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Tour Notes

India – Big Cats and Small Kingdoms - Rajasthan and Gujarat **Duration – 15 Days**



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●●○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●●●

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Experience India's rich and diverse wildlife through its array of distinctive landscapes
- ✓ Search for the iconic tiger and visit the impressive fort in stunning Ranthambore National Park
- ✓ Track leopards in the remote areas of southern Rajasthan
- ✓ Seek out the last remaining Asiatic lions in Gir National Park in Gujarat
- ✓ Explore the Little Rann of Kutch, home of the endangered Indian Wild Ass
- ✓ Fascinating insights into rural tribal village life
- ✓ Breathtaking views from the magnificent temples of Jain at Palitana



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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotels throughout. Deluxe tented accommodation in Ranthambore
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Maximum 12
- Start Point:** Delhi – you can arrive any time on day 1
- End Point:** Ahmedabad – evening flight on day 15
- Transport:** Minibus/train/safari jeeps
- Countries:** India



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India – Big Cats and Small Kingdoms – Rajasthan & Gujarat

India has extraordinarily abundant and diverse wildlife. On this remarkable tour you seek out three iconic large cats: search for tigers in Ranthambore National Park, leopards in the remote areas of southern Rajasthan and the only remaining Asiatic lions in Gir National Park, Gujarat. This tour is not confined to wildlife though. It offers fascinating insights into the customs of tribal rural village life and includes a climb up the magnificently poised Jain temples in Palitana. Add to this the dramatic salt flats and marshland of Kutch, home to the rare Indian Wild Ass. This tour boasts a great combination of culture, history and wildlife and is not to be missed.

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not merely passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies, it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK: we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. On this tour you will be accompanied by the same guide from Delhi until Jodhpur, and another guide from Jodhpur to Ahmedabad. For certain of the safaris in the itinerary you will be accompanied by local guides and naturalists.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrive Delhi

Arrive in Delhi, the capital of India, where you are met and transferred to your hotel. If your flight times are suitable, there may be time to take a guided afternoon heritage walk to explore the bustling spice bazaar and chaotic streets of Old Delhi and view the city at sunset from a rooftop vantage point. Overnight at Udaman Hotel or similar. No meals included.

Old Delhi

Old Delhi was the capital of Moghul India between the 12th and the 19th centuries. You will find here many mosques, monuments and forts of the Moghul period of India's history. The medieval atmosphere of the bazaars of Old Delhi contrasts sharply with the open, spacious streets of New Delhi, the imperial city created as the capital of India by the British.

Day 2 – Delhi – Ranthambore National Park (Train – approx. 5 hours)

This morning is at leisure and you can explore some of the bazaars in the immediate vicinity of the hotel. After lunch take the afternoon Janshabadi Express train, with air-conditioning and excellent views of the Rajasthan countryside, to Sawai Madhopur, your base for visiting the stunning Ranthambore National Park. The landscape is much more open than in many other parks, making tiger sightings more frequent, though of course still a matter of chance. On arrival at Sawai Madhopur railway station you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Overnight at Ranthambore Heritage Haveli or similar. (BLD)



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Ranthambore National Park

The former hunting reserve of the Maharaja of Jaipur, Ranthambhore derives its name from a 10th century fort that sits high on a craggy outcrop. In the early 1970s Ranthambhore was included in the first phase of Project Tiger and subsequent visitors have been thrilled by the tiger sightings. Set routes, usually in shared vehicles, are used for early morning and late afternoon game drives, with deer, monkeys, and colourful birdlife all frequent sightings. Although reports show a declining tiger population, Ranthambhore remains one of the best places to view tigers in the wild.

