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Mughals, Rajputs & Villages: The Cultural Heritage of North India 2025

31 JAN – 21 FEB 2025 *Code: 22503*

Tour Leaders Em. Prof. Bernard Hoffert

Physical Ratings

Prof. Bernard Hoffert leads this tour visiting three magnificent capitals of the Mughal Empire – Delhi, Agra & Fatehpur Sikri – and a number of great Rajput fortress cities of Rajasthan.

Overview

- Professor Bernard Hoffert, former World President of the International Association of Art-UNESCO (1992-95), leads this cultural tour of North India.
- Visit three magnificent princely capitals in the heartland of the Mughal Empire – Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri – and a number of great Rajput fortress cities of Rajasthan.
- Explore the fusion of Indian and Islamic cultures at Mughal monuments, such as Agra's Red Fort, Shah Jahan's exquisite Taj Mahal, and Akbar the Great's crowning architectural legacy, Fatehpur Sikri – all of which are UNESCO World Heritage sites. The opulence and grandeur of Mughal architecture is also experienced at a number of matchless Rajput palaces.
- Stay in former palaces that are now heritage hotels – an experience which enhances our appreciation of this sumptuous world.
- Visit great Hindu and Jain temples, encounter the vernacular architecture of Rajasthan, including its famous stepped wells and villages, and explore fortresses like Jaisalmer and Bikaner that rise from the Thar Desert in the state's north.
- Explore the vibrant folk culture of Rajasthan, manifest in its fine music, dance and textiles.
- Experience a boat cruise on Lake Pichola at Udaipur, a 4WD drive excursion to view blackbuck (an endangered species of antelope native to the Indian subcontinent) and feed elephants in Jaipur.

Overnight Delhi (3 nights) • Jaipur (3 nights) • Bundi (1 night) • Castle Bijaipur (1 night) • Udaipur (2 nights) • Kumbhalgarh (1 night) • Jodhpur (2 nights) • Jaisalmer (2 nights) • Bikaner (1 night) • Khimsar Fort (2 nights) • Jaipur (1 night) • Agra (2 nights)

About the Tour

Professor Bernard Hoffert, former World President of the International Association of Art-UNESCO (1992-95), leads this tour to North India, visiting three princely capitals in the heartland of the Mughal Empire – Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri – and a number of great Rajput fortress cities in Rajasthan. It explores the fusion of Hindu and Islamic cultures at Mughal monuments such as Agra's Red Fort, Shah Jahan's exquisite Taj Mahal, and Akbar the Great's Fatehpur Sikri.

We also enjoy the opulence and grandeur of Rajput fortress palaces, fusing indigenous Hindu and Mughal styles at Jaipur, Bijaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner. From their powerful walls, brilliant glass-walled staterooms, exquisite garden courts and lustrous pavilions, the Rajputs dominated teeming cities. At Chitor, we explore the grand deserted fortress from which opium-crazed Rajput cavalry thrice charged better-equipped Muslim forces whilst their women committed ritual suicide.

In Udaipur, we cruise past exquisite island pleasure pavilions on Lake Pichola and explore merchant houses in Jaisalmer and Bikaner, with their intricately carved window screens. We visit the great Sufi shrine of Ajmer, grand Mughal mosques like Delhi's ancient Qutub Minar, brilliant red or white royal tombs like Agra's Itmad Ud Daula and vast, richly decorated Jain Temples at Ranakpur and Jaisalmer.

As we wend our way through teeming bazaars, we explore Rajasthan's vibrant folk culture manifest in its village life, its fine music and dance, intricate jewellery and brilliantly coloured textiles. We feed stately elephants and take a 4WD through one of Rajasthan's best nature reserves to view blackbuck, an endangered species of antelope. In addition to the delights of delicious Indian cuisine, special features of this tour are accommodation in fine heritage hotels in old palaces, fortresses and pretty merchant houses in Jodhpur, Bijaipur, Bikaner, Khimsar and Jaipur.

Testimonials

This is a fantastic trip – I was surprised and overwhelmed with many of the cities, forts and palaces in Rajasthan. The Taj Mahal is perfection! ASA really showed me a wonderful part of North India and I would recommend the tour to anyone who wants a detailed experience of the culture and history of this area. Juliet, VIC.

