

Deccan Odyssey - Indian Odyssey

12 Day Guided Tour

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

• Luxury train journey from Delhi to Mumbai • Golden Triangle • Taj Mahal • Tiger spotting in Ranthambore National Park • Lake Palaces of Udaipur • Extend your stay on India's beaches

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Depart

Fly overnight with Virgin Atlantic non-stop direct flight to Delhi.

Day 2 - Delhi

Arrive at Delhi International Airport where you will be met and transferred to the **Imperial hotel** for a 1 night stay.

Day 3 – Depart Delhi

Welcome aboard the Deccan Odyssey. This evening assemble at the railway station at approximately 1830 hours to complete the registration process and check in formalities for your Indian Odyssey journey, as you receive a traditional Indian welcome and enjoy a refreshing welcome drink. After completion of all formalities, you will be shown to your delightful cabins. As you settle in, the Deccan Odyssey shall depart Delhi for Sawai Madhopur. Overnight on **Deccan Odyssey**. (D)

Day 4 - Ranthambore

Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan is the alighting point for the famous Ranthambore National Park, and India's efforts to conserve the dwindling tiger population can be seen here. The park is one of the finest tiger reserves in the country and the most likely place to spot one of these majestic animals. Enjoy an early morning breakfast before you set out for your morning game drive. Ranthambore is home to several other species as well; you can see herds of Chital and Sambhar deer as well as wild boar, Nilgai antelope and chinkara gazelles. There are also sloth bear, a few leopards and crocodiles. Extensive bird life includes jungle fowl, partridges, quails, the crested serpent eagle, woodpeckers, flycatchers etc. There are also water birds like storks, ducks and geese at the lakes and waterholes. If it's your lucky day, you could spot a tiger lolling around lazily in the sun, or feverishly hunting down deer around the lakes! When you're done with the jungle, return to the comfort of the Deccan Odyssey. Feel free to share the spoils (of your photo shoots!) over a leisurely lunch before you set out for a village safari. The people of Rajasthan's villages are mostly tribals who subsist on farming and hunting. These friendly folk are warm and welcoming, happy to show guests around their villages, giving deep insights into their daily lives. The women here wear bright colours to offset the drab desert, and most people live in mud huts. Visit a local home for a and interact with the family. After a fulfilling afternoon, proceed for high tea at the Sawai Madhopur Lodge, the former hunting lodge of the erstwhile royal family of Jaipur. After high tea, it is time to head back to the Deccan Odyssey where you can relax with a drink before dinner on board, as the Deccan Odyssey sets off for Agra, the city of the world famous "Taj Mahal". Overnight on **Deccan Odyssey** (B, L, D)

Day 5 - Agra

Arriving at Agra, you will realize that the Mughals were not just the greatest dynasty to rule India but also its greatest builders. After a leisurely breakfast on board, you will visit the Taj Mahal, which was Emperor Shah Jahan's gift of love to his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, and is truly the world's most wondrous monument. The making of the Taj Mahal is as much a fable as the edifice itself. It took 20000 men 22 years to build this unrivaled mausoleum and its exquisite white marble was brought from 200 miles away by caravans of elephants and camels. Lunch at a City Hotel. After lunch, your tour of Agra continues as you visit Itmad-ud-Daulah, a marble mausoleum built by Nur Jahan, the wife of Emperor Jahangir, in memory of her father, Ghiyas Beg. Sometimes called the 'Baby Taj', it is beautifully conceived in white marble, mosaic and lattice. Thereafter proceed to Agra Fort, another outstanding example of Mughal architecture, and the seat of Mughal reign and administration for three generations. The present structure owes its origins to Emperor Akbar who had its first buildings of red sandstone erected on the eastern bank of the river Yamuna. His grandson Shah Jahan, the most artistic and prolific builder of the dynasty, later added the impressive marbled private quarters and the mosque while Aurangzeb added the outer ramparts. A visit to the *Diwan-e-Am*, 'Hall of Public Audience' and the Royal Pavilions is not to be missed. Later, you have the opportunity to visit the local markets to admire the exquisite Pietra Dura (marble inlay) artefacts and Mughal ornaments. Late evening, you return to the Deccan Odyssey for dinner and your onward journey to Jaipur, The Pink City. Overnight on **Deccan Odyssey** (B, L, D)

