



PHOTOS BY TODD GUSTAFSON, GUSTAFSON PHOTO SAFARI

# INDIA

## Essence of India: Temples, Tigers, and Natural Wonders

**15 DAYS** | Choose your dates | Travel dates: **OCT 1 - APR 15**

*India delights the imagination with layers of civilization that date back 7,000 years. Its deep spirituality manifests in a cultural blend of temples, palaces, bazaars and everyday devotion. It is saturated with colors, entrancing music, rich cuisine, and wild habitats of amazing biodiversity. Discover it all on this comprehensive overview that marries the iconic cities of the Golden Triangle (Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur) with an unforgettable safari in search of the elusive Bengal tiger, plus a chance to visit a rural village. From its dynastic origins to the Mughal era to the British Raj, experience India's endless transformations on this diverse introduction to the subcontinent.*

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Behold the magnificent Taj Mahal, a travel milestone.
- Ride an elephant to Jaipur's Amber Fort, then explore the Palace of the Winds, Johari Bazaar and other marvels of the "Pink City."
- Go on safari in Bandhavgarh and Kanha National Parks in search of Bengal tigers, and learn about the challenges of protecting this majestic species.
- Experience rural life during a school visit or cooking demonstration.
- Explore the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Delhi, including Jama Masjid, India's second-largest mosque.
- Admire the intricately carved 10th-century temples of Khajuraho, symbolic of the religious coexistence between Hinduism and Jainism.

### WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting





BENGAL TIGERS BY TODD GUSTAFSON | GUSTAFSON PHOTO SAFARI

## ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

### DAY 1 - IN TRANSIT

Depart the U.S. and fly to India.

### DAY 2 - DELHI

Arrive into Delhi, the capital of India. Your guide will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. Please note that this is an arrival day; no activities or meals are included. *Overnight at The Claridges.*

### DAY 3 - DELHI

After breakfast, receive a program orientation and then spend a full day exploring the walled city of Old Delhi and cosmopolitan New Delhi. Old Delhi pulses with energy and color; the hustle and bustle of thronged bazaars is laced by a maze of narrow lanes that twist and turn between tall, leaning houses full of the sights, sounds, and aromas of the Indian subcontinent. Visit the Jama Masjid mosque, with its tapering minarets and marble domes, and experience a rickshaw ride. In the afternoon, explore New Delhi, a city known for its wide boulevards, formal parks, and landmarks like the India Gate, Parliament Building, and the Rashtrapati Bhawan, the official residence of India's president. Also visit the Qutub Minar, a 240-foot tower that dates to the 13th century, and Humayun's Tomb, a 16th-century mausoleum whose architectural influence can be seen in the Taj Mahal. *Overnight at The Claridges. (BLD)*

### DAY 4 - JAIPUR

After breakfast, drive to Jaipur (5-6 hours), the capital of the state of Rajasthan. Also known as the "Pink City," Jaipur owes its name, its foundation, and its planning to the warrior-astronomer Maharaja Jai Singh II. The city sits on a dry lakebed in a wild and somewhat arid landscape, surrounded by barren hills surmounted by fortresses and

crenelated walls. Upon arrival, have the remainder of the day free for leisure activities or go for a walking tour of the bazaar. Stroll through the labyrinth of colorful alleys where artisans make puppets, bangles, and other local handicrafts. The streets are fragrant with the scent of spices—turmeric, cinnamon, cardamom, and more. *Overnight at Alsisar Haveli. (BLD)*

### DAY 5 - JAIPUR

After breakfast, leave for the outskirts of Jaipur to walk through the grounds and structures of the Amber Fort. Originally constructed by a tribe called the Meenas and dedicated to "Amba" or the "Mother Goddess," it was built over the remains of an earlier structure. The present palace complex was commenced in 1592 under the reign of Raja Man Singh, commander of Akbar's army and a member of the emperor's inner circle of nine courtiers. The fort was modified by successive rulers over the next 150 years, until the Kachwahas shifted their capital to Jaipur during the time of Jai Singh II. Here you'll have the choice of reaching the fort either on foot or atop an elephant! The short, steep ascent provides views of Jaipur, Maatha Lake, and the original city walls. One of the fort's most