Loved this tour! It was fabulous and far exceeded my expectations with its meticulously planned itinerary and myriad of sights, ranging from the breathtaking Taj Mahal, grand palaces, temples and forts to the rustic village family home. I loved the heritage accommodation and the folk culture we saw – the wonderful textiles, carpets, jewellery, carving, food – we saw it all and revelled in everything Northern India had to offer. We all had a wonderful time and I would recommend this tour (and this company) to anyone wanting to see India. Kim, New Zealand.

Leaders

Em. Prof. Bernard Hoffert

Art historian & artist, former World President of the International Assoc. of Art - UNESCO, Assoc. Dean, Monash University. He has a long involvement with India & has published on Indian Architecture and lectured at the National Inst. of Design in Ahmedabad.

Bernard Hoffert is Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Art Design & Architecture at Monash University. He was formerly Associate Dean in the Faculty of Art and Design, with responsibility for the Faculty's Higher Degree by Research program and the Faculty's International and External profile. He headed five departments while at Monash including the art school. He was the World President of the International Association of Art-UNESCO (1992-95) and remains an Honorary President; he has been Honorary President of the Asia-Pacific Regional Council of the International Association of Art- UNESCO and has continued involvement with UNESCO through the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA). He has been a member of the Global Advisory Board of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Network, Columbia University since 2006 and a member of their Research Committee. He was Vice President of the Academic Board of Monash University (2008-2010). He has been a member of the Review Boards of the *Art Education Research Journal*, Melbourne University (2004-12), the *Art Education Australia Research Journal* (2004-12), and a member of the Monash Asia Institute Publication Board (MUP) from 2001-11. He has been a member of the Executive Committees of the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) and Art Education Australia (AEA), and coordinated AEA's research development. He has also contributed to standing committees of Art Education Victoria and the National Association of the Visual Arts.

Bernard first joined ASA in 1981, and is ASA's longest standing group leader/lecturer. He has led over 50 tours to Europe, including programs to Italy, France, Spain, Eastern Europe and the United Kingdom. Bernard also has a long involvement with India and has travelled extensively from the Himalayas in the north to the southernmost tip of the subcontinent. He has led eleven ASA tours to India including *Mughals, Rajputs & Villages: The Cultural Heritage of North India (2008-2020), South India Sojourn: from temple sculptures and spice gardens to classical dance and canal cruises* (2009, 2012), and *Ancient Kingdoms and Empires of Southern India* (2017, 2019). He wrote the section on India in the 1987 edition of *Art and Diversity* (Longman) and has exhibited his paintings and presented his poetry at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society Gallery in Delhi; his paintings are in several Indian collections. He has participated in art symposia and conferences in India and has lectured at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. His research has been published in the Indian journal *Design Plus* and his research on craft revival in India has been published by UNESCO and the Network of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies. He contributed a chapter to the Indian text, *Design Education: Tradition and Modernity*, published late 2007.

Combine this tour with

Sri Lanka: Elephants, Temples, Spices & Forts 2025
9 JAN – 28 JAN 2025

Itinerary

The detailed itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. Participants should note that the daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in museum opening hours, flight schedules, etc. All meals are included in the tour price and are indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner. Bottled water is also included. All entrance fees and permits are included in the tour price.

New Delhi - 3 nights

Day 1: Friday 31 January, Arrive Delhi

- Light Dinner at The Claridges
- Airport transfer to meet SQ406 arriving at 2000hrs

Our tour commences in Delhi. Participants arriving into Delhi on Singapore Airlines flight SQ406 at 8pm will be transferred by private coach to our hotel located in the heart of New Delhi. If you are not arriving on this flight you will be required to make your own way to The Claridges or you may wish to contact ASA to arrange a private transfer. On arrival a light dinner will be served at the hotel. (Overnight Delhi) D

Day 2: Saturday 1 February, New Delhi

- Welcome Meeting
- Lutyens' New Delhi
- India Gate & Parliament House
- Humayun's Tomb
- Welcome Lunch
- National Museum New Dehli

Delhi has been a centre of power almost continuously since the 13th century. Rulers of successive Muslim

dynasties established seven cities in Delhi, each adjacent to its predecessor and spread over a large plain on the west bank of the Yamuna River.