Day 6 - Jaipur

Legendary for the triumphs of its proud Rajputs, Jaipur, the City of Victory, is surrounded by the rugged Aravali hills - crowned by formidable forts - and beautiful palaces, mansions and gardens. Royal processions and parades, in all their splendour, graced these palaces and forts once. The city is a colourful oasis in the desert and you will notice a timeless quality to Jaipur's bazaars and its people. After breakfast you drive to Maharaja Mansingh's 17th century masterpiece, the Amber Fort that overlooks the beautiful Maota Lake. The fort is a sprawling complex of courtyards, halls and rooms adorned with beautiful paintings, precious stones and mirrors. Behold the *Sheesh Mahal*, 'Hall of

Mirrors', where a single lamplight reflects in many mirrors, and lights up the entire room, creating a dazzling effect. En-route to Amber Fort visit the Palace of Winds, otherwise known as the *Hawa Mahal*, famous for its intricate pink sandstone carving and a beautiful view of the city. Thereafter you will visit the famous City Palace of Jaipur, an overwhelming complex of exquisite palaces, gardens and courtyards, decorative art and carved doorways. The palace museum houses collections of rare manuscripts, armoury, costumes and carpets. Walk across to the adjacent *Jantar Mantar*, the astronomical observatory built in the 18th century by Sawai Jai Singh. A wondrous achievement for its time the observatory gives accurate readings even to this day. Lunch at a City hotel. Following lunch you may choose to participate in one of the optional tours. After your full day of delving in the royal past of Jaipur you will return to the Deccan Odyssey for dinner on board as it departs for Udaipur. Overnight on **Deccan Odyssey** (B, L, D)

Day 7 - Udaipur

The Deccan Odyssey rolls into Udaipur in the morning. Set on the shores of the placid Lake Pichola, Udaipur, known as the City of Lakes, is easily one of the most romantic cities of India, surrounded by scenic hills. Enjoy your breakfast as you admire the picturesque landscape of the Aravali hills. You will then disembark to visit the famous City Palace, the largest palace complex in Rajasthan, with its scalloped arches, fretted balconies, and cupolas, which also houses the spectacular Crystal Gallery. Later, board a ferry to ride on Lake Pichola to reach Jagmandir, a 17th century Palace located on an island on the picturesque lake, for an exquisite lunch. Allow the sounds of the Tabla and the unique Jal Tarang to soothe your inner rhythm as you glance out to the lovely views of one of the most romantic cities of Rajasthan. After lunch, return to Deccan Odyssey for a short rest. Later embark on a Walking Tour through the Old City of Udaipur. Sample the exquisite variety of handicrafts ranging from toys, bewitching puppets, wall hangings, cloth lanterns, handmade papers, jewellery, paintings, painted wooden boxes, pottery, brassware and terracotta sculptures. Thereafter you return to the Deccan Odyssey for a relaxed evening and dinner as we depart for Vadodara. Overnight on **Deccan Odyssey** (B, L, D)

Day 8 - Train

Today you arrive at the capital of the Gaekwads, Vadodara, located along the seasonal river Vishwamitri. Breakfast over, you will disembark and proceed to visit Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site and the only complete and unchanged pre-Mughal Islamic city in India. This concentration of largely unexcavated archaeological, historic and living cultural heritage properties is cradled in an impressive landscape. Marvel at the Jami Masjid (Great Mosque) built in 1513 representing a perfect blend of Hindu and Muslim architecture which was a model for later mosque architecture in India. Drive back to Vadodara for a leisurely lunch on board the Deccan Odyssey. After lunch, you will visit the Maharaja Fateh Singh Museum, originally constructed as a school for the Maharaja's children. Today, art lovers can view a large number of works of art displayed in the museum including a collection of the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma and other renowned European Masters as well as a collection of sculptures in marble and bronze. Enjoy high tea at the resplendent Laxmi Vilas Palace, built in 1890, and the residence of the Royal family even today. Reputedly four times the size of Buckingham Palace, its overwhelming Durbar Hall boasts a Venetian mosaic floor, Belgian stained glass windows and walls with intricate mosaic decorations. The palace also houses a remarkable collection of old armoury and sculptures in bronze, marble & terracotta by Fellici. Witness a folk performance typical of the region as you savour some of the special delicacies from the Royal kitchens. Return to the Deccan Odyssey for dinner as it pulls out for Aurangabad. Overnight on **Deccan Odyssey** (B, L, D)

