

# The Golden Triangle 2020

10 Day Guided Tour – 4V

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

• Exclusive to Virgin Holidays guests • Three cities of the Golden Triangle • Taj Mahal • Tiger Safaris in Ranthambore National Park • Extensions available to Amritsar or Shimla.

## ITINERARY

### Day 1 – Arrive Delhi

On arrival, transfer to the **Vivanta by Taj Dwarka** for 2 nights and the rest of the day is at leisure. Delhi is a bustling metropolis, which combines the ancient with the modern. Amidst the skyscrapers can be found many monuments which stand as silent reminders of the region's ancient legacy.

### Day 2 – Delhi

Morning sightseeing tour of Old Delhi, the 300-year-old walled city built by Emperor Shah Jehan in 1648 as his capital and named after him. Drive past the magnificent Red Fort built of red sandstone. Visit the Raj Ghat, where Mahatma Gandhi was cremated in 1948. You will have the opportunity to visit a local restaurant for lunch (at own expense) before afternoon sightseeing tour of New Delhi. Drive past the imposing India Gate - a War Memorial Arch, the residence of the President - the Rashtrapati Bhawan, the Parliament House and other government buildings. Visit the Qutab Minar (Tower of Victory) – a masterpiece built to establish the might of Islam and the onset of the Muslim rule in India and Humayun's Tomb – the first great example of a new and distinctive style, which developed to become the hallmark of the Mughal Dynasty. Following sightseeing tour, return back to hotel. (B)

### Day 3 – Agra

Morning drive to Agra (approximately 205kms/5hrs excluding sightseeing) via the Itmad-Ud-Daulah. Often described as a "jewel box", sometimes called the "Baby Taj", the tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah is often regarded as a draft of the Taj Mahal. Afternoon arrival at the **Clarks Shiraz** (Deluxe Room) for an overnight stay. The city of Agra, the quintessence of the grand Mughal era, reigns to this day in the public mind as the embodiment of royal grace, imposing architecture and power. In the late afternoon visit the Agra Fort, an outstanding example of Mughal architecture and the seat and stronghold of this Empire under successive generations. Later this afternoon visit the world famous Taj Mahal for a sunset viewing. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, built by Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his favourite queen, Mumtaz. This incomparable marvel is constructed entirely out of white marble and is an architectural masterpiece with beautiful inlay work and marble screens. Approximately 20,000 of India's most revered craftsmen were recruited to give shape to this poetry in marble. (B)

### Day 4 – Agra to Ranthambore

After breakfast, we continue to drive to Bharatpur this morning (approximately 56km/1 to 2 hours driving excluding sightseeing) via the deserted 16th-century city of Fatehpur Sikri, built by Akbar the Great and abandoned on the emperor's death. The deserted red sandstone city built by the great Mughal Emperor Akbar as his capital in the late 16th century. It was the Mughal capital for 14 years after which it was abandoned due to lack of water, they city is made of red sandstone and combines influences from both Hindu and Mughal architecture. In the afternoon, board the express train to Sawai Madhopur (2 hours 30 minutes) and proceed by road to the **Ranthambore Regency** for 2 nights. (B,D) **Please Note:** For those who wish to view the Taj Mahal at sunrise, there is an optional visit to see this magnificent wonder as the day awakes. This is a very morning visit but well worth the 5am alarm call (this is pre-bookable and at an additional cost)

### Day 5 – Ranthambore

Early morning and late afternoon game-drives, with the opportunity to see some of India's richest and most diverse wildlife with over 270 species of birds, 12 reptiles and 30 mammals. (B,L,D)

### Day 6 – Ranthambore to Jaipur

Enjoy an early morning game-drive in Ranthambore before driving to Jaipur (approximately 180kms/4 hours). The vibrant 18th-century capital of Rajasthan is popularly known as the 'Pink City' because of the pink coloured buildings in its old city. You will arrive at **The Lalit, Jaipur** or 2 nights and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure. (B)

### Day 7 – Jaipur

Take a morning tour of the fabulous Amber Fort by jeep, a honey coloured fortress palace in the Aravalli Hills. Possessing a chamber of mirrors, the interiors are a decorative arts paradise and there are striking views of the gorge. In the afternoon, visit the Observatory and City Palace which boasts courtyards, impressive gateways and temples. Witness the elegant façade of the Hawa Mahal, the spectacular Palace of the Winds, built by King Sawai Pratap Singh in 1799, and one of Jaipur's photographic highlights. The evening is at leisure to explore Jaipur further; home to cultural delights and a shopper's paradise. (B)

**Day 8 – Jaipur to Delhi**

Morning drive to Delhi (approximately 270kms/6-7hours). Check-in at the **Vivanta by Taj Dwarka** for an overnight stay. This afternoon will be at your leisure. (B)

**Day 9 – Depart Delhi**

After breakfast, depart for the airport your onward arrangements. Alternatively why not extend your stay on the beaches of Goa. (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.**

**Notes:**

We feel it is important to point out that although India contains a great variety of wildlife, the huge concentration of animals seen in the African bush will not be seen here. The mainly forested terrain can make viewing difficult and the animals are generally shy and can be skittish. Having said this, the excitement of exploring the beautiful, wildlife parks of India is something you will never forget. Your local guide cannot accompany you on the game-drive instead you will be accompanied by one of the park naturalists.

**The National Parks in India restricts the number of visitors they have on any given day, therefore there is a limited number of permits for tiger safaris per day. These sell out quickly and we recommend booking your tour well in advance to avoid disappointment. Full passport details must be supplied to your Virgin Holidays agent at the time of booking to confirm these permits.**

## TOUR NOTES

### Pre/Post Tour information

The first day of the tour is at leisure so allows you enough time to arrive and relax. If you wish to arrive earlier extra nights can be added to your tour in the Vivanta by Taj Dwarka in Delhi. We recommend extending your tour on one of our city extensions or with a few nights on the tropical beaches of Goa.

### Is this tour for

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

- International flight with Virgin Atlantic in economy class, including all UK and overseas airport taxes and applicable fuel surcharges
- Shared air conditioned transport throughout
- Sightseeing as detailed including entrance fees, still camera fees and game-drives
- The services of an experienced local guide in each destination
- Road taxes, parking fees, fuel surcharges, interstate taxes and portage at airports and train stations.

### Tour exclusions

- Flight upgrades and airport transfers in the UK
- 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

8 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 2 dinners.

### Included activities

- Game-drives in Ranthambore National Park in open jeeps and park permits (seats together can't be guaranteed as these are on a first come, first serve basis)
- Tours listed in the itinerary.

### Optional activities (not included and booked locally)

- Delhi food tour
- Delhi Haus Kaus
- Delhi walking tour of Mehrauli Archeological Park
- Delhi Akshardham by Metro
- Agra Taj Mahal by sunrise

### 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 conditions may vary depending on the region.

### Group size

There is a maximum of 25 people per group.

### 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.

### Tipping

It is customary to tip in India. 10% is usual in restaurants, tour escorts may receive USD\$8, drivers USD\$3 and local guides USD\$5 all per person per day.

### Recommended vaccinations

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

### Currency

At the time of writing the Indian Rupee cannot be exported or imported to India. 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.

### Seasons and Weather

Generally speaking, 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 for game drives
- Casual clothing and sandals for dinner and relaxing at your hotel/lodge
- Sun cream, sunglasses and hat
- Camera and/or video camera with spare batteries and memory cards
- Swimwear 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.