Following a brief welcome meeting, we shall drive through precincts of British Imperial Delhi, designed by the great English architect Edward Lutyens. Next we shall pass the India Gate and Parliament House of India.

We next visit the wonderful complex of Humayun's Tomb (c.1565). Commissioned by the Emperor's widow, this was the first of the great Mughal tombs. It inaugurated a suite of grand imperial mausoleums surrounded by vast gardens that were entered through monumental gates, which reached its apogee almost a century later in the Taj Mahal (1634). Humayun's widow engaged a Persian architect to design the building, which accounts for its high quality. Particularly noteworthy is its tight massing, which in composition (base, pavilions and central dome) and dramatic power presages the Taj Mahal. One difference is that it is constructed of red sandstone and not white marble.

Following a welcome lunch at a local restaurant, we conclude our day's program with a visit to the National Museum New Delhi showcasing five millennia of Indian history. The impressive Harrappan Civilisation Gallery exhibits 4825 artefacts including seals, tablets, jewellery, pottery and fine terracotta figurines such as the remarkable *Dancing Girl*. Other galleries display Central Asian treasures from the Silk Route, a collection of Mughal and Rajput miniature paintings, Sacred Buddhist relics dating back to the 5th and 4th Century BC, ancient Mughal manuscripts and exquisite old coins including pure gold examples from the 1st century AD.(Overnight Delhi) BLD

Day 3: Sunday 2 February, Old Delhi

- Red Fort, Delhi
- Jama Masjid
- Short rickshaw ride to see Chandni Chowk

Today we begin with a visit to the Red Fort. In 1639, Shah Jahan laid the foundation of a new capital, the seventh city of Delhi, to be named Shahjahanabad (now Old Delhi). At the eastern edge of it, he constructed his imperial citadel – the Red Fort. It contains some of the finest examples of Mughal architecture in a suite of grand audience halls and exquisitely chaste, inlaid marble pavilions set in formal gardens with ornamental pools and fountains.

Lunch will be served at The Maidens Hotel. This is one of Delhi's oldest hotels, built in the early 1900s, and it has retained its colonial charm and architecture.

This afternoon we visit the Jama Masjid, begun some six years after the Red Fort was commenced. Located in the centre of Shahjahanabad, it is a massive congregational mosque that provided an impressive setting for public worship and ceremonial usage, and proclaimed orthodox Islam as the fountainhead of the imperial dynasty's legitimacy. In detail and sensuousness, it is entirely characteristic of Shah Jahan's architecture, dominating his capital from its lofty plinth, with its towering gateways and majestic flights of steps.

We also we take a short rickshaw ride of Old Delhi. Crammed within its medieval walls is a rabbit warren of lively, noisy streets and lanes, peppered with monuments and tombs from the colourful and turbulent history of one of the world's most fascinating cities. The axis of our ride will be along Chandni Chowk, the crowded, bustling bazaar street that starts at the Lahore Gate of the Red Fort. (Overnight Delhi) BLD

Jaipur - 3 nights

Day 4: Monday 3 February, Delhi – Jaipur

- Qutub Minar

This morning we visit the Qutub Minar complex, which holds India's earliest mosque, the Quwwat ul Islam Masjid, constructed by Qutb-ud-din in 1193, when Delhi was first Islamised. Nearby is the pride of Dehli, the Qutub Minar, a soaring minaret that was possibly based upon a victory tower. Its magnificent form and intricate decoration make it one of the masterpieces of the Islamic world. We then drive to our hotel in Jaipur. (Overnight Jaipur) BLD

Day 5: Tuesday 4 February, Jaipur

- Ambèr Palace/Fort
- Lunch at an Elephant Sanctuary
- Jaigarh Fort (Cannon only)

In 1727, Raja Jai Singh II, ruler of the principality of Ambèr, took advantage of the declining Mughal power to move from his cramped hilltop fortress above the town of Ambèr to a new site on the plains, some ten kilometres away, to be named Jaipur, after himself. To stamp the mark of Hinduism on the capital of his state, Jai Singh laid out his city according to the principles of town planning given in the Shilpa Shastra, the ancient Hindu treatise on architecture. He built a city of broad avenues and remarkable architectural harmony; a walled city divided into nine squares, each signifying one of the nine treasures of Ganpati, the Hindu god of wealth.

