

EXPLORE!

Tailormade Toy Trains and Holy Temples
9 days

India - Trip code TMIN8



Tailormade Toy Trains and Holy Temples

Hill stations and holy temples

Discover some of the highlights offered by India's Northern states, home to important holy sites and some quirky experiences. Throw yourself into Indian life and take the narrow gauge train to the old hill station of Shimla, where Rudyard Kipling based his 'Plain tales from the Hills' novel. Roam through marbled courtyards in the grounds of the ornate Golden Temple in Amritsar, and embrace the noise and commotion at the closing of the border crossing with Pakistan. Inbetween there is also a stop in McLeod Ganj (Dharamsala), home to the Dalai Lama and therefore a place laden with Buddhist sites.

Enriching tailormade journeys – for you

This bespoke journey features some of our favourite spots in Northern India. You can choose to take our destination experts' recommendations and travel just as you see the itinerary here, or contact us to add your own special touches. We're here to design your perfect holiday.

Call us on 01252 883 184.

Trip highlights

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.

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Fly to Delhi

Depart the UK on your overnight flight to Delhi.

 None

DAY 2 - Arrive in Delhi and afternoon tour of Old Delhi

Your journey begins in the Indian capital today, where the afternoon is spent on 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 you will view on your way to explore the Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb.



Accommodation: Treebo Citi International (or similar)



Standard Hotel

Wi-Fi available


 None

DAY 3 - Toy Train to Shimla

Depart Delhi for Kalka, where you'll transfer to a narrow gauge track and continue to Shimla on the remarkable 'Toy Train'. Climbing from the plains below, the train meanders for 93km, ascending over 1600m through an incredible 103 tunnels and passed some of the most scenic landscapes in the region.



Accommodation: Woodville Palace Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Wi-Fi available



Breakfast

DAY 4 - Explore Shimla

The town of Shimla stretches out along a crescent shaped ridge, its alpine style houses shaded beneath dense evergreen forests. The old British hill station, with its colonial buildings and beautiful promenades is overlooked by the snow-capped Himalayas, making it one of the most scenic places to visit in North India. In the morning you will visit the imposing Viceregal Lodge, followed by the Command House, Gaiety Theatre, the Town Hall and Christ Church. The afternoon has been left free for you to explore at your leisure. We recommend a visit to the Mall or Lower Bazaar.



Accommodation: Woodville Palace Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel

Wi-Fi available

 Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Journey to Dharamsala (Mcleodganj), home of the Dalai Lama

Travel from Shimla to Dharamsala and stay in Mcleodganj. The area of Dharamsala is an old British Hill station and Mcleodganj, which sits in the higher part of the town is today an important site for Buddhism, known as the home of the Dalai Lama.




Accommodation: Shiva Castle (or similar)



Standard Hotel

Wi-Fi available

 Breakfast

DAY 6 - Full day tour of Dharamsala

Your full day tour will include visits to the Church of St John in the Wilderness, the Buddhist Namgyal Monastery known locally as Little Lhasa, and the Kalachakra Temple.




Accommodation: Shiva Castle (or similar)



Standard Hotel

Wi-Fi available

 Breakfast

DAY 7 - Journey to Amritsar

Today you have a full day journey to Amritsar. It is a long day of travelling but a scenic way to see the country.



Accommodation: Hotel Ritz Plaza Amritsar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available

 Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Golden Temple and India/ Pakistan border ceremony

Amritsar was founded in 1577 by the fourth Sikh Guru, Ram Das. Today you will visit The Golden Temple which was built in the heart of the city in 1589 and remains the holiest of all Sikh shrines, housing the Holy Book from which the granthis read from dawn until late evening. You will also visit Jallianwala Bagh, the emotional memorial site of the 1919 massacre of hundreds of unarmed demonstrators. Late afternoon you transfer to Wagah border to watch the closing of the border ceremony. The flamoyant Indian and Pakistani guards attract a large crowd and a brilliant atmosphere.



Accommodation: Hotel Ritz Plaza Amritsar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Breakfast

DAY 9 - Depart Amritsar

Depart Amritsar for your connecting flight to the UK



Breakfast

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 8



Transport

Private car
Train



Trip staff

Local guides
Driver(s)



Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel

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

+5

Plugs

3 Pin Round

Religion

Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

Language

Hindi and English.

Budgeting and packing

Country Information

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

£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

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.

Standard

Light on your pocket but long on authentic experiences, these tours are based in simple, sometimes local-style accommodation. If your idea of adventure travel is to experience real, everyday life then you will enjoy our Standard style of tour. You will have the chance to stay at simple, family-run hotels and guesthouses where the lack of luxury is more than compensated for by the warm welcome and genuine insight into local life.

Woodville Palace Hotel

Dating back to 1866 when Sir William Mansfield, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army became the first resident of the picturesque estate, the Woodville Palace has an impressive history, it was later acquired by His Highness Maharaja Bhagvat Sinh of Gondal State in Western Indian as a gift for his daughter. The original building was replaced in 1938 and decorated in heritage style with no rooms the same.

Hotel Ritz Plaza Amritsar

Hotel Ritz Plaza offers guests a comfortable and peaceful stay, set within two acres of landscaped gardens. Rooms are spacious and the facilities at the hotel include a range of restaurants, swimming pool and gym.

Premium

On Premium level tailor-made tours you will stay at comfortable mid-range hotels, chosen for their location, ambiance or local character. Your rooms will be clean and well-appointed, with en suite bathrooms and air-conditioning or heating as necessary. Premium level hotels normally have restaurants, bars and often other amenities such as a swimming pool and gardens, offering a good level of comfort at a reasonable price.

Clarkes Hotel

Clarkes Hotel is one of the oldest hotels in Shimla, dating back to 1898 and retaining much of that heritage charm. The rooms and suites are spacious with all the usual modern conveniences. The Dining Hall which dates back to the times of the British Raj offers panoramic mountain views and The Terrace allows guests to enjoy a pot of tea in the open air surrounded by dramatic views of the city and beyond. The hotel is centrally located making it ideal for exploring this charming hill station.

Ranjit Svaasa

Ranjit Svaasa is a heritage style haveli property, tucked away in a quiet corner of Amritsar. The rooms and suites are traditionally decorated yet equipped with all the modern amenities, the hotel also benefits from a spa, sun deck and restaurant.

Indulge

If you are looking for the best of both worlds, with adventurous days and indulgent nights, our Indulge level tailor-made tours may be just the answer. On these tours you can enjoy busy days packed with adventure and activity, followed by relaxing evenings unwinding in the comfort of accommodation hand-picked for its high level of comfort and service. Some hotels are full of historical interest too: a converted palace in India for example, or a restored colonial mansion in Latin America.

Oberoi Cecil

This beautiful heritage hotel is a converted hill station and offers glorious views over the valley below. The rooms are elegantly decorated and hark back to the days of the Raj with their teak furniture and chandeliers. The hotel also benefits from having a swimming pool, spa and fitness centre, billiards room and a range of dining options.

Holiday Inn Amritsar

Centrally located and only a short distance from the famous Golden Temple and Jallianwala Bagh, the Holiday Inn Amritsar is your ideal hotel to stay in this vibrant town. The en suite rooms are stylish and modern, while the Ziva restaurant offers an exciting mixture of Punjabi favourites and continental flavours, and the stunning outdoor swimming pool is the perfect place to unwind after a long day of sightseeing.

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](#)

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.