QUTAB MINAR BY ALEKSANDR ZYKOV



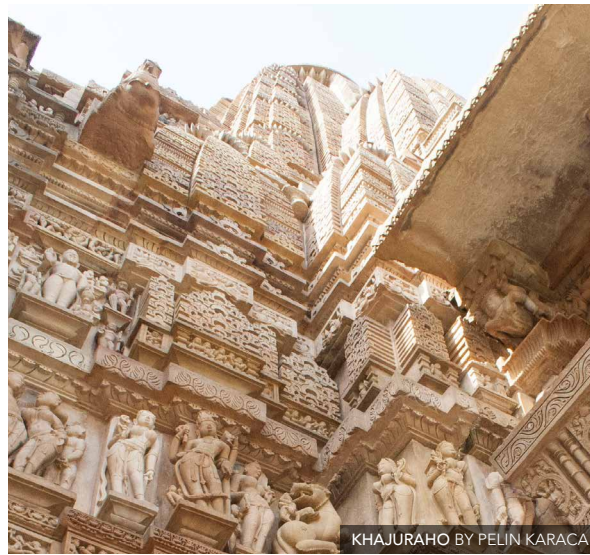
striking features is the Hall of Mirrors. When the palace was occupied by royalty, the hall could be lit at night by a single candle reflected in thousands of tiny, intricate mirrors. After lunch, visit Jantar Mantar, an open-air astronomical observatory, and then stop for a photo at the Hawa Mahal, or Palace of the Winds. Behind the palace's elaborate facade, the ladies of the court could watch the busy activities in the street below without being seen. In the heart of Jaipur is the huge City Palace complex, home to numerous rooms, formal gardens, and the fascinating Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, which contains his personal collection of weaponry, miniature paintings, royal attire, and jewelry. *Overnight at Alsisar Haveli. (BLD)*

## DAY 6 - AGRA

After breakfast, check out and drive to Agra. En route, visit Fatehpur Sikri, a city known for its red sandstone buildings. Emperor Akbar built it as his capital and palace in the late 16th century. Also visit the Bulund Darwaza, one of the largest gateways in the world. Agra was established by Badal Singh in 1475 AD. The ruler and poet Sikandar Lodi made Agra his capital, but he was defeated by Babur, who not only captured Agra but also laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire. In the mid-16th century and earlier 17th century AD, Agra witnessed frenzied building activity, and it was during this time the Taj Mahal was built as a symbol of love. Upon arrival, check in at the hotel. In the afternoon, visit Agra Fort and Mehtab Bagh (Moonlight Garden). *Overnight at ITC Mughal. (BLD)*

## DAY 7 - KHAJURAHO

This morning visit the Taj Mahal at sunrise. The Taj is a white marble mausoleum that was commissioned in 1632 AD by Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal. This monument took 22 years to complete and was designed and planned by Persian architect Ustad Isa. Apart from its stunning design, balance, and perfect symmetry, the Taj is also noted particularly for its elegant domes, intricately carved screens, and renowned inlay work. (Note: Closed on Fridays.) After your visit, return to the hotel and relax until your flight to Khajuraho. Khajuraho is well-known for its magnificent temples, which were built between 950 and 1050 AD. Khajuraho derives its name from the khajur tree (date palm), which can be found in abundance in the area. The divine sculptures in these temples are a tribute to life itself, embodying everything that is sublime and spontaneous about it. The murals depict the life and times of the Chandelas and celebrate the erotic state of being. They not only testify to the mastery of the craftsman, but also to the extraordinary breadth of vision of the Chandela Rajputs under whose reign these temples were constructed. *Overnight at Radisson Jass. (BLD)*



## DAY 8 - BANDHAVGARH

This morning, tour the Jain and Hindu temples in the Khajuraho Group of Monuments. Intricate stone sculptures exhibit images of gods and goddesses, celestial maidens and dancers, animals, and musicians, many in the act of courtship. Khajuraho has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site to preserve this collective glorification of life, love, and joy, which reflect the spirit of creativity and human relationships of the Chandela period. Have lunch, then drive to Bandhavgarh, approximately 5 hours, passing through the villages and countryside of Madhya Pradesh. Upon arrival, check in at the lodge. Bandhavgarh National Park is set among the Vindhya Hills in Madhya Pradesh, and consists of 168 square miles of mixed sal and bamboo forests, grassland, and a complex of deciduous forests.

There are at least 150 species of birds in the park, along with mammals such as tigers, sloth bears, langur monkeys, wild boars, mongooses, and three kinds of deer—chital, sambar, and barking. *Overnight at Bandhavgarh Jungle Lodge. (BLD)*

## DAY 9 - BANDHAVGARH

As soon as dawn breaks, leave for your jungle safari, accompanied by a resident naturalist and forest park guides in 4x4 Jeeps. Return to the lodge for lunch, and then have a second visit to the park. Please note: India's famous tiger parks are quite popular; therefore, visits are tightly controlled. Upon arrival at the park gate, vehicles are assigned a prescribed route whether or not tigers have been seen on this

track recently. The vehicles may only go forward, which can present a problem if a tiger appears out of photo range behind the vehicle. To ensure the best viewing and photo opportunities, there is an optional upgrade (at additional cost) to a "Golden Permit," which allows entry into the park 15 minutes earlier than regular permit, access to all zones without any time restrictions, and allows 15 additional minutes in the park at the end of the day. Return to the lodge for evening tea and free time to relax. *Overnight at Bandhavgarh Jungle Lodge. (BLD)*

## DAY 10 - BANDHAVGARH

Continue with another early morning jungle safari by 4x4 Jeep. Return to the lodge for evening tea and the rest of your time free to relax. *Overnight at Bandhavgarh Jungle Lodge. (BLD)*

## DAY 11 - KANHA

Embark on an early morning jungle safari, then drive approximately 7 hours to Kanha. The drive is through rural countryside and colorful towns and villages. Stop in the sleepy town of Mandla (a sacred city for Gond tribes),

where the Narmada River, second holiest to the Ganges, is the center of activity. Break up the long drive with a picnic lunch before arriving at the lodge. Kanha National Park, set on the Chhota Nagpur Plateau in Madhya Pradesh, provides breathtaking vistas of grassy plains and strands of sal forests. This 366-square-mile preserve was created to save two endangered species, the tiger and the barasingha. The park offers a variety of species including tiger and leopard, cheetah, gaur, barking deer, sambhar deer, and the endangered barasingha deer. *Overnight at Kanha Jungle Lodge. (BLD)*

## DAY 12 - KANHA

As soon as dawn breaks, set out on a jungle safari accompanied by a resident naturalist and forest park guides in 4x4 open Jeeps. Explore the area's abundant nature and enjoy a picnic breakfast. Spend the remainder of the morning at leisure or go for a nature walk, visit a nearby village and school, or watch a cooking demonstration. Have lunch at the lodge. This afternoon, there is a second safari by 4x4 open Jeep. Return to the lodge for evening tea and free time for stargazing. *Overnight at Kanha Jungle Lodge. (BLD)*

## DAY 13 - KANHA

Today explore the park's jungle again, with the afternoon at leisure. In the evening, enjoy a screening of the "Tigerland" documentary. *Overnight at Kanha Jungle Lodge. (BLD)*

## DAY 14 - DELHI

After one last morning game drive into the park, depart for Jabalpur. Have lunch and then proceed to Jabalpur airport for your flight to Delhi. Transfer to the hotel for time to freshen up before returning to the international terminal and boarding your flight back home. *Day room at Radisson Blu. (BLD)*

## DAY 15 - US

Arrive home.

## LAND PRICING

**\$5,150** (15 participants + 1 leader)

**\$5,675** (10 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, internal flights, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, full-time guide for duration of program, and carbon offset.

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included.

Valid for travel through April 30, 2021. For travel May through December 2021, pricing is \$5,525 (15 participants + 1 leader) or \$6,125 (10 participants + 1 leader). Does not operate during the monsoon season.



## TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

## THE FINE PRINT

*A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Non-refundable final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure.*



ACTIVITY LEVEL **2** EASY-MODERATE

## WHAT TO EXPECT

This 15-day journey celebrates India's iconic historic, cultural, and natural attractions, with six safari days as its centerpiece. It is moderately paced, with 1–3-night stays at 7 locations, and easy physical activity. This mainly entails walking in urban and rural areas over mostly flat paths that also have some cobbled or uneven surfaces, and stairs. To reach Jaipur's Amber Fort you may walk uphill for about 20 minutes, or choose to ride up by elephant or 4x4 vehicle. Expect many early mornings, including a sunrise visit to the Taj Mahal and safari drives when you depart at dawn to see animals at their most active. Safari drives can be bumpy. Otherwise, land travel takes place aboard air-conditioned, private motorcoaches. There are several long overland transfers of 5–7 hours, plus two internal flights. Weather is typically humid and warm, with the hottest temperatures (90°–101°) occurring between April–July. November–February are the coolest and driest months; August is the rainiest.



*This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at [holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe](http://holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe)*