Day 3 – Ranthambore National Park Safari

Today take a morning and afternoon game drive by shared jeep and hope to spot the majestic Bengal Tiger and other wild animals. The varied landscapes within the park are attractive and the wildlife safari by purpose built safari vehicles is an enjoyable experience even if wildlife proves elusive. Morning safaris usually start at around 06:00, and afternoon safaris at around 14:00, and usually last for 3 to 4 hours, though timings vary according to the season. Overnight at Ranthambore Heritage Haveli or similar. (BLD)

Day 4 – Ranthambore National Park – Jodhpur (Train – approx. 7-8 hours)

Early this morning visit the magnificent old Ranthambore Fort, now populated only by monkeys. There are fabulous views over the National Park, and this is also a great place for bird watching. Then transfer to Sawai Madhopur railway station to board the train to Jodhpur also known as the Blue City and the second largest in Rajasthan. Your seat will be in a pleasant, air-conditioned sleeper carriage. On arrival at Jodhpur railway station, transfer to your hotel. Overnight at Pal Haveli or similar. (BL)

Jodhpur

Jodhpur is universally known as 'The Blue City' and, even at first glance, the cobalt coloured array of 'blue-washed' houses makes the reason obvious! Locals dispute the origins – some say that the original blue walls were the Brahmin caste's homes, others that it was an attempt to drive away termites with copper sulphate, or simply that it repels the solar rays in this, 'The Sun City'. The original city, founded in 1459 by Rao Jodha and was the capital of the Princely state of Jodhpur, known as 'Marwar' – the desert country. Clustered behind formidable walls and in the shadow of the huge citadel, the city has now spilled over into a large area and numbers over a million people, mainly Hindus, though nearly a fifth are followers of Islam. The state was fiercely independent and during the separation of the British Raj, Jodhpur initially resisted inclusion within the nation of India. Once persuaded, it remained as Jodhpur State until absorption into Rajasthan in 1956. Dripping with historic sites and famed for its textiles and small-scale metalwork and fabric industries, the city is a fascinating place to wander and explore – be sure to look into one of its celebrated sweet shops to try out the local delicacies.

Day 5 – Jodhpur – Bhenswara (Driving time – approx. 2.5 hours)

In the morning you visit the impressive and invincible 15th century Meherangarh Fort, a quite astonishing feat of architecture which dominates the city's array of famously blue dwellings and a magnificent vantage point. After the visit you will walk back down into the town through the labyrinth of narrow streets to get a real feel for the city. Lunch taken, your journey takes you to the picturesque Aravalli hills of south west Rajasthan, bordering the great Thar desert. The terrain here is a unique mixture of hills, sand dunes and vivid ravines. The area is relatively untouched by tourism and offers a good insight into a traditional way of life. You stay in a Rajput country estate whose 'castle' has been converted into a striking heritage hotel. Overnight at Ravla Bhenswara, or similar. (BLD)



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Meherangarh Fort

The Meherangarh Fort, or 'Majestic Fort', is one of the most impressive in Rajasthan. Its location on a rocky outcrop with majestic views to the seemingly Blue City below is quite outstanding. Lining the ramp climbing up to the fort are a number of enormous stone gateways, the last of which shows the hand prints of the royal satis, the former wives of the Maharajas who jumped onto their husband's funeral pyres before the British outlawed the practice. Such is the grandeur of the setting that official state ceremonies are still carried out here from time to time.

Day 6 – Bhenswara

Today you explore the fascinating region around Bhenswara which is home to some of the more pastoral tribes of India. You will take a jeep safari to these villages to experience the lifestyle of the tribal people who live in complete harmony with nature: the way of life is intriguing, since the tribe were until relatively recently, nomadic. The locals are extremely welcoming, especially the delightful children who will tag along, pied-piper fashion. The location also is great for wildlife and sightings may include Wild Boar, Antelope, Langur Monkeys and even the nesting sites of Indian vultures. The rock-strewn region of Bhenswara is also the natural habitat for the elusive Leopard and your host at Bhenswara is a keen tracker. As the sun sets you will stop at a stunning location to soak up the tranquillity whilst enjoying some Masala Chai and biscuits. Later as dark descends, enjoy a thrilling, eerie evening safari drive to try and get a glimpse of the Leopard; although sightings are rare, the mere chance is compelling enough and the sense of anticipation is breathtaking. Overnight at Ravla Bhenswara, or similar. (BLD)