Today we begin with a visit to Ambèr, the ancestral seat of the ruling house of Jaipur. The Ambèr palace complex was first laid out by Rana Man Singh I (1586-1614), who served the Emperor Akbar with great distinction. Successive rulers added various palaces, each a unique record of how Mughal cultural influences permeated the Rajput courts. We then enjoy lunch at a local elephant sanctuary.

Towering above the hillside palace of Ambèr Fort and linked to it by escape tunnels, stands the higher and more rugged, Jaigarh Fort. From here we may enjoy spectacular views over Jaipur. (Overnight Jaipur) BLD

Day 6: Wednesday 5 February, Jaipur

- Palace of the Winds (Hawa Mahal) (exterior view only)
- City Palace
- Jantar Mantar
- Afternoon at leisure to explore Jaipur's craft bazaars

This morning we view the Hawa Mahal – the Palace of the Winds – a five-storey pink wedding cake construction, built in 1799 for the Maharaja's family to watch, from their seclusion, the passing parade in the street below.

Nearby we visit the City Palace, which occupies a large area of the old city and is divided into a series of courtyards, gardens and buildings constructed in an interesting blend of Rajasthani and Mughal styles. The centrepiece is the seven storeyed Chandra Mahal, which commands fine views of the gardens and the city. The complex contains several superb halls and an excellent armoury, which we will visit to inspect its collection of Mughal and Rajput armour and weapons.

We end our morning's program with a visit to the Jantar Mantar, the largest of five massive stone observatories built in various cities in north India by the celebrated patron of astronomy, Jai Singh II (1699-1744). Its huge astronomical instruments are extraordinary constructions of sandstone and marble, each designed and orientated to observe the movements of the sun and the moon, or of a particular star or constellation. Angles and part-circular planes with calibrated scales etched onto stone strips create novel architectural shapes. By far the largest instrument is the Samrat Yantra, an impressive curved marble scale interrupted by a steep pyramid of steps with a small pavilion (*chatri*) at the summit. This was used to determine the time, declination and hourly angle of different heavenly bodies.

After lunch there will be time at leisure to explore the lively craft bazaars of the city. (Overnight Jaipur) BLD

Bundi - 1 night

Day 7: Thursday 6 February, Jaipur – Bundi

- Taragarh (Star) Fort, Bundi (exterior)
- Chitrashala (painting gallery), Bundi
- Nagar Sagar Kund Stepwell
- Sukh Mahal: Summer Palace

Today we set out for Bundi, a delightful, unspoilt small medieval town which arguably gives a more vivid image of Rajasthan's past than any other old fortified city. It was founded by the Hadoti Chauhans, who claim descent from the fires of great Mount Abu, after their conquest of this part of Rajasthan in the twelfth century. In the afternoon, we will view (exterior only) the vast ruinous Taragahr (Star) Fort that dominates the city.

As well as the Star fort, the city is also dominated by the Garh Palace, an extremely impressive old complex that stands on powerful foundations above the city. We shall visit the beautiful Chitrashala pavilion situated above a pleasure garden in the Garh Palace. The walls of the Chitrashala gallery are covered with elaborate paintings of scenes from the Radhakrishna story. The Bundi School was an important school of the Rajasthani style of Indian miniature painting that lasted from the 17th to the end of the 19th century.

We also visit the Nagar Sagar Kund Stepwell. These water repositories may be found all over Rajasthan, but Bundi has particularly fine examples. They provided cities and towns with much-needed drinking water, but also were used for ritual ablution, and therefore, are often connected with temples and other shrines. Their surrounding structures often sport intricate carving.

