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Tour Notes

India – Temples, Tigers and Tribes

Tour Duration – 13 Days



Tour Rating

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

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore the medieval architecture at Orchha
- ✓ Enjoy the glorious sculptures at Khajuraho
- ✓ Experience India's rich and diverse wildlife through its distinctive landscapes
- ✓ Search for the incomparable tigers in Bandhavgarh and Kanha National Parks
- ✓ Interact with rarely visited tribal communities
- ✓ Immerse yourself in an area of India which few outsiders encounter





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Tour Map - India – Temples, Tigers and Tribes of Central India



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotels; basic accommodation in Boramdeo
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: Delhi
Transport: Minibus, air-conditioned train with chair-car, domestic flight
Countries: India



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India – Temples, Tigers and Tribes of Central India

India remains a fiendishly impossible country to package, and perhaps for this reason its allure is profound and enduring. No single visit should seek to condense what must be one of the world's most diverse and intense travel destination. However, this well-balanced tour combines some of India's best wildlife viewing opportunities and explorations of fascinating historic sites, with a rare opportunity to become genuinely immersed in the rural life of village India – it's a truly memorable experience for any visitor.

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. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip, but on occasions it may be advantageous to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrive Delhi

Arrive in Delhi, the capital of India, meet your driver and transfer to hotel accommodation. Depending upon timings it may be possible to arrange local excursions. Overnight at Taj Hotel or similar. No meals.

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 dating from 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 majestically proportioned imperial city, created as the capital of India by the British.

Day 2 – Orchha

After breakfast, head to the railway station and board the express train to Jhansi. On arrival in Jhansi drive the short but picturesque 18km road route to Orchha, a small but historic village in northern Madhya Pradesh, one-time bastion of the Bundela dynasty. Overnight Amar Mahal or similar. (B)

Orchha

Its very name, meaning 'Hidden Place', is intriguingly seductive and its setting amidst dhak forest lends it an air of abandoned glory: during the 16th and 17th centuries, this was the capital of the Bundela dynasty who built a fort palace on a small island at a bend in the Betwa River, later followed by other magnificent fortifications, palaces and temples. The rulers here were characterised by their eccentricity and audacity: one Rudra Pratap, driving force behind much of the early sixteenth century building work, died wrestling a cow from the clutches of a local tiger! It is now a peaceful and easy-going place - perfect for relaxation and independent exploration of the scattered, but remarkable ruins. Its relative obscurity in the travelling consciousness is all the more extraordinary when you wander through beautifully preserved fresco-clad palaces in the late afternoon, long after other onlookers have trickled away.



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Day 3 – Orchha

This morning embark on a guided tour of Orchha. Huge monuments which once defined the capital of the Bundela kings now surround and dwarf the small rural village. The largest of these is the palace complex, where the Raj Mahal and Jehangir Mahal display a unique combination of Hindu and Muslim architecture, painted decorations, and ornate tile work. Afterwards, visit Chaturbhuj temple and the enormous riverside cenotaphs. The afternoon is free for independent exploration. Overnight at Amar Mahal or similar. (B)

Day 4 – Khajuraho Erotic Temples

Today, drive from Orchha to Khajuraho. Take a guided tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, a complex of 25 temples dating from 950AD to 1050AD that manifest the finest art and architecture of medieval India. Delicate, sable-coloured sandstone is covered by finely detailed stone carvings. Scenes are sublime and sensuous, ranging from erotic art to subjects drawn from Hindu and Jain religious teachings. Overnight at Ramada Khajuraho. (B)

Khajuraho

The splendour of the Hindu temples at Khajuraho is a sight to behold. They have been immaculately restored and are now classified as a UNESCO world heritage site. It is thought that the temples date from the 10th – 12th centuries from the Chandella dynasty and are prized for their exquisite intricacy, especially the temples in the Western group which are partly constructed with soft coloured sandstone making the temples particularly conducive to viewing in the gentler early morning or late afternoon light. Some temples feature erotic images which have been the cause of much debate between academics and historians to fully explain the content and meaning of the carvings; links to the nearby Tantric cults are a popular theory. There is no doubt however that Khajuraho is a site not to be missed for its incredible and unique artisanship.