Day 9 - Train

Aurangabad, named after the last Great Mughal Aurangzeb, is an industrial town in Maharashtra and the stop from where to head out to visit the exceptional Ellora Caves, a World Heritage site. The city itself has deep Mughal influences and there are several monuments of note here; the Daulatabad Fort, Bibi-ka-Makbara and the city's 52 gates, each with its own history, amongst them. Today brings a late start, leaving the morning free for you to enjoy a languid breakfast and enjoy some of the activities available on board. Later, as you savour lunch, the Deccan Odyssey arrives at Aurangabad, from where a scenic drive takes you to the Ellora Caves, carved into the side of a basaltic hill 30 km from the city. The finest specimen of cave-temple architecture in India, the site encompasses 34 rock-cut shrines representing Buddhist, Jain and Hindu art dating from the 4th to 5th century AD. The 12 caves to the south are Buddhist, the 17 in the centre Hindu, and the 5 caves to the north are Jain. The most remarkable is the Kailash temple, meant to be a replica of Shiva's celestial abode on Mt. Kailash. It is the best example of rock cut architecture and an engineering marvel. After exploring Ellora, return to the Deccan Odyssey. This evening relax with a sun downer at the Mumbai-Hi before dinner is served. Overnight on **Deccan Odyssey** (B, L, D)

Day 10 - Mumbai

Early this morning, after breakfast, you will disembark at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus Railway Station, Mumbai. Bid farewell to the Deccan Odyssey and transfer to **Hotel Trident Nariman Point** for a 1 night stay. Check in 1400hrs. (B)

Day 11-12 - Depart

Depart for Mumbai Airport to board your international flight back to the UK via Delhi. Alternatively why not spend a few nights on the beautiful beaches of Goa? (B)

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

Notes:

We feel it is important to point out that although India contains a great variety of wildlife, the huge concentration of animals seen so often in the African bush cannot be seen here. The mainly forested terrain makes viewing more difficult, and the animals are generally more shy and retiring, and live in scattered groups, or even as solitary individuals. Having said this, the excitement of exploring the wildlife parks of India, perhaps for this very reason, is something you will never forget. Please note that your local guide cannot accompany you on the game drive. You will be accompanied by one of the park naturalists.

******The National Parks in India now issue a limited number of permits for tiger safaris per day. As these are limited they can sell out and especially early in peak season so we recommend booking well in advance to avoid disappointment. Please note that in order to book safaris, full passport details are required at the time of booking.**

TOUR NOTES

For current departure dates and prices please check our website

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 Maidens Hotel in Delhi. We recommend extending your tour with a few nights on the tropical beaches of Goa.

Time difference

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

Tour inclusions

- International flights in economy class, including all UK and overseas airport taxes and applicable fuel surcharges
- Private air conditioned transfers and assistance of a representative during arrival & departure transfers at airports & railway stations
- Accommodation in double/twin bedded cabin with en-suite bathroom
- Soft beverages during meals on the train only
- Valet service
- Sightseeing as detailed including entrance fees, still camera fees and game drives
- The services of an experienced local guide in each destination.

Tour exclusions

- Flight upgrades and airport transfers in the UK
- Insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as alcoholic drinks, soft drinks outside of meal times, laundry, tips & gratuities, video camera fees at monuments
- The required Indian visa – details will be provided at time of booking
- Anything not detailed on the itinerary.

Dining inclusions

8 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners.

Included activities

- Game drives in Ranthambore National Park in open jeeps
- Guided off train excursions listed in the itinerary.

Optional activities (not included and booked locally)

- Sightseeing tour, New Delhi
- Sightseeing tour, Mumbai.

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.

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. Recent changes mean you can now apply for an e-Visa at a cost of \$60USD per person at <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. This must be completed a minimum 4 days in advance of the date of arrival with a window of 30 days, for example, if you are applying on 1st Sept then you can select an arrival date from 5th September to 4th October. Your passport must be valid for 6 months beyond your departure date from India and have at least two blank pages. Further information can be viewed on the above link. If you wish to obtain a paper visa we recommend using 'CIBT' who will obtain all visas in person, and return your passport to you by registered post. Contact them on www.uk.cibt.com/virginholidaysjourneys or 0844 800 4650.

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 a guide for rangers, tour guides and drivers would be £2.50 or \$5 each per guest per day.

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.

What to expect

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.

Recommended vaccinations

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