

EXPLORE!

Highlights of North India and Nepal

INDIA, NEPAL - TRIP CODE HDK

DISCOVERY

DAYS
12

PRICE FROM
Call us

FLIGHTS
NOT
INCLUDED

Why book this trip?

Travel between two great cities on this exciting journey from Delhi to Kathmandu. Watch the sunset over India's most famous monument, the Taj Mahal, and explore holy Varanasi, nestled on the banks of the Ganges. In Nepal, visit the birthplace of Buddha before searching for one-horned rhino in Chitwan National Park, and exploring the temples, backstreets and markets of Kathmandu.



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 11
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 2



TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader
Driver(s)



TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat
Rickshaw



ACCOMMODATION
8 nights standard
hotel
2 nights standard
lodge
1 nights simple
overnight train



TRIP PACE:
Moderate



GROUP SIZE:
10 - 16

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in Delhi. Visit the Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb

Our journey begins in the Indian capital and we start by exploring the area known as New Delhi. The city of Delhi has long been a phoenix rising time and again from its own ashes, and New Delhi was created by the British Raj in the 1930's. We'll drive along wide boulevards, passing imposing buildings such as the Lok Sabha (Parliament) and India Gate - a hive of activity in the afternoons and evenings as people gather to walk, chat and socialise. There are also vestiges of Delhi's past to explore including the Qutub Minar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site dating from 1192, and Humayun's Tomb, another UNESCO site considered to be the architectural forerunner of the Taj Mahal which is set amongst lovely gardens - a delight to wander around in the warm early evening.



ACCOMMODATION:
Taj Princess Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Experience Old Delhi's winding streets on foot and by cycle rickshaw

Compared to New Delhi, the old city is much closer to the image conjured up by Rudyard Kipling. We explore by metro and on foot, culminating in a jamboree of deafening barter at the Chandni Chowk bazaar where tiny stores sell everything from jewellery to saris to refreshing cups of chai. Chandni Chowk is the street food capital of Delhi and offers a superb opportunity to try some of India's world-famous street snacks such as paratha (a type of flatbread) stuffed with vegetables or potatoes, or Pani Puri, a particular favourite of the locals made of flour, spiced water, onions, potatoes and chickpeas. A short cycle- rickshaw ride then takes us to the Jama Masjid mosque. Built in the 1600s, it remains one of the largest mosques in the country and continues to be an important place of worship for the city's Muslims.

There is some free time to continue to explore Old Delhi after lunch.



ACCOMMODATION:

Taj Princess Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Drive to Agra and visit the Taj Mahal at sunset

We leave the capital this morning for a four hour drive to the city of Agra where we'll discover 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; it 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 three million rupees (at today's prices around \$70 million). We'll take a walk through the beautiful gardens that surround the Taj, and if we wish we can enter the mausoleum where both Mumtaz and Shah Jahan are buried, before watching the sun set over this iconic masterpiece.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Amar (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Discover Agra's dramatic fort and the 'Baby Taj'. Take an overnight train to Varanasi

This morning there is the option to return to the Taj Mahal to see the sunrise over this incredible building before we begin exploring Agra. Once the capital of the mighty Mughal Empire, the city is littered with some of the country's most opulent and spectacular buildings. One particularly fine example is its imposing fort, with a grandeur and importance that has seen it recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Constructed by Emperor Akbar and then embellished by his grandson, Shah Jahan, this was once a great city with palaces, mosques and halls lying behind the protective embrace of twenty metre 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 Jahangir's chief minister which is known as the 'Baby Taj'.