Bhenswara

Situated in the picturesque Aravalli hills of south west Rajasthan, Bhenswara borders the great Thar desert. The terrain here is a unique mixture of hills, sand dunes and picturesque ravines. The area is relatively untouched by tourism and offers a good insight into a traditional way of life. You stay in a Rajput country estate whose 'castle' has been converted into an attractive heritage hotel. The owner of the property is 10th generation family and is passionate about the region, its people and local biodiversity and is a keen birder and tracker.

Day 7 – Mount Abu (Driving time – approx. 3-4 hours)

This morning you drive from Bhenswara to the former hill station of Mount Abu. The last hour of the journey is a twisty scenic ride up into the mountains. On arrival, you visit the magnificent Dilwara Temples, one of the finest examples of Jain architecture in India. Later this afternoon you take a stroll in the small but picturesque Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary, a prime spot for seeing Red-cheeked bulbuls and possibly even a crocodile, before taking in the sunset from a truly magnificent viewpoint. Overnight at Connaught House or similar (BLD)

Note: No food or drink or cameras are allowed in the Jain temple. Shorts are also not permitted and you must remove your shoes, so please wear socks if you do not wish to go barefoot.

Mount Abu

At around 1200 metres above sea level, Mount Abu is the only hill station in Rajasthan and its wooded surroundings provide a great contrast to the desert which dominates much of the rest of the state. Many of the Maharajas had summer houses built here. As with most hill stations, Mount Abu surrounds a lovely lake. And just outside the town are the magnificent Dilwara temples, one of the finest examples of Jain architecture in India. The local biodiversity is very different to the low-lying surroundings and the birdlife,



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butterflies and forests are abundant in their unusual species. Nowadays, the Maharaja's and colonial officer's huge Polo Field at the heart of the town play host to the Gujaratis who flock here from the neighbouring state to enjoy the milder air and to take the traditional walk round the beautiful Nakki Lake.

Day 8- Little Rann of Kutch (Driving time – approx. 4-5 hours)

Over the border into Gujarat lies the Little Rann of Kutch, a vast expanse of flat wilderness which is seasonally flooded by the monsoon and then dries into huge expanses of salt flats and desiccated low grasses. You stay in a standard Rann Cottage / safari-style camp with your own private cottage, a few minutes drive from the nature reserve's plains. Dasada is a small village occupied mainly by farmers, nomadic cattle herders and artisans. It provides the perfect base from which to explore the Little Rann of Kutch, the last refuge in India of the Asiatic Wild Ass, an elegant, toffee and cream coloured member of the horse family. Boasting over 300 species, including 2 endemic larks, the avian population explodes with winter migrants, such as flamingoes, pelicans and MacQueen's bustard, etc. After some relaxation time, you visit nearby villages, inhabited by a number of interesting communities. The women here are experts in embroidery using herringbone stitches interspersed with small mirrors, and occasional chain stitches for peacocks and other motifs. Overnight at Rann Riders or Royal Safari Camp or similar. (BLD)

Little Rann of Kutch

The salty desert expanse of the Little Rann of Kutch sprawls out over 5,000sqkm. Its name makes sense only in comparison with the salt desert next door: the Greater Rann of Kutch, again, a part of the Kutch tribe's heartlands, which stretches out across 7,500sqkm. The word *rann* means "salty desert" and while driving through the Little Rann of Kutch, a salty desert is all you see. The air is dry and the earth parched and at sunset the scene looks akin to something out of Star Wars. The Little Rann contains one of the country's largest wildlife reserves, the Wild Ass Sanctuary, where the topography varies from large marshlands to brown-grey patches of soil with a few small thorny shrubs. The desert fox and the endangered Indian Wolf also roam the desert here and you may even catch sight of a wandering McQueen's Bustard or two!

