

Itinerary

DAY 1

En route

DAYS 2–4

Delhi

After a leisurely morning, we'll have an orientation lunch with our Micato Tour Director. Now we'll delve into swirlingly colourful Old Delhi, rickshawing over to Jama Masjid, one of India's largest and most impressive mosques (it's one of the last monuments built by Shah Jahan, whose world crowning glory, the Taj Mahal, we'll soon see). We'll visit Humayan's Tomb (said to have inspired the eagerly inspirable Jahan), pay our respects at the Gandhi Museum, explore the British Raj's imposing New Delhi edifices, and mingle with happy pilgrims at giant Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, a bustling Sikh temple.

The first of our Indian palaces, the Leela, is set in the capital's Diplomatic Enclave, and beckons with quietude, unabashed luxury, and India's unceasingly gracious hospitality.

DAYS 5 & 6

Agra

A modern toll road takes us to Agra for a couple of days in the sweetly hypnotic aura of the Taj Mahal. Our base is the Amarvilas, a scintillating Oberoi jewel. Every window in Amarvilas looks out at the Taj, less than two thousand feet away, giving us ever changing views of humanity's greatest artifact from our beautifully decorated, balconied rooms and from the hotel's expansive verandahs.

We'll make early morning and evening visits to the Taj, wandering in its gardens and under its white cloud archways. We'll amble in fascinating Agra Fort (where Shah Jahan was imprisoned for the last years of his life, peering dolefully out at his masterpiece). We'll visit a marble inlay studio (after seeing the exquisite Taj inlays, we'll want to know how this marble magic works), returning to the Amarvilas for a swim in its lovely pool, dinner at its top-flight restaurant, making sure to catch a few minutes or hours to contemplate the Taj.

DAYS 7–9

Jaipur

A countryside drive takes us to the fabled Pink City of Jaipur. For more than half a millennium Jaipur's Rajput maharajahs were renowned for their regal disdain for rupee-pinching. They spent, played, and built extravagantly; witness our palace, the Rambagh, home of the last of Jaipur's rulers, Sawai Man Singh II. The Rambagh Palace, now a Taj Group property, regularly lands high on lists of the World's Best Hotels, for its frank splendour, its traditionally noble but state-of-the-art comfy rooms, its cool marble corridors, its fountain-misted gardens, its fine dining, and, in the Taj Group custom, its flawlessly alert and cheery service.

There is much to see and enjoy in the Pink City, and with our Micato Tour Director at our side, we'll do our best to take it all in, visiting the vast and fabulously ornate City Palace; hot air ballooning in the early morning as Jaipur awakens; rambling in the Doctor Seussian (but strikingly accurate), 280 year-old Jantar Mantar Observatory; and admiring the whimsical Hawa Mahal, or Palace of the Winds.

We'll wander in the mirrored mini-palaces of massive Amber Fort, lunch at the serene Samode

Palace a little way out of town, and spend a late afternoon helping bathe and riding jauntily atop lovingly-cared-for elephants at a private estate, followed by dinner.

DAYS 10 & 11

Udaipur

A morning flight takes us to lakeside Udaipur, beloved of Indians and internationals for its beauty and serenity, its intriguing temples, and its chromatic history—which we'll experience in the flamboyant City Palace, hilltop home of Udaipur's Mewar maharanas, who, like their Mughal suzerains, gracefully avoided all things frugal.

Udaipur has a Venetian feel, with homes and palaces built by the shores of Lake Pichola, and we'll take a motor launch across the lake to our lodgings, the sublime Oberoi Udaivilas, recently ranked the planet's second best hotel by Condé Nast Traveler, and the number one Indian resort hotel by Travel + Leisure. We luxuriate in Udaivilas' sparkling pools, domed public rooms, in its artwork, fragrant gardens and spa, reveling in a modern palace in which India's maharajahs, maharanas, nizams, and assorted nawabs would feel right at regal home.

DAYS 12 – 14

Jodhpur

We drive northwest towards Jodhpur, stopping for a quiet lunch at the Maharani Bagh Orchards and a visit to the Jain temple complex at Ranakpur before motoring up to the doors of the Umaid Bhawan Palace, fittingly the last and the largest of India's great palaces.

Umaid Bhawan sits among 26 garden acres atop Chittar Hill, overlooking the city of Jodhpur. The vast palace—once the world's largest private residence—now serves as a museum, as the home of the old ruling family, and as a uniquely stately hotel, expertly operated, as always, by the Taj Group. Our palace rooms are decorated with Art Deco themes and feature all the luxuries, amenities, and grace notes we've come to expect from a Taj hotel. The Umaid Bhawan is, as they say, a destination in itself, but so is Jodhpur; we'll wander in the Old City, visit monolithic Mehrangarh Fort and the glowing marble cenotaph of Jaswant Thada, and we'll take a jeep safari through Bishnoi villages (the Bishnoi are a religious group rooted in deep respect for nature), followed by a picnic lunch and a return to the inimitable Umaid Bhawan.

DAY 15

Back to Delhi and Homeward

After flying back to Delhi, we'll have day rooms,—and night rooms, if necessary for late flights—at the splendid Oberoi Gurgaon, near Delhi's airport.