

Independent India – Varanasi 2020

4-day independent tour

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

This 3 night package in Varanasi includes airport transfers and private day tours. We offer a number of other Independent India locations that are easy to link together with internal flights. Explore India your way.

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Arrive Varanasi

Fly from New Delhi Airport to Varanasi. Upon arrival in Varanasi you will be met and transferred to the **Taj Ganges** where you'll spend the next 2 nights. This evening you'll witness the enchanting & mystical Aarti ceremony on the banks of the River Ganges. The river Ganges is worshipped as a living goddess in Varanasi and daily prayers at dawn and dusk serve as salutations to the river. Oil lamps are offered, bells rung and mantras chanted in a spectacular and well-orchestrated event lasting 45 minutes to an hour. After the ceremony, return back to the hotel where the rest of the evening will be at leisure.

Day 2 – Varanasi

Early morning you can experience a boat ride on River Ganges followed by a Sightseeing Tour of Varanasi. Varanasi's principle attraction is the string of bathing Ghats along the west bank of the river. The boat ride presents an incredible scene as the multitudes of devotees come to the river to pay homage to the Sun God. Pass the bathing Ghats where thousands of pilgrims immerse themselves in its holy waters and the burning ghat, where cremations are conducted. You can also see the 'floating market' during the tour. After the boat ride, continue south of the city to visit the Benaras Hindu University (BHU), which was founded at the turn of the 19th century. It was originally intended for the study of Sanskrit, Indian art, music and culture. The university campus is home to the New Vishwanath Temple, one of the tallest in India. Planned by Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Chancellor of the university, who believed in Hinduism without caste distinctions, the temple is open to all. Also, visit the Bharat Kala Bhawan, a museum with a fabulous collection of miniature paintings, sculpture and contemporary art and bronzes. Return to the hotel for breakfast. In the afternoon you'll visit the ruins and museum at Sarnath (closed on Fridays) Located 10 km from the city. Stop to visit the Mulagandhakutty Vihara that marks the meditation site of the Buddha during his monsoon retreats. The interiors of the temple here have life-size murals depicting the significant events of Buddha's life. (B)

Day 3 – Delhi

After breakfast at leisure, transfer to Varanasi Airport for your return flight to Delhi. Upon arrival in Delhi you will be transferred to the **Vivanta by Taj Dwarka** for your overnight stay. The afternoon can be spent at leisure, or you may wish to visit the Kingdom of Dreams (extra cost). (B)

Day 4 – Depart Delhi

After breakfast transfer to Delhi International Airport for your onward travel arrangements. Why not extend to the beaches of Goa, or see the awe-inspiring Taj Mahal in Agra. (B)

Meals: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

This is a set tour itinerary, if you have booked any pre/post or optional tour arrangements please refer to your separate vouchers and final documents.

TOUR NOTES

A Private Tour

This is a private itinerary, where you will travel with a driver and be met by local English-speaking tour guides for any included sightseeing.

What to expect and is this tour for me?

A tour in India is an adventure where anything can happen. We recommend you are of a reasonable fitness as touring often involves long walks and uneven surfaces, this tour is not suitable for those who require special assistance.

Time difference

GMT +5 ½ hours (summer) +6 ½ hours (winter)

Tour inclusions

- Air-conditioned transport throughout
- Sightseeing as detailed including entrance fees and still camera fees
- The services of an experienced local guide in each destination
- Road taxes, parking fees, fuel surcharges, interstate taxes and portorage at airports and train stations
- Flights to and from Varanasi in economy. Baggage allowance of 15kgs.

No meals during flight.

Tour exclusions

- International flights including all UK and overseas airport taxes and applicable fuel surcharges
- Flight upgrades and airport transfers in the UK
- Optional excursions listed as extra cost
- Insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, tips & gratuities, video camera fees at monuments
- The required Indian visa.
- Anything not detailed on the itinerary.

Dining inclusions

3 breakfasts

Included activities

- Tours listed in the itinerary.

Accommodation

Occasionally we may need to substitute one or more of the hotels with that of a similar standard.

Journey times

India is a vast country and journey times between destinations can sometimes be long. Journey times are listed in the itinerary and are approximate. India is a vast country with different topography from the North to the South and road condition may vary depending on the region that they are travelling. You may find modern express highways to un-surfaced roads / tracks.

Group size

This is a private tour, you a driver and local English-speaking tour guides for any included sightseeing only.

Language

English is widely spoken in India.

Visa requirements

An Indian visa is required for all British passport holders and MUST be obtained before your arrival in India. You can now apply for an e-Visa at a cost up to \$25 USD per person when staying 30 days or less. This can be obtained at <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. The application must be completed no later than 4 days prior to your arrival in India. Your e-visa will be valid for 60 days from the date of your arrival. You should ensure that your passport is valid for 6 months beyond your departure date from India and have at least two blank pages.

Currency

At the time of writing the Indian Rupee cannot be exported or imported to India. There is no limit to the amount of sterling travellers' cheques or currency (or equivalent) that can be taken into India. If you are carrying more than \$1000 this must be declared at customs. There are plenty of banks and ATMs, but you see less once you head out of the cities, so make sure you have enough to cover your drinks and ad-hoc item bills. You may want to carry small amounts of local currency for tips and to buy souvenirs from vendors too! Please note: Not all smaller hotels and shops can accept credit cards.

Electricity

The electricity supply in India is 220 volts, most hotels have a three round pin sockets, so we recommend a travel adaptor set.

Tipping

It is customary to tip in India. 10% is usual in restaurants and as an idea tour guides receive USD\$5 per person per day and drivers receive USD\$3 per person per day.

Seasons and Weather

The weather in India can be divided into three seasons – summer, winter and monsoon. The coolest and driest time of the year to visit is between October and February, which is regarded as the winter season. Temperatures will always be warmer in the south, with comfortable coastal beach weather. Following winter is the summer season which is hot and dry, lasting from March through to May, when temperatures reach their peak. May signals the start of the monsoon season, which begins in Kerala on the south-western coast, bringing with it regular downpours interspersed with sunny hot intervals that gradually work their way up the country. It is very humid during this time of year and the days are interrupted by intermittent rainfall. At the height of monsoon season there can be flooding in some lowland regions and most national parks may close during this time. Come November and December another monsoon hits southern India, sweeping in from the Bay of Bengal. Kerala receive most of their rainfall during this time.

What to pack

- Lightweight, cotton clothes. Smart casual is acceptable in hotels
- A light sweater or fleece for early mornings and evenings and air-conditioning can be cool in restaurants
- Comfortable, enclosed and sturdy footwear
- Casual clothing and sandals for dinner and relaxing at your hotel
- Sun cream, sunglasses and hat
- Camera and/or video camera with spare batteries and memory cards
- Swimming attire for an occasional swim
- Binoculars
- Mosquito repellent and spray
- Handy wipes, antiseptic hand gel and bottled water where possible
- Low denominations of local currency – handy for ad-hoc tipping!
- For visits to religious monuments and buildings clothing rules may apply, for example covering shoulders or removing footwear, your local guide can advise where necessary.

Recommended vaccinations

- We advise you to discuss your individual requirements for India with your GP at least 6-8 weeks prior to travel.