Day 9 – Exploring the Little Rann of Kutch

This morning, at dawn, you will take a first safari drive to the wetlands area of the Little Rann of Kutch: expect a huge range of birds during the winter period – Desert wheatears, Greater and Lesser Flamingo, stints, plovers, stilts, ruff, godwits, Steppe eagle, Dalmatian pelican, storks, cranes – the list seems endless. Either have a picnic breakfast, or return late to eat at the hotel. After lunch and some leisure time, take an afternoon safari in search of the indigenous and rare Indian Wild Ass. The plains also provide a haven for the endangered Indian wolf, desert cats, striped hyenas and birds of prey. The scenery is quite remarkable in the late afternoon light and would not be out of place in a Star Wars film. If time allows you will also see how local people pan for salt in this harsh environment, before driving home and perhaps spotting the occasional nightjar on the twilight road surfaces. Overnight at Rann Riders or Royal Safari Camp or similar (BLD)

Day 10 – Dasada – Junagardh – Gondal (Driving time – approx. 5-6 hours)

This morning you depart early and drive to Gondal. En route you stop at the town of Junagadh, a sizeable town with atmospheric narrow streets in its evidently historically wealthy old quarter and notable in particular for the ruins of Uparkot Fort dating back to 300 BC. To reach the walled citadel, you will take a tuk-tuk and head through an atmospheric tunnelled passage and then out onto the wooded slopes. From the elevated perch of the fort ramparts there are fine views over the town before it and to verdant forest to the other side where Black kites and Spotted eagles soar on the thermals that rise across the Jain Temple-dotted



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mountains. If time allows you may also visit the Buddhist caves and then walk back down into the old quarter to rejoin your minibus. After the visit you continue to Gondal and visit the 18th century Naulakha Palace which also houses a private palace museum with some interesting artefacts. Here too you can savour a taste of the royal lifestyle in the Maharaja's palace, now a heritage hotel and experience the eerie thrill of the passage overhead of Indian fruit bats as dusk gathers. Overnight at Orchard Palace, or similar. (BL)

Note – the steps up to the ramparts of Uparkot Fort do not have a hand railing and also require stooping under a low entrance.

Gondal

Gondal is a former princely state which was known for its progressive rulers. In the late 19th century, Gondal did away with the women's purdah or veil, abolished land taxes and insisted on compulsory education for girls. Gondal is a picturesque town with plenty of gracious architecture, wide tree-lined roads and European lampposts, well worth strolling in to soak up the atmosphere. There is also plenty of evidence of the architectural ambition of the eighteenth and nineteenth century maharajas who build lavishly and impressively, from palaces and residences for their guests, to the gothic magnificence of the Sangramsinh School.

Day 11 – Gondal – Sasangir – Asiatic Lions (Driving time – approx. 2.5 hours)

After breakfast take a look at the incredible collection of vintage cars on show at the Orchard Palace belonging to the Maharaja. Continue to Gir Forest National Park. On arrival you will have some time at leisure before you embark on an exciting safari around mid afternoon in search of the Asiatic Lion and other wildlife. Whilst waiting for access to be granted to the park you can spend some time looking at the engaging interpretation centre, providing an insight into the park and its flora and fauna. Overnight Gir Birding Lodge. (BLD)

Note – Please ensure you take water with you for the safari especially in the afternoon when temperatures are hotter.

Gir Forest National Park

Gir Forest is the only habitat of the lion left outside Africa. And with the thriving lion population now several hundred strong, your chances of spotting one are very good, in particular towards the end of the dry season from January – March. Wildlife is harder to spot in October and November, soon after the monsoon, when the forest is dense and the grasses long. However this also is when the forest is at its most picturesque and the arrival of migrant birds boosts the avian population there significantly. Game viewing is done by jeep and is normally at its best in the late afternoon. Other wildlife in the park includes panthers/leopards, hyenas, foxes, wild boar, sambhar, chital, and nilgai. There is also always rich bird life including the rare Paradise fly-catcher.

