

11 Days

October 10th-20th, 2020

Day 1 October 10th, Saturday. Arrival Day. Delhi

You will be met at the airport by an English speaking driver, and transferred to your hotel, in the heart of chaotic Central Delhi. Most flights arrive in the evening, so you will have some time to rest and adjust to jet lag.

Day 2 Sunday. Delhi. Breakfast/Dinner

After breakfast, you will enjoy a guided orientation tour of New Delhi including a drive through of Vijay Chowk, with views of the Secretariat buildings, Parliament House, the Presidential Palace and the India Gate, commemorating Indian and British soldiers. Next, stop at the Gandhi Smriti Museum, paying tribute to the inspiring leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who forced change through nonviolent protest, leading to an independent India in the late 1940s.

After lunch we will transfer to the Red Fort in Old Delhi for a guided tour. Old Delhi architecture is a spectacular example of Mughal architecture, with plenty of charisma and nostalgia. While walking the bylanes of old Delhi you realize every wall has a story to tell. Old Delhi is a walled city shaped roughly like a quarter circle with the Red Fort as a focal point. The old city was surrounded by a wall enclosing about 1500 acres with 14 gates.

Although the walls have largely disappeared, most of the gates are still present.

After the Fort, we will take a rickshaw ride into the spice market, and then experience the exhilaration of a tuk-tuk ride back to our hotel.

Welcome Dinner

Day 3 Monday. Taj Mahal and Jaipur

Rise and shine early for our New Delhi Habibganj Shatabdi Express to Agra. 1st class air/con, breakfast on board. We will meet our guide and be escorted to the magnificent Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is an enormous mausoleum complex commissioned in 1632 by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan to house the remains of his beloved wife. Constructed over a 20-year period on the southern bank of the Yamuna River in Agra, India, the famed complex is one of the most outstanding examples of Mughal architecture, which combined Indian, Persian and Islamic influences. At its center is the Taj Mahal itself, built of shimmering white marble that seems to change color depending on the daylight. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983, it remains one of the world's most celebrated structures and a stunning symbol of India's rich history.

Its then off to explore the Agra Fort. The Fort was built in the year 1573 under the reign of Akbar – one of the greatest Mughal Emperors. It took more than 4000 workers and eight years of hardship to complete the fort. Knowing the significance of its location, Akbar built the fort to make it the main residence of the Mughals. The fort remained as the main residence of the emperors belonging to the Mughal dynasty until the year 1638.

Lunch at a local restaurant and then our express train to Jaipur. 1st class air/con.

Arrive early evening.

Day 4 Tuesday Jaipur

After a good rest and a hearty breakfast we begin our tour at the Amber Fort. Set in a picturesque location, Amber is a fascinating blend of Hindu and Muslim architecture. Built in the 16th century by Raja Man Singh in red sandstone and white marble, the palace complex has some very interesting apartments. Then we head off to the Jal Mahal, the water palace that is situated in the midst of the beautiful Man Sagar Lake in Jaipur City. Jal Mahal is an exceptional structure of the Rajput culture. The palace and the lake around it were renovated and enlarged in the 18th century by Maharaja Jai Singh II of Amber. A wonderful five storied building built in red sandstone. Our last stop before lunch, is the Hawa Mahal, the most famous landmark of Jaipur, the palace of winds built by Sawai Pratap Singh was actually planned for the royal household to have a look at everyday life of the city. The palace has tier upon tier of curved arch surmounting fairy casements with "jali" – latticework screens.

Lunch at a restaurant near the Pink Palace.

Afternoon free to explore the exotic, colorful bazaars and markets around the Pink City. Tuk tuk back to hotel.

Dinner

Day 5 Wednesday Amritsar

Breakfast. Morning free to explore, shop, relax at hotel pool, visit other sites. After late lunch, transfer to the airport for late afternoon flight to Amritsar. Transfer to hotel.

Day 6 Thursday Basunti Retreat

Breakfast, then a visit to the Golden Temple. It is not only a central religious place of the Sikhs, but also a symbol of human brotherhood and equality. Everybody, irrespective of cast, creed or race can seek spiritual solace without any hindrance. The Golden Temple has a unique Sikh architecture. Built at a level lower than the surrounding land level, The Gurudwara teaches the lesson of egalitarianism and humility. The four entrances of this holy shrine from all four directions, signify that people belonging to every walk of life are equally welcome. After our visit we transfer by land rovers to Basunti. Arrive for afternoon tea, settle in to our new home, then dinner.

Day 7 Friday -Day 10 Monday Basunti Retreat

Early morning tea/chai followed by meditation and pranayama. Delicious breakfast, followed by 2 hour yoga class. Free time to explore, relax, sunbathe. After lunch one can hike, use the row boats, hire a local fisherman, swim in the lake or pool. There will be an excursion one afternoon to a local village, and another afternoon excursion will be to a local temple, with an opportunity to shop for scarves and other local crafts. Each day at 5pm we will meet for a gentle yoga class or satsang. Dinner is 6:30pm. Evenings are relaxing. We will have one movie night.

Day 10 Monday McLeod Ganj

After breakfast and short yoga class, we say goodbye to Basunti and enjoy an interesting drive to Dharamsala and McLeod Ganj, It is known as "Little Lhasa" because of its large population of Tibetans. The Tibetan government-in-exile is headquartered in McLeod Ganj. This is also home of the Dalai Lama. Afternoon free to wander the colorful streets of this holy mountain town. Take in the beautiful vistas from a local restaurant or bar.

Day 11 Tuesday McLeod Ganj-Departure day.

After breakfast we will visit the Dalai Lama Temple Complex. We will then say our goodbyes. There are connecting flights from Dharamsala airport, which is about 45 minutes away to Delhi, Mumbai and even onto Europe.