Day 5 – Bandhavgarh National Park

The drive from Khajuraho to Bandhavgarh National Park traverses an undulating tree-clad landscape through protected areas of Madhya Pradesh. Bandhavgarh is one of the best places in India to spot a Royal Bengal tiger, and is also home to a wide range of wildlife including leopard, nilgai antelope, jungle cat, wild boar and hyena. The park's birdlife too is prolific with over 150 species recorded. This compact park, with a core area of 105 square kilometres, has the distinction of being the place where the world's first wild albino tiger was spotted. Overnight at Nature Heritage Resort or similar. (BD)

Bandhavgarh National Park

As is often the case in India, the origin of the national park has a darker past: it was a popular tiger hunting area for the local maharajas of Rewa, and this continued well into the 20th century. However, as the largely forested areas in northern India, perfect for the big cats' territories, were progressively felled and shooting of tigers for trophies continued, it became apparent that the Bengal tiger's very existence was in doubt. In this particular case, the maharajah donated the parkland to the state as a nature reserve and since then a healthy population of big cats has been nurtured. One of the principal National Parks of Madhya Pradesh, Bandhavgarh now has one of the highest densities of tigers of any park in India. Your chances of spotting this majestic animal are high here. The park consists of a mixture of grassland and rugged hilly terrain with sal trees prominent in the valleys and mixed forest at higher elevations. In addition to the healthy tiger population there is an array of other wildlife including leopard although these are very elusive. The park is also home to over 250 species of exotic bird, of which 138 are resident; amongst possible sightings are the scarce Indian Skimmers, Great White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Painted and Red Spurfowls, and the critically endangered Red-headed, Indian and White-backed Vultures.

Day 6 – Bandhavgarh National Park

Activities in the park include morning and afternoon jeep safaris escorted by expert wildlife guides. The day begins just before dawn with a wake-up call and an invigorating cup of tea or coffee. Game viewing is from open vehicles, bringing you closer to nature and ideal for photography. Tigers may be the draw for most but



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other flora and fauna and their place in this complex ecosystem are not ignored. Overnight at Nature Heritage Resort or similar. (BLD)

Day 7- Bandhavgarh National Park - Kanha Tiger Reserve

Today we drive to Kanha Tiger Reserve, the original inspiration for Rudyard Kipling when he wrote 'The Jungle Book'. Today a similar abundance of wildlife still exists in one of the largest sanctuaries in India, in total covering an area in excess of 2,000 square kilometres. Extensive grasslands and sal and bamboo forests have led to comparisons with Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Ravines and hills create diverse habitats, home to Royal Bengal tiger, leopard, sloth bear, swamp deer, sambar and Indian bison, along with a rich birdlife. Overnight at The Courtyard House, or similar. (BD)

Kanha National Park

Widely considered one of the most stunning wildlife reserves in India, 'The Jewel of Kanha' is a National Park covering around 940 square kilometres of grasslands, forests and meandering rivers and its beauty is utterly spellbinding. In addition the park is home to hundreds of species of birds and animals. For most the highlight of a visit to Kanha is the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the magnificent tiger. Sightings cannot be guaranteed but you have a reasonable chance of seeing them here: at the last census, 60 individuals were counted within the park. Thankfully poaching is largely under control here and the benefits are also seen elsewhere in the fauna on show: amongst the rich diversity of other wildlife on show are sloth bears and sambar deer which, as recently as the 1970s, were on the brink of extinction. There are also many species of birds to seek out, such as the endemic Green Avadavat, Red Spurfowl and Andaman Cuckooshrike, the Indian Pitta, Greater Racket tailed Drongo, Black Rumped flameback and Paradise Flycatcher. Heading out into the park in the cool of the morning, the mist hanging over the grasslands is a sight to behold, gently siphoning away to reveal the delights of the day's nature watching.