Day 12 – Sasan Gir – Palitana (Driving time – approx. 4 - 5 hours)

For those that wish to, venture back into the park early in search of wildlife. The safari starts at around 6am and should finish around 9:30am. Alternatively, relax in the mango and lemon groves of the hotel grounds, either enjoying the views from the roof-top terraces or your verandah, or venturing down to the rustic bird-hide at the edge of the property. Later this morning we drive to Palitana. Overnight at Vijay Vilas Palace or similar. (B)



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Palitana

Palitana is an important place of worship in Jainism, a belief system that revolves around non-violence toward all living things - people, animals, even insects. comprising the holiest place on earth for Jainism. An astonishing 863 magnificent marble Jain temples are built on the slopes of the nearby Shatrunjaya Hill with steps stretching 591m high. They were built at different times but most belong to the 16th century and bear many common architectural features. The 4-km ascent via the 3950 steps takes about two hours to the top and a further hour to descend.

Day 13 – Palitana

Early this morning, around 6am to avoid the heat of the day, you ascend the steps to the top of the hill to see the temples and enjoy the magnificent views. Including those you pass along the way, there are 863 magnificent marble Jain temples, and it is likely you will see many white-clad pilgrims joining you for the ascent. From the top of the hill, a breathtaking panoramic view of the Gulf of Cambay and the countryside makes an unforgettable picture for any traveller. The main temple is quietly bustling with devotional acts and makes for a compelling and privileged visit. You will have plenty of time to enjoy the temples before descending back to the town. Overnight at Vijay Vilas Palace, or similar. (B)

Note: The excursion should not be undertaken by anyone with a serious pre existing medical condition. The climb is not steep but you are ascending around 500 metres in total. It is possible to be carried up to the temples on a dolli (swing chair) by local people who will of course charge for the service. Please ensure you take a day pack with plenty of water. Cameras are strictly not allowed from the very bottom of the steps. Please also ensure you dress respectfully – no shorts allowed.

Day 14 – Palitana – Velavadar National Park (Driving time – approx. 2.5 hours)

After breakfast we drive through extensive plains, which gives way to thorny scrub, to Velavadar National Park. On arrival, you will have some leisure time before you embark on a late afternoon safari though the park by jeep (sharing basis). You will be on the lookout for the beautiful Blackbuck antelope and, if you are lucky, the endangered Indian Wolf. The birdlife and in particular the raptors are also very impressive. Overnight Blackbuck Lodge or Blackbuck Safari Lodge. (BLD)

Velvadar National Park

Velavadar National Park also known as Blackbuck National Park is a utterly memorable landscape of dessicated flat grassland plains, rich in wildlife: this particularly includes India's largest herds of blackbuck (a beautiful Indian antelope); additionally, at dawn there is a good chance of seeing the endangered Indian wolf close to the watering holes, whilst striped hyena, and smaller mammals like jackal, jungle cat, Indian fox and hare are in evidence. It is also the largest roosting ground for harriers in the world and the up close sightings you are likely to get here of raptors is quite remarkable, from Pallid harrier and Imperial eagle to Besra and Black-shouldered kite.

Day 15 – Velvadar National Park – Ahmedabad (Driving time – approx. 3 hours)

For those who wish another drive into the park is possible this morning, but if you prefer you can relax in the beautiful surroundings of the lodge. Later, you depart for Ahmedabad where you will transfer to the airport for your evening flight (BL)

For those that wish, extra nights can be booked in Ahmedabad on request.



