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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 - India – Big Cats and Small Kingdoms (Rajasthan & Gujarat)



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
End Point: Ahmedabad
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'll be met and driven to hotel accommodation. Those arriving in good time may be able to take an afternoon heritage walk exploring the fragrant spice bazaar and chaotic streets of Old Delhi, at the end of the day viewing the city at sunset from a rooftop vantage point. Overnight at Florence Inn 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 (Approximate journey time: five hours)

This morning is free to independently explore some of the bazaars in the immediate vicinity of the hotel. After lunch we head to the station and board the air-conditioned Janshatabdi Express. The journey offers excellent views of the Rajasthan countryside en route to Sawai Madhopur, your base for visiting Ranthambore National Park. On arrival transfer to hotel accommodation. Overnight at The Ranthambore Bagh / Om Rudrapriya or similar. (BLD)

Ranthambore National Park

The former hunting reserve of the Maharaja of Jaipur, Ranthambore derives its name from a 10th century fort that sits high on a craggy outcrop. In the early 1970s Ranthambore was included in the first phase of Project Tiger and subsequent visitors have been thrilled by the tiger sightings. Set routes, usually in shared



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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 Om Rudrapriya or similar. (BLD)

Day 4 – Ranthambore National Park – Jodhpur (*Approximate journey time: seven to eight hours*)

Ranthambore's landscape is more open than most Indian parks, increasing the chances of seeing tigers and other wildlife during game drives by purpose-built safari vehicles. Royal Bengal tigers are the headline species here and guides will do their best to search them out. However, the park's varied landscapes create habitats for a multitude of wildlife and time is also spent appreciating the intricacies of the broader ecosystem. Game drives start at around 6:00am and 2:00pm, usually lasting three to four hours according to the season. 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 (*Approximate driving time: two-and-a-half-hours*)

This morning we visit the impressive and ultimately invincible 15th century Mehrangarh Fort, a quite astonishing feat of architecture which looms over the city's famously blue dwellings. From this magnificent vantage point, walk back down to the town through a labyrinth of narrow streets, gaining a real feel for the city. After lunch, drive to the picturesque hills of the Aravalli Range in south west Rajasthan, bordering the great Thar Desert. The landscape here combines hills, sand dunes and ravines and is relatively unexplored by commercial tourism. Characterful accommodation is provided at a Rajput country estate whose 'castle' has been converted into a striking heritage hotel. Overnight at Ravla Bhenswara, or similar. (BLD)

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.



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Day 6 – Bhenswara

Today is dedicated to the fascinating region around Bhenswara, home to some of India's more pastoral tribes. Jeep safaris to rural villages allow glimpses into the lifestyle of tribal people who live in harmony with nature. Villagers are extremely welcoming, especially the children who will tag along with visitors, pied-piper fashion. The location also is rich in wildlife and sightings may include wild boar, antelopes, langur monkeys and even the nesting sites of Indian vultures. Elsewhere, a quieter rock-strewn region provides an ideal habitat for leopard, and the village host at Bhenswara is a keen tracker... As the sun sets, we'll stop at a suitable viewpoint to soak up the tranquil surroundings while enjoying some Masala Chai and biscuits. Later, as darkness falls, we'll head out on a night drive, attempting to glimpse notoriously elusive leopards. Sightings are rare, but that doesn't dampen the excitement and anticipation... 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 (Approximate driving time: three to four hours)

This morning we drive from Bhenswara to the former hill station of Mount Abu. The last hour of the journey is a twisty scenic climb into the mountains. On arrival we visit the magnificent Dilwara Temples, one of the finest examples of Jain architecture in India. After lunch we explore the small but picturesque Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary. Overhead birdlife is varied, and there's a chance to see red-cheeked bulbuls, while elsewhere among the undergrowth crocodiles are a possible sighting. After watching the sunset from this magnificent viewpoint, we drive to our hotel accommodation. Overnight at Connaught House or similar. (BLD)

Please note: *No food or drink or cameras are allowed in the Jain temple. Shorts are also not permitted, and shoes must be removed.*

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, 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 (Approximate driving time: four to five hours)

Over the border into Gujarat lies Little Rann of Kutch, a vast expanse of flat wilderness seasonally flooded by the monsoon that dries into huge expanses of salt flats and desiccated low grassland. This apparently arid wilderness is also the last refuge in India of the Asiatic wild ass, an elegant, toffee and cream coloured member of the horse family. Elsewhere, birdlife is extensive with over 300 recorded species. Accommodation here is a safari-style camp with private cottages, a few minutes' drive from the reserve at Dasada. The small village of farmers, nomadic cattle herders and artisans makes a perfect base from which to explore Little Rann of Kutch. After some relaxation time, we'll visit communities in nearby villages where women are experts in embroidery using herringbone stitches interspersed with small mirrors, and occasional chain stitches creating peacock motifs. Overnight at Rann Riders, or similar. (BLD)



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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

Wildlife rises early, as such at dawn we'll take a first safari drive into the wetland area of Little Rann of Kutch. The range of avian species is immense and grows further over the winter period to include desert wheatears, greater and lesser flamingos, stints, plovers, stilts, godwits, steppe eagles, Dalmatian pelicans, storks, cranes – the list seems endless. Choose to have a picnic breakfast or eat later at the hotel. After lunch and some time to relax, take an afternoon safari in search of the indigenous and rare Asiatic wild ass. The plains also provide a haven for the endangered Indian wolf, desert cats and striped hyenas. In late afternoon light the landscape is remarkable and would not be out of place in a Star Wars film. If time allows, we see how local people pan for salt before driving back to the hotel, along the way perhaps spotting the occasional nightjar by the road. Overnight at Rann Riders, or similar. (BLD)

Day 10 – Dasada – Junagadh – Gondal (Approximate driving time: five to six hours)

This morning we depart early and drive to Gondal. En route we stop at Junagadh, a sizeable town where atmospheric narrow streets characterise its historically wealthy old quarter. It's also notable for the nearby ruins of Uparkot Fort dating from 300 BC. We take tuk-tuks to reach the walled citadel, heading through a tunnelled passage and out onto wooded hillside. From an elevated position on the fort's ramparts there are fine views over the town and to distant forest beyond. Black kites and spotted eagles soar on thermals rising before the temple-dotted mountains. If time allows we'll visit nearby Buddhist cave temples, afterwards walking down into the town's old quarter to meet our transport. Later we visit Gondal and its 18th century Naulakha Palace where the private museum has some interesting silver artefacts. Accommodation here offers a tantalising glimpse into a lost royal lifestyle as we stay in a wing of the maharaja's palace, now a heritage hotel. Overnight at Orchard Palace, or similar. (BL)

Please note: Steps up to the ramparts of Uparkot Fort do not have hand railings and require those entering to stoop 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 (Approximate driving time: two-and-a-half-hours)

After breakfast we have explore the hotel's 'Royal Garages', home to vintage cars once belonging to the Maharaja, said to be the greatest collection in the whole of Asia. Afterwards we continue by road to Gir Forest National Park. On arrival there's time to relax until mid-afternoon when we embark on a game drive in search



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of the park's key species, Asiatic lion. At the park gate there's a well-presented interpretation centre, providing an overview of the park's flora and fauna. Overnight Gir Birding Lodge. (BLD)

Please note: *Make sure to take drinking water on the safari, particularly in the afternoon when temperatures are higher.*

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 (Approximate driving time: four to five hours)

Those wishing to make an early foray into the park in search of wildlife may take a 6:00am game drive, returning to the hotel around 9:30am. Alternatively, relax among the hotel's mango and lemon groves, take in the views from the roof-top terraces or your veranda, or ventures down to the rustic bird-hide. Later, we'll check-out and drive to Palitana. Overnight at Vijay Vilas Palace or similar. (B)

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

Palitana's remarkable mountain has 863 temples, and the greater complex almost 3,000, making it the world's largest collection of religious architecture. It's the duty of every adherent to the Jain faith to ascend the mountain at least once in their lifetime. At around 6:00am, avoiding the heat of the day, we aim to ascend the 3,800 steps leading to the top of the hill. As we climb it's likely we'll see many white-clad pilgrims making the same journey. At the summit the main temple will be quietly consumed by those making devotional acts, adding a compelling sense of privilege to our visit. Outside, the view is a breath-taking panorama over the Gulf of Cambay and the countryside below, a memorable sight for pilgrims and travellers alike. There's plenty of time to appreciate the temples before descending to the town. Overnight at Vijay Vilas Palace, or similar. (B)

Please note: *This excursion should not be undertaken by anyone with a serious pre-existing medical condition. The climb is not steep but does entail an ascent of around 500 metres. Porters are available to carry people to the temples on a dolli (swing chair). They will of course charge for the service. Please ensure you take a day pack with plenty of water. Cameras are strictly prohibited from the beginning of the steps. Please also ensure you dress respectfully – no shorts, short skirts, uncovered shoulders etc...*

Day 14 – Palitana – Velavadar National Park (Approximate driving time: two-and-a-half-hours)

After breakfast we traverse extensive plains that eventually give way to thorny scrub and the protected area of Velavadar National Park. On arrival there's time to relax before embarking on a late afternoon safari though



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the park. Possible wildlife highlights include blackbuck antelope and endangered Indian wolf. Birdlife is rich and varied with raptors (birds of prey) being well represented. Overnight Blackbuck Lodge. (BLD)

Velvadar National Park

Velvadar 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 (*Approximate driving time: three hours*)

The tour ends today. However, an early-morning drive into the park is available for those keen to catch wildlife at its most active, leaving around 6:00am and returning close to 9:30am. It's also possible to simply relax and enjoy the lodge's immediate surroundings. Later, we'll depart by road for Ahmedabad and head to the airport to meet onward evening flights. (BL)

Please note: *Extra nights may be booked in Ahmedabad on request.*

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 / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Excluded:

International flights
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
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)



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Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). 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 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 consisting of small hotels and guesthouses. 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.



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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

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

Most nationalities need to get a visa before travelling to India.

Make sure you get the right visa for your travel and that it's valid for the purpose and duration of your stay. If you enter India on the wrong visa, you could be detained on arrival and you may be deported and blacklisted, meaning that you can't enter India again. Make sure you meet entry requirements.



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From 1 April 2017, the length of stay on an e-visa has been increased from 30 days to 60 days with double entry on tourist and business e-visa and triple entry on medical e-visa. The 60 days start on the date of your first entry into India on your e-visa. When you arrive at the airport, your passport will be stamped and an expiry date for your e-visa will be handwritten by an Immigration Officer. Please be aware that 60 days is not automatically equal to 2 calendar months. Check the date that is written on your passport and make sure you leave the country before your visa expires.

Nationalities and people who meet the eligibility criteria can apply for a double entry e-Tourist Visa (e-TV) to enter India at certain designated airports. You can find more information about the eligibility criteria on the government of India's e-Tourist Visa website. Beware of fake websites offering the e-TV service.

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.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

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.



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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.

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.



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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 5th November 2019