After dinner we board the Marudhar Express overnight train to Varanasi. The journey takes around 12 hours and offers 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

Grade: Simple Overnight Train



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Walk through the streets of Varanasi and watch the evening Ganga Aarti ceremony on the river banks

Arriving in the early morning we take a short drive to our hotel. Varanasi, also known as Benares, has been the centre of Hinduism since the dawn of civilisation; 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 in the holy city. After freshening up and enjoying breakfast we walk around the narrow winding streets of the city, soaking up the atmosphere and learning about the city's long history. In the early evening we take cycle rickshaws to the ghats where we witness the evening Ganga Aarti ceremony where young saffron-robed Pandits - Hindu holy scholars who study the ancient

Vedic texts - venerate the river as a living goddess. The ceremony begins with the haunting sound of a conch shell and is followed by waving incense sticks in elaborate patterns and circling oil burning lamps while clanging cymbals and chanting songs in praise of the deity.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Grapevine (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Visit ancient Buddhist temples at Sarnath. Free time in Varanasi

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 around 1700 years ago when it was a respected centre of religious activity, learning and art. Muslim invaders destroyed much of it but the remains of several monasteries and stupas are still in existence today.

In the afternoon there is free time to explore Varanasi and the labyrinth of streets, bazaars and temples that line the banks of the river. As a holy city, you are likely to encounter many colourfully dressed Sadhus and holy men, and next to the river you may also see cremations taking place. Usually the eldest son, clad in white and often with a shaved head, performs the rites and sets light to the funeral pyre before scattering the ashes in the river. This ensures the deceased breaks the cycle of birth and death to achieve moksha or nirvana.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Grapevine (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Train and drive to Lumbini, crossing the Nepalese border at Sonauli

We have a journey of around eight hours today, but the scenery is spectacular as we head north across the Gangetic Plains through remote towns and villages to the Nepalese border at Sonauli. The first leg is by train, from Varanasi to the town of Gorakhpur. Here we switch to a bus and drive the remaining distance to Sonauli, where we walk through customs and immigration into Nepal. Our Nepalese bus will drive us to Lumbini, the birth place of the Buddha, where we spend the night.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Nirvana (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Explore Lumbini then drive to Chitwan National Park

This morning we explore Lumbini by rickshaw, visiting the World Peace Pagoda and the Maya Devi Temple where the Buddha was born. Located in a sacred garden with a pond where his mother, who the temple is named after, was said to have bathed just before giving birth to him. From Lumbini we drive for around five hours through the Terai - a narrow forested lowland strip that stretches the full width of the southern border of Nepal, arriving at Chitwan in the late afternoon. The oldest and best known of the national parks in Nepal, Chitwan consists of swamp, tall grass and dense forest; it is a natural habitat for tiger, the rare one-horned Indian rhino, leopard, sloth bear and other wildlife. Once we arrive at the park we'll take a short walk through some of the villages that are close by, learning how the local people live in harmony with nature.



ACCOMMODATION:
Nana Holiday Homes (or similar)



Grade: Standard Lodge



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Search for wild rhino in Chitwan National Park

Chitwan means 'heart of the jungle' and its thick tree cover and tall elephant grass shelter a wealth of animals, most famously the one-horned rhino. During our day in the park there are several activities that we can choose from, including a jeep safari searching for the rhino, bird watching, jungle walks and a canoe trip along the Rapti River. The river trip will be dependent on the water level, but floating silently down the Rapti River offers a great opportunity to spot many varieties of water birds. On the nature walk we are accompanied by a local naturalist while navigating trails in the less densely forested parts of the park, and an early morning bird-watching walk near the river reveals many of the park's 450 bird species. These include the Asian openbill stork, paradise fly catcher, jungle myna, grey-headed fish eagle, and white-eyed buzzard.