Day 8 – Kanha Tiger Reserve

Today, morning and afternoon jeep safaris explore different habitats, each excursion taking around three hours. Early morning drives offer the best opportunities to see wildlife, leaving at dawn as the sun streaks through the mist and the forest comes alive. However, after lunch, when temperatures have risen, there's a chance to observe animals as they search out water. Overnight at The Courtyard House, or similar. (BLD)

Day 9 – Khana Tiger Reserve – Borhamdeo

After breakfast we drive Borhamdeo, an isolated village in north-western Chhattisgarh. The Maikal Hills that surround the village are home to the indigenous Baigas and Gonds tribal people, whose tolas (villages) are dotted through the countryside. This is an opportunity to attune to life in rural India as we'll stay for three-nights at a simple well-run rural retreat where comfortable farmhouse-style accommodation of just five rooms, is set in idyllic gardens. A few minutes' walk from the village lies a striking 11th century temple complex dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, almost a miniature Khajuraho and of similar antiquity. Here, there's an opportunity to attend an evening puja (offering) ceremony and experience the concurrent enthusiastic burst of bells, smells and minor pyrotechnics. Food throughout the stay is prepared in Chhattisgarhi village style, mainly vegetarian and representative of real Indian cuisine. Overnight at Borhamdeo Jungle Retreat. (BLD)

Baiga and Gond Tribes

The Baiga and Gonds are indigenous to this region of central India. Local legend has it that God created the Baiga from the womb of the earth and offered to make them kings, but they declined and, opting for a simpler life, asked God to give lordship to their neighbours, the Gonds. God's response was to order them to tend the earth and never forsake it; historically then, the two tribes peacefully coexisted, with the Baiga acting as spiritual healers, yet remaining in poverty while the Gond tribe prospered and thrived. Indeed the modern day divide is still evident: the Gond tribe have enjoyed financial successes from their artwork sales, whilst the Baiga still live far more primitively in traditional huts and with little of the paraphernalia of modern life impinging on their traditional practices. Latterly, the Baiga have suffered greatly, owing to their eviction from



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their forest homeland to make way for the formation of the tiger sanctuary at Kanha. Displaced and in danger themselves of extinction, recent local efforts to reinvigorate Baiga traditions and embrace visitors through sharing of their ancient traditions and performance of ritual dances has had significant positive effects in re-establishing their cultural integrity.

Day 10 – Bhoramdeo

In the company of a local guide, today visit some of the villages around Bhoramdeo. There's the chance to spend an afternoon at a pottery village, trying your hand at the wheel or paddling the clay with bare feet, later calling in at bamboo workshop, and afterwards at the Yadav (cattle herder) villages and Agaria (blacksmith) villages. The area is notable for many colourful weekly haats (tribal markets), taking place almost every day of the week, and there'll be a chance to visit at least one of these. Overnight at Bhoramdeo Jungle Retreat. (BLD)

Day 11 – Bhoramdeo

Today there's a short, guided trek into the forested hills to search out local wildlife. Species commonly seen include langur monkey, barking deer and jackal, together with a wealth of bird, butterfly and other insect life. Later, it's possible to hire bicycles and independently explore the nearby area, calling in at villages and interacting with local people. Overnight at Bhoramdeo Jungle Retreat. (BLD)

Day 12 – Bhoramdeo – Raipur – Delhi

A three-hour drive takes you to Raipur airport, where you can board a flight back to Delhi. Overnight at a hotel close to Delhi airport. (B)

Day 13 – Depart

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All transport
Train tickets by Shatabdi Express from Delhi to Jhansi (A/C Chair car)
Flight from Raipur to Delhi (15kg checked baggage and 7kg hand baggage)
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 (see the notes section for information on the tipping kitty)



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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.

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.

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.



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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 £45 - £60 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.

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.



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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 and Central India enjoys a predominantly dry, desert climate, with the months between October and March providing the best time to visit.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. You will also be travelling at altitude so some warmer clothes will be necessary in the mountains. 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.

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.

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



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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.

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 but still abundant. 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.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended. Sandals are fine when 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 prepared on 22nd December 2018