of the Ana Sagar Lake and the Aravali Hills. From here we then transfer by jeep to the nearby Hindu pilgrimage town of Pushkar.



Accommodation: Hotel Master Paradise (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Ride a camel through the desert and watch the sunset from Savitri Temple

This morning we travel through the desert on a camel safari. This safari will show you the desert landscape from a completely unique perspective. Travelling by camel captures the traditional means of desert travel allowing us to experience something of the remote life of the tribesmen and their families. Riding camels can be quite relaxing and sitting high up enables us to appreciate the unique beauty of the desert. Many people find that they prefer to combine riding with periods of walking, so ensure that you have appropriate footwear. If you do not wish to take part in the camel safari your Explore Leader can arrange for you to take a walking tour of Pushkar. As the day starts drawing to an end we hike up into the nearby hills to visit the Savitri temple for sunset. Dedicated to Brahma's first wife, the temple lies at the end of a long series of steps that run behind the Brahma Temple and from its lofty vantage point the views out across the lake and the surrounding dunes offer a breathtaking setting from which to watch the sun

setting over the city.



Accommodation: Hotel Master Paradise (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Take a jeep safari in Ranthambore National Park

We start early this morning as our drive to Ranthambore will take about five hours. On arrival, we check in to our accommodation before setting off for an afternoon game drive, where we hope to have an opportunity to view tigers in the wild. Ranthambore National Park was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1957, although it was still used as a hunting reserve until the early 1970s. It became part of the Project Tiger scheme in 1974 and, today, is home to over 40 of the remarkable beasts. We hope to see tigers roaming among the woodlands and cooling off in the lakes. Aside from its more famous residents, the park is also home to sloth bear, langur, striped hyenas, marsh crocodiles, pythons and Ganga soft-shelled turtles. There is also the chance to spot a myriad of bird species, including crested hawk eagle, crested serpent eagle, jacana, parakeet and white-breasted kingfishers. Aside from its rich wildlife, the park's beauty is also noteworthy. Once part of the magnificent jungles of Central India, it comprises of rivers, lakes and forests that nestle among a surrounding girdle of steep cliffs and rocky outcrops.



Accommodation: Raj Palace Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 7 - Search for tigers before travelling to Agra

This morning, an early start affords us more chances to spot tigers on our second game drive in Ranthambore. The tigers are usually most active early in the morning, before the heat of the day forces them to take shelter. After our safari we take a train to Agra. The Indian rail network is infamous and travelling by train offers us a great chance to interact with locals as we make our way across the country.



Accommodation: Utkarsh Vilas (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Watch the sunrise over the beautiful Taj Mahal

An early start this morning as we visit one of the most universally recognised buildings on earth. The Taj Mahal was built by the emperor Shah Jahan to honour the memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz, and was once described by Rudyard Kipling as '...the embodiment of all things pure'. Built of marble and decorated with the most exquisite inlay work, it required the labours of 20,000 men and is estimated to have cost something in the region of 3 million rupees (at today's prices around \$70 million) We visit at sunrise to watch the colours of the building changing as the sun slowly rises in the sky. After returning to the hotel for breakfast we make our way to the imposing Agra Fort, whose grandeur and importance has seen it inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Built by Emperor Akbar and then embellished by his grandson, Shah Jahan, this was once a great city, with palaces, mosques and halls all lying behind the protective embrace of 20m high walls. We will also visit is the exquisite Itimad-ud-Daulah on the east bank of the river, a 17th century tomb built for the Emperor Jehangir's chief minister, also known as the Baby Taj. Please note: There is currently a restoration project taking place at the Taj Mahal, which involves applying a mud pack to the outer walls of the monument. In order to carry out the work, temporary scaffolding is being erected around the minarets and portions of the main dome. The work is being carried out in phases and is expected to continue until January 2017.



Accommodation: Utkarsh Vilas (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Drive to Chambal Sanctuary, take an afternoon nature walk

Leaving Agra this morning we drive for approximately four hours until we reach Chambal Safari Lodge, a beautiful eco-lodge that lies amongst acres of sprawling plantation and farmland in the heart of the Chambal Valley. The lodge accommodation is simple but with everything we need to enjoy the surroundings including an extensive library filled with books detailing the various species of birds and mammals we hope to spot over the next few days. After settling in to our rooms we head out on a nature walk. Starting off in the grounds of the lodge we keep our eyes peeled for hornbills, babblers and barbets and as the sun goes down we can look out for fruit bats and several species of owls.



Accommodation: Chambal Safari Lodge (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 10 - Search for soft shell turtles and explore the temples at Bateshwar

Taking to the water this morning we board small motor boats and explore the River Chambal. The boatmen are skilled at spotting soft shell turtles, gharials and sarus cranes from a great distance and knowing when to cut the boats engine so we can enjoy the wildlife without disturbing it. Back on dry land we drive to Bateshwar, a collection of 40 Hindu Temples set on the banks of the River Chambal. Originally more than 170 temples lined the river banks but many have crumbled over the years. We spend some time wandering through the temples and the small market as well as sitting to watch people bathing and washing clothes in the river. We transfer back to our lodge for the evening.



Accommodation: Chambal Safari Lodge (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 11 - Free time to relax at Chambal before an overnight train to Varanasi

Today there is chance to relax in the morning and make the most of the peaceful setting of the lodge, or if there is a chance to take another river safari In the early afternoon we will drive to Agra where we board an overnight train to Varanasi. Indian sleeper trains are a fantastic experience and a great way to meet people as we travel. We make our bookings in second class air-conditioned sleepers, which have four beds in each compartment and all bedding provided.



Accommodation: Overnight train from Agra to Varanasi



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Explore Varanasi on a walking tour and watch the evening ceremony on the river banks

Arriving in the early morning we take a short transfer to our hotel. Varanasi (Benares) has been the centre of Hinduism since the dawn of history; its age is contemporary with Babylon and Thebes. Often known as 'Kashi' (City of Light) by Hindus it attracts over a million pilgrims each year - many of whom come to spend their last years here in the holy city. After breakfast and a freshen up we take an orientation walk around the narrow winding streets of the city. In the evening we make our way to the ghats to witness the evening aarti ceremony when the River Ganges is venerated with a display of light and sound.



Accommodation: Hotel New Temple's Town (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Visit ancient Buddhist temples at Sarnath. Take a train to Delhi

After breakfast we visit nearby Sarnath. Having gained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya the Buddha came to Sarnath to preach his first sermon. The city was at its peak in the 5th century, when it was a respected centre of religious activity, learning and art. Muslim invaders destroyed much of the city and today remains of several monasteries and stupas can be seen. In the afternoon time is free to enable you to explore the labyrinth of streets, bazaars and temples that line the banks of the river. In the early evening we take an overnight sleeper train back to Delhi.



Accommodation: Overnight Train from Varanasi to Delhi



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Free time to explore Delhi

After arriving in Delhi we transfer to our hotel and check in. After breakfast and time to freshen up the day is left free for you to explore the capital city.



Accommodation: Treebo Citi International (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



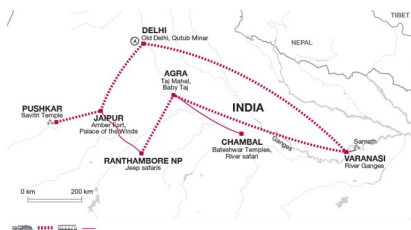
Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 15 - Trip ends in Delhi

Our trip ends this morning in Delhi after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 14
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus
4WD
Boat
Rickshaw
Train



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel
3 nights simple hotel
2 nights standard lodge
2 nights simple overnight train

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

From March through to November the weather will be warm and lightweight clothing is recommended. Conditions in December through to February will be cooler, and will require warm clothing mainly for early morning and evenings although please note that midwinter does see occasionally very cold spells and hotels rarely have heating arrangements compatible with UK standards so a thick fleece is necessary. Local people may be offended by western styles of dress. Brief shorts, tight fitting clothing etc. should be avoided by both men and women. Neutral coloured clothing is best for the game drives in Ranthambore.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own baggage - so don't overload yourself. There are porters available for a small cost at train stations if you wish to use them.

Equipment

A torch is useful in case of powercuts/emergencies. Binoculars are needed for game/bird watching in Ranthambore and Chambal.

Tipping

Explore leader

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

Local crew

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 for £30.

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 bought 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, Boat, Rickshaw, Train

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.

The Chambal Sanctuary is a wonderful natural location in an area rich with wildlife, but has very limited accommodation. For the majority of the year we will be staying in cottages at the Chambal Safari Lodge. However, there is a particularly busy period for the area around the time of the Bateswar Festival which usually takes place at the end of October or early November. During this period the lodge supplements its rooms with tented accommodation. They have proper full sized beds, en suite facilities, hot and cold running water and carpeted floors. Please note that at this time of year we may be allocated this type of room.

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. 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 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.

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 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.

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.

Included activities

Tiger Safari permit requirements Ranthambore National Park is closely managed by the Indian Authorities. The number of vehicles permitted to enter the park at any one time is restricted and all game drives must now be booked and paid for well in advance. We recommend you book as early as possible in order to have the best chance of securing a space on a game drive. In order to secure a booking we must provide your passport copy and full payment for the safari at the time of booking. Once a game drive has been booked no changes are permitted and the payment is non-refundable. In order to proceed with bookings we require the following: A scanned copy of your passport - you must carry your passport during the game drive and if you renew your passport before travelling then you will need to take both passports with you. We book all of our game drives in shared jeeps, with a maximum of 6 passengers per jeep with a driver and naturalist guide. On occasion we will be sharing jeeps with non-Explore passengers. We will purchase seats for all passengers as soon as permits become available, usually 4 months prior, after this point it is not always possible to secure additional spaces. We cannot guarantee the operation of any game drives until the necessary permits have been purchased. We aim to purchase the permits as soon as they are put on sale, whilst this is usually at 120 days before the date of the game drive on going changes to the booking system means that we cannot guarantee this.

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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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth> and from your local healthcare provider.