ACCOMMODATION:
Nana Holiday Homes (or similar)

Grade: Standard Lodge



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 10 - Take an early morning nature walk and drive to Kathmandu

After a final early morning walk through the park and our last chance to spot the animal and bird life, we'll leave for Kathmandu, a drive of around six hours. The journey follows a series of deep river valleys and much of the scenery is spectacular. On arrival in Kathmandu we take a short walk around the Thamel area. Its narrow streets first attracted hippies in the 70's and it retains a bohemian atmosphere with small shops and eateries packed in to every available corner. It's a great place to try some of the local cuisine such as momos - small steamed or fried dumplings stuffed with meat, cheese or vegetables, or Chatamari - a small crepe made out of rice flour which was originally a speciality of the Newar people of the Kathmandu Valley.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Ambassador (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Discover Kathmandu's bustling streets and temples

This morning we experience this fascinating and historic city on foot, visiting the temples and bazaar of old Kathmandu. Much of the day-to-day life of the city takes place in and around the bazaar; a fascinating mixture of people selling spices, potters spinning their wheels, rickshaw wallahs honking their horns, and the ever-present sacred cow wandering amongst it all. We end up in Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site at the heart of the city, which is surrounded by spectacular architecture. Here we may get a glimpse of the Kumari, or living Goddess, who resides in the Kumari Ghar Palace and is worshipped as a manifestation of divine female energy.

The afternoon is left free for you to explore more of the city. You may choose to discover the temple of Pashupatinath on the banks of the Bagmati River. The largest and holiest Hindu shrine in Nepal, it was built in the 5th century and is dedicated to Shiva. You can also visit Bodnath, the largest stupa in Asia and an important destination for Buddhist pilgrims where devotees perform the Kora - a ritual circumnavigation of the monument. The area has become home to many Tibetan refugees and offers a great chance to experience something of the Tibetan Buddhist culture. Another option is to explore Bhaktapur - the 'city of devotees'. Just outside Kathmandu, it is one of the ancient city-states of Nepal and many of its buildings, monuments and temples date from the city's heyday in the 1100s.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Ambassador (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Trip ends in Kathmandu

Our trip ends this morning in Kathmandu.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

India

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	Plugs	Religion
+5	3 Pin Round	Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

Language

Hindi and English.

Nepal

Climate

Temperatures in the lower altitude regions are extremely pleasant. At Pokhara variations in temperature are very limited: from the coldest recorded of 8°C (46°F) to the highest of 31°C (88°F). The mountains are best admired, with greater air clarity, from October to January, while from February to May the skies may be hazy. Monsoon rains are strongest in June, July and August. The coldest months are December and January.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+5.45	2 Pin Round	Hinduism	Nepali

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Bhaktapur tour - \$35 per person.

Clothing

Lightweight clothing is needed from March to November. December through to February is cooler especially early mornings and evenings with the occasional very cold spell for which you should be prepared. You should bring a fleece and a woolly hat and gloves for the early morning jeep safaris and walks. Local people may be offended by western styles of dress. Brief shorts, tight fitting clothing should be avoided by both men and women.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes, trainers and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Remember - porters are not always available, so don't overload yourself.

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

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £50 for tipping. Your tour leader will account to you for any organised tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

India

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£6	£8	£1.4	£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.

Nepal

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£7	£10	£3	£0.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency Nepali Rupee.	Recommended Currency For Exchange US\$ or GBP.	Where To Exchange In major cities and towns
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ATM Availability

Although you may occasionally find cash machines these are very unreliable - do not rely on plastic!

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are not generally accepted except in larger establishments in Kathmandu.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are not accepted as a valid mode of payment in Nepal.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Rickshaw

Accommodation notes

Accommodation in India and Nepal is as varied as the two countries are. On this trip we generally stay in 3 star hotels, but please note that standards may not equate to those 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 but extra blankets are available on request. 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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport 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 £30 + 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.

Nepal: An entry visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, US & Canadian citizens. Visas can be arranged on arrival, but due to queues at immigration we recommend for the visa to be arranged in advance. A passport-sized photograph for immigration is required and payment must be made in cash in US Dollars if you are arranging your visa on arrival.

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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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




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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Nepal

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus, polio and Japanese encephalitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Although not compulsory, travellers may wish to take immunisation against meningococcal meningitis. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

 <p>AWARD WINNING EXPLORE LEADERS</p>	 <p>PRICE GUARANTEE PROMISE</p>	 <p>AIRPORT TRANSFERS</p>
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