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Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
Overland transport in private vehicle
Train tickets Delhi-Sawai Madhopur in Chair Car
Train tickets Sawai Madhopur – Jodhpur in 3 tier A/C sleeper class
All accommodation on twin-share basis
Park entrance fees for excursions listed in the itinerary
Services of English speaking guide (103 pax) / tour leader (3 pax +)
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Excluded:

International flights & Domestic flight Ahmedabad - Delhi
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Visas
Services, Meals and Drinks other than those mentioned in the itinerary
Laundry, telephone calls and expenditure of a personal nature
Any Gala dinner supplement on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve
Entrance fees (unless specifically mentioned in the inclusions) and extra charges for camera and video
Tips and gratuities (see the notes section – a tipping kitty will be collected on arrival)

Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to the areas of India that we visit. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 12pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour



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which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

On this tour we stay in mid-range comfortable accommodation - a mix of hotels from comfortable to the newly renovated luxurious wildlife Resorts in Rann of Kutch and Velavadar. All accommodation has private bathrooms. Some of the properties used on this tour are wonderful heritage style hotel with lots of character.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Camera Fees

Please note that for this tour, the camera fees for the National Parks in Gujarat are approximately Rs 1,200 in Dasada, Rs 1400 per safari in Sasan Gir and Rs 1400 in Velavadar.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is very much part of the culture in India and is usually expected. Tipping can often be an awkward affair, especially when in an unfamiliar country where you are not sure when or how much to tip. As such, your guide will collect an amount of between £60 - £70 per person on arrival depending on the group size which will be used to tip hotel staff, local sightseeing guides, drivers and any other hotel staff throughout the tour. A tip for the main tour guide is left up to you and is not part of the kitty. A suggested amount is £2 – 3 per person per day.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: India is well equipped with ATMs, although less so in smaller towns than in larger cities



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Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are generally only accepted in the more expensive shops and restaurants

Local Currency: Rupee

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Pound Sterling or US Dollars

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

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.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations 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 and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to India. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smarttraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.



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Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

Your passport must be machine readable, with 2 blank pages for your visa and valid for a minimum of 180 days at the time of your visa application.

The guidelines regarding passport validity on arrival in India are unclear. To avoid possible problems at immigration, make sure your passport is valid for a minimum of 180 days at the time of entry into India.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. The use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

The climate of much of the Subcontinent - which includes Sri Lanka, India, Bhutan, Nepal & Pakistan - is dominated by heat, monsoons and the Himalayas. Northern India enjoys a predominantly dry, desert climate, with the months between October and March providing the best time to visit. October and March can still be very hot by day with temperatures into the high 30's Centigrade. If you prefer cooler conditions then November – February will be more comfortable. During this time nights can be quite cool. Misty conditions are common in early mornings during winter.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night, especially in the desert. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy. Rain is quite rare in the dry winter season but cannot be entirely ruled out.

You should bear in mind that India tends to have a conservative attitude towards dress. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women. In temples you will be asked to remove your shoes so please wear socks if you do not wish to be Barefoot.

Road Conditions

Most roads on this tour are in a reasonable or good condition, but you will encounter some sections where works are in progress or rural sections where the roads are not in such good order. Safaris are carried out mostly in jeeps, ideal for the terrain but please be advised that safaris are still bumpy.



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Safari Expectations

On this tour you have the opportunity to see some amazing biodiversity. However these animals are wild. We cannot guarantee sightings. Your chance of seeing larger cats are increased from January – March when the land is parched. From October – December parks are often lush from the rains and wildlife is harder to see. The flip side of this is that the forests and parks are more beautiful. October and November is also a great time for birding and migratory species. So please enjoy what nature has to offer and keep expectations realistic.

Heritage Hotels

During the tour we will stay at times in wonderfully atmospheric old heritage hotels. In many cases these hotels have been converted from old forts and/or palaces. Many hotels will not have lifts although they are not high rise hotels so they usually only have a few floors and assistance can be provided with bags at all hotels. Also beware of clearance issues if you are tall getting into rooms and through corridors. Some areas may not be well lit so always carry a small torch.

Gujarat

Kindly note that Gujarat is a dry state in India and alcohol is not served. Alcohol is available in Rajasthan so up to and including Mount Abu.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please also bring a torch/flashlight or a head-torch for any unexpected electricity outages or for dimly lit areas.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended. Lighter sandals are fine for travelling.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

230-240volts. Plugs are usually of the European two round pin variety.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These notes were updated 31 October 2022.