

HIDDEN RAJASTHAN



ITINERARY:

Start and End in Delhi; 14 days/13 nights



Day 1

Land in New Delhi. Transfer to the wonderful Imperial Hotel (**1 night**)

PM After lunch 'gentle' sightseeing at one of New Delhi's sights.



Day 2

AM Mid morning transfer to Delhi Airport for a domestic flight to Udaipur.

PM Land and drive into Udaipur (45mins) and arrive at Amet Haveli (2 nights). This intimate boutique hotel, offers wonderful views over Lake Pichola and the palaces of Udaipur from every room. The hotel's open air Ambrai restaurant is considered the 'Best' in town both for food and views!



Day 3

We spend the morning strolling in town, visiting the City Palace museum with a guide. The extensive complex houses a great collections of artefacts and the belongings of the Sisodia Clan (The longest continuous royal line in the

world). Back at hotel for lunch and siesta. Sunset boat cruise on Lake Pichola, a romantic experience reflecting why Udaipur was called the 'Kashmir of the South' or the 'Venice of the East'.

Day 4

Morning drive (2.5h) to the extensive Chittorgarh Fort (UNESCO WHS), with its ruined palaces, the famous 'Victory Tower', its water tanks and temples. Chittorgarh is the Kingdom of Mewar's ancient capital and the world's largest inhabited fort. We lodge at the simple but comfortable Padmini Haveli for 1 night (Heritage Hotel) situated within the ramparts of the famous fortress, (Access is by motorised rickshaw). A friendly Brahmin family run this establishment and make us feel very welcome. Should you wish, you can participate in the preparation of the delicious vegetarian dinner cooked for us by our hosts.

Day 5

At 11:00h depart by road (1h) for Castle Bijaipur (Heritage Hotel) whose Suites and Superior Rooms we take over for the next 3 nights. Arrive for lunch



PM After a siesta or a swim in the lovely pool a jeep & walking safari gives an introduction to the lush, hilly country of Rajasthan's 'Opium Belt'. This takes us through cultivation and villages, ending with sunset over a large reservoir where we have tea.

Day 6

AM A 15 minutes drive takes us to the drop off and start of our morning walk. We follow a path into a village, through dry deciduous forest, and over a low ridge to a small lake created by an ancient dam (2.5h). Lunch will be served by the lakeshore.

PM In late afternoon optional stroll around Bijaipur's small but lively bazaar and narrow lanes, chatting to the friendly locals. Dinner at Castle Bijaipur.

Day 7

AM After breakfast we get dropped off by jeep at the start of a wilderness walk (4.5h), through hamlets, farmland, lakes and forest to Pangarh Lake Retreat. This tented camp is picturesquely set on the shores of an extensive reservoir. Lunch will have been prepared for us at the camp.

PM Drive back to Bijaipur for a deserved mid afternoon siesta.

Day 8

AM Departure by road (3.5h) for Bundi, briefly stopping on the way at the C10th & C11th ruins of the Madoli Temples. Built a thousand years ago, during the Classical period of Hindu architecture, this little-visited temple complex has some superb stone carvings. We check into our hotel, Bundi Vilas, for **2 nights**. This boutique Heritage Hotel (7 rooms) is located immediately below and adjacent to the ramparts of the royal palace. Lunch will be served on the shaded rooftop terrace.

PM We visit Bundi's royal palace with our local guide. The sprawling palace complex, dating from various periods since the C15th, houses some of the best frescoed halls in Rajasthan, and India for that matter. London's Courtauld Institute has recently undertaken extensive studies of the frescoes with the aim of ensuring their preservation. Bundi is renowned for its traditional architecture and wonderful street markets, which we shall explore on foot later in the afternoon. Dinner at Bundi Vilas.

Day 9

AM This morning we drive (1h) towards the village of Garadah. From here we set off on foot to the nearby river and spend the morning investigating the overhanging granite boulders that line its banks. This geological feature shelters some recently discovered prehistoric rock paintings. Ochre depictions of humans, beasts and abstract patterns are common, some dating from as far back as 7,000 BC. Return to Bundi Vilas for a late lunch

PM Late afternoon stroll through the Bundi's bustling bazaars and markets.

Day 10

AM Depart by road (4.5h) for Sawai Madhopur and the world renowned Ranthambore National Park, one of the few remaining sanctuaries for the Bengal Tiger. Here we lodge **3 nights** at Khem Vilas, one of the very best, set far away from town among its own 25 acres of farmland. Accommodation is in lovely 'Cottages' and 'Safari Tents'. The lodge only serves delicious vegetarian food, but everything is organic and grown by them.



PM We drive into the park (30 mins) and, on foot, climb up to the vast C10th Ranthambore Fort, visiting its abandoned pavilions and the still active Ganesh temple, the elephant-headed God of good luck & prosperity. The park is unusual in allowing access on foot to the fort, which is located in the core area. From the ramparts the views of the surrounding country are stunning and it is not unusual to spot wildlife, occasionally even tigers, by the lakes below.



Days 11 & 12

AM & PM We shall have 2 full days of safaris, this will mean 4 drives in total, much more than most visitors experience. Obviously we are trying to maximise our chances of seeing tiger but please remember that wildlife viewing is a question of chance and that despite good odds there is no 'guarantee' of seeing a big cat! Ranthambore happens to be a very beautiful park and it is worth exploring its many habitats. We use jeeps exclusively booked for our group. Each vehicle is designed to carry up to 8 clients but we never put more than 5 in each. For every single safari the Forest Department allocates an individual route (There are 9 in total in the park) to each individual vehicle. They also allocate who sits in which vehicle. We have little or no say in this.

Morning safaris start at dawn, we are woken with 'bed tea/ coffee' and biscuits, and carry a light 'packed breakfast' for our 4h in the park. On our return we have a proper cooked breakfast at Khem Vilas and we are then at leisure (There are opportunities to swim in the small pool, bird watch, do a nature and farm walk, visit a women's cooperative, etc).

After a late lunch we go back into the park for our afternoon safaris, and return as it gets dark. Early morning and late afternoon are the best times for wildlife activity; it is also the time when the big cats patrol their territories, often walking along the very jeep tracks we drive.

Ranthambore has been part of Project Tiger from the very beginning and Khem Vilas, our lodge, was built by Mr Fateh Singh Rathore, India's most famous naturalist, and the very man who lobbied and fought to have Ranthambore protected. His daughter-in-law now manages the lodge, whilst his son, a medical Doctor, runs the Prakratik Society. This NGO is involved in healthcare, education and grass roots development. It has been converting local tribals from potential poachers into gamekeepers.

Day 13

AM We catch the 07:00h Jan Shatabdi Express train, (a/c seating cars) arriving in Delhi at 12:30h, transfer to The Imperial Hotel for **1 night**. Lunch at The Imperial.

PM At leisure. Time to shop for souvenirs or stroll to the nearby Connaught Circus. Dinner at The Imperial.

Day 14

Transfer to Indira Gandhi International Airport for flights home.