Finally, we drive to the edge of Bundi to visit the Sukh Mahal, the Summer Palace of the Maharajas of Bundi overlooking the Jait Sagar lake. The palace was used by the royal family during the summer months and has beautiful views across the artificial lake, constructed as Bundi's water supply, to the wooded hills surrounding. (Overnight Bundi) BLD

Castle Bijaipur, Chittorgarh - 1 night

Day 8: Friday 7 February, Bundi – Kota – Bijaipur

- Orientation coach tour of Kota
- Kota Fort: Fort Museum & Galleries

We depart Bundi for the royal city of Kota, or 'Kotah', as it is historically referred to. Located on the banks of the Chambal River, it is known for its spectacular palace, gardens and wide leafy streets. Here, we visit the

Kota Fort, one of the largest forts of Rajasthan that has an artistic heritage that still speaks volumes of the rich architecture of that era. Built in the year 1264, the fort construction expanded and was finally completed in the year 1625. The main entrance today is through the south Naya Darwaja Gate (New Gate) and as you enter the fort palaces, miniature paintings, colourful murals, exquisite mirror work and frescoes welcome you. The most attractive place here is the Durbar Hall that has ebony and ivory doors, and stunning Kota paintings that are quite intricate and different from the rest of the miniature ones found in other parts of India.

After lunch in the garden of a private *haveli* (mansion), we drive to Bijaipur, where we stay in one of Rajasthan's loveliest palaces. Castle Bijaipur is a 16th-century fortress set in the serene Vindhyanchal ranges near Chittorgarh (Chitor). It was built by Rao Shakti Singhji, the younger brother of the great warrior Maharana Pratap. A wildlife sanctuary adjacent to the castle has leopards, chinkara, spotted and four-horned deer, crocodiles, wild boar, as well as a variety of birds. (Overnight Castle Bijaipur, Chittorgarh) BLD

Udaipur - 2 nights

Day 9: Saturday 8 February, Bijaipur – Udaipur

- Chittorgarh (Chitor)

We depart early this morning and drive to one of the most haunting and evocative places in all India – a scene of chivalry and slaughter, of Rajput honour and valour at its most noble and futile. Standing on an isolated rocky outcrop, 150 metres above the surrounding plains, the walls of Chitor are the finest medieval Hindu defence work to survive in any degree of completeness. A still silence hangs over the deserted pavilions and ruined temples of Chitor. Three times in its history, the Hindu princes of Mewar led their warriors from the gates of their capital to carry death to Muslim besiegers or meet it in the field. Three times, the women they left behind performed the terrible rite of *jauhar*, the self-immolation by the women of the royal line, along with all their female relatives, on mass funeral pyres. Death for all, before dishonour.

The heights of Chitor were the key to Rajasthan and its reduction was amongst the first priorities of any ruler hoping to hold northern India. It fell to the Sultan of Delhi in 1303 and to the Sultan of Gujarat in 1535. In that assault, the queen mother in battle regalia led a final cavalry charge from the fortress and died fighting, along with 32,000 warriors and the flower of Mewar nobility. Behind them, 13,000 women and children – royal, noble and common – performed *jauhar*.

Chitor was invested for a third time by the Emperor Akbar in 1568. As in the case of the two earlier sieges, the ruling prince was smuggled to safety to raise the standard of revolt anew. Two young Rajput nobles, Jaimal and Patta, aged 15 and 16, commanded Chitor's defences. Their bravery has made them household names in Mewar even today, their valour immortalised in Rajasthani folksongs and bardic poems. Jaimal was shot at close range by Akbar himself. Patta, with his mother and wife at his side, died in the final suicide charge of the defenders from the fort, when 8000 warriors, dressed in the saffron robes of Hinduism and drunk on opium, charged the Mughal artillery and fought to the last man. The night before, with defeat certain, 1700 wives and daughters of the nobility sealed their duty to Mewar with their lives by performing the ritual of *jauhar*. When the fighting ended, the Mughals entered the fortress capital and slaughtered 30,000 inhabitants of the town and surrounding countryside. This final orgy of killing also had its ritual title – the *saka*. Jahanghir restored the fort to the Rajputs in 1616 but the people of Mewar never returned. Chitor, the scene for a thousand years of heroic valour and high adventure, was left desolate. Still left within the walls of this mighty fortress capital, whose walls encompass 280 hectares, are the ruins of several palaces, many temples and ceremonial pools fed by springs that emerge from the bedrock. There is also a victory monument visible from several kilometres away, that the Mewar raja built to commemorate his victory over

the Sultan of Malwa in 1440.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we drive to Udaipur, renowned for its views of Lake Pichola and its islands. After the fall of Chitor in 1568, Rana Udai Singh II of Mewar founded a new capital which, in the best north Indian tradition, he named after himself. The site that he chose stood on a small, wooded plain hidden in the mountains, on the edge of a natural lake. The rulers of Mewar established a new capital at Udaipur. They belonged to the Sisodia clan of the Rajputs and they were the oldest of the Rajput ruling lineages. They offered the fiercest resistance to the Mughals, making no settlement with them until 1614, while the other two great Rajput houses, Ambèr (Jaipur) and Marwar (Jodhpur), grew wealthy and powerful as senior allies of the Mughals. (Overnight Udaipur) BLD

Day 10: Sunday 9 February, Udaipur

- City Palace
- Jagdish Temple
- Boat cruise on Lake Pichola
- Bara Bazaar and Bapu Bazaar

By the early years of the seventeenth century, Mewar had accepted the realpolitik in north India and made its peace with the Mughals. The city palaces of Udaipur, built largely in the century that followed, reflect this accommodation with the Mughals by their steady incorporation of Mughal design elements. We will begin our morning tour at the City Palace, whose towers and cupolas dominate the skyline of Udaipur. It is the largest palace complex in Rajasthan, an interesting blend of Rajput military architecture and Mughal decorative art. The sheer external bulk and elevation of the palace, accentuated by its reflection in Lake Pichola, recall the walls and towers of Chitor. The interior, by contrast, is clad in marble, every surface inlaid in the geometric and floral patterns that are the hallmark of Mughal art.

Adjacent to the City Palace is the Jagdish Temple, built in 1651 and dedicated to Vishnu as Lord of the Universe. It is an excellent example of the Indo-Aryan style and contains a superb bronze statue of Garuda, Vishnu's mount.

After lunch, we take a boat cruise on Lake Pichola, upon which seem to float lovely pleasure palaces like the Jag Nivas (now the Lake Palace Hotel), and the Gul Mahal (on the island of Jag Mandir). These island pavilions, like the city palace itself, reflect the luxurious lifestyles of the Rajputs, who retreated here from the heat of the mainland. The Gul Mahal is the largest and best-preserved lake palace, composed of domed pavilions set among trees. The complex and its reflection in the lake provides a breathtaking view.

One of the delights of visiting Udaipur is to wander the bazaars and watch the craftsmen at work. We end the day with a visit to the Bara Bazaar and Bapu Bazaar, both near the City Palace, where we shall see traditional Mewari tie-dying, puppets, copperwork and silverware. (Overnight Udaipur) BLD

Kumbhalgarh - 1 night

Day 11: Monday 10 February, Udaipur – Ranakpur – Kumbhalgarh

- Ranakpur (Jain) Temples

We drive to Kumbhalgarh, visiting the Ranakpur Temples along the way. Ranakpur is one of the five most important pilgrimage sites of Jainism. It is home to an exceptionally beautiful temple complex tucked away in a remote valley in the Aravalli range, situated north of Udaipur in Pali district. Ranakpur is named after the

liberal Rajput, Rana Kumbha, whom Dharna Sah, a Jain businessman, approached to ask for land for the construction of a great temple he'd seen in a vision. Renowned for their marvellous carvings in amber stone, these temples were constructed in 1439. The whole complex rests on a basement of forty-eight thousand square feet. There are four subsidiary shrines and twenty-four pillared halls with domes supported by over four hundred columns. In total, there are 1444 columns, all of which are intricately carved and no two are alike. The carved flute-playing nymphs in various dance poses are of particular interest. In the assembly hall there are two big bells weighing one hundred and eight kilograms, whose sound echoes throughout the entire complex. The main temple is a Chaumukh, or a four-faced temple, dedicated to Adinath.

On reaching Kumbhalgarh we check into our nature resort which is perched on a cliff overlooking the famous Aravali Ranges. There will be time to relax and enjoy the very peaceful environment before dinner. (Overnight Kumbhalgarh) BLD

Jodphur - 2 nights

Day 12: Tuesday 11 February, Kumbhalgarh – Jodhpur

- Kumbhalgarh Fortress

This morning we travel by jeep to visit Kumbhalgarh Fort. Its location had always been Kumbhalgarh's greatest advantage. Because it was virtually inaccessible in the 15th century, Rana Kumbha of Mewar built this great defensive fortress on a 3500-foot (1100-metre) high hill overlooking the approaches from Ajmer and Marwar. It is the second most important Mewar fortress after Chitor, providing a haven when the city was attacked.

After exploring this magnificent fort, we have an early lunch before making the 240-kilometre journey to Jodhpur. (Overnight Jodhpur) BLD

Day 13: Wednesday 12 February, Jodhpur

- Mehrangarh Fort
- Mandor
- Old City

In the early 13th century, the Rathor tribes of central India, one of the great Rajput lineages, were displaced by Muslim invaders from Afghanistan. They migrated further and further westward, eventually settling in the blazing desert country in the heart of Rajasthan. They called their land *Marwar*, "the land of death". In 1459 their ruler, Rao Jodha, founded the city of Jodhpur when his ancestral capital at nearby Mandor proved too difficult to defend. After the Mughals had established themselves in north India, the ruler of Marwar married his sister to the Emperor Akbar and received the title, Raja. His son entered the emperor's service and conquered Gujarat and part of the Deccan for the Mughals, the rewards from these expeditions contributing to the embellishment of his capital.

We will start our tour of Jodhpur at Mehrangarh Fort, perched atop a sheer rocky crag that rises 120 metres above the centre of the old city. The fort contains the best museum in Rajasthan, with a superb collection of miniature paintings from a variety of schools, musical instruments, and all the trappings of Indian royalty: howdahs, thrones, furniture, robes, weapons. The ramparts afford stunning views over this rare example of a medieval Hindu fortified city.

After lunch we visit Mandor, the ancient seat of the Rathors of Marwar. Here, landscaped gardens surround

a group of ancient Hindu temples and the cenotaphs of the rulers of Marwar, constructed in a richly mixed architectural style that incorporates Buddhist, Jain and Hindu elements. In this tranquil setting, the visitor can reflect on six hundred years of Rajput history that began in hardship and austerity, rose to glory in bravery and chivalry, and culminated in grandiose magnificence and decadence.

If time permits, we also visit the Old City with its colourful winding streets of distinctively Rajput vernacular architecture, to view the crafts of the city. The houses are mostly three storeys, jutting out on tiers of elaborately carved corbels, their windows filled with pierced stone grillework, all uniting to form streets of great charm. (Overnight Jodhpur) BLD

Jaisalmer - 2 nights

Day 14: Thursday 13 February, Jodhpur – Jaisalmer

Today, we drive through the Rajasthan desert to Jaisalmer, one of the most evocative of all the Rajput cities. It is dominated by its ancient fortress that rises out of the desert, far from the great urban centres of north India. The Bhatti Rajput ruler Jaisala founded the city and fortress in 1156, removing his court to this isolated desert territory from the more vulnerable Lodhruva, which was constantly being raided by the Ghaznavids (of Afghanistan). Jaisalmer is famous for its intricate Rajasthani jewellery. The goldsmiths of Jaisalmer are particularly known for their skills in carving out beautiful pieces of silver jewellery. You may also view unique costumes and textiles from the desert tribes which are visible in the street stalls; many of them are collectable antiques. (Overnight Jaisalmer) BLD

Day 15: Friday 14 February, Jaisalmer

- Gadi Sagar Lake
- Jaisalmer Fort (exterior only)
- Jain and Hindu Temples
- Old city of Jaisalmer
- Merchant Houses *(havelis)*

We commence this morning with a brief visit to the Gadi Sagar Lake, a man-made reservoir built in 1156 AD. During the Rajput clan period, it was the only resource for drinking water in Jaisalmer. The lake is marvellously placed in picturesque surroundings and an imposing sandstone entrance known as Tilon-ki-Pol opens to the lake. A grand Krishna temple is also placed at the gate. The banks of the Gadi Sagar enclose superbly maintained gardens, temples and majestically carved Chattris.

The remainder of the day is devoted to exploring Jaisalmer fortress, its temples and the old city.

The fort is protected by formidable sandstone walls, from which its defenders hurled large spherical rocks, examples of which are still piled up on the ramparts. It was besieged by the Sultan of Dehli, Ala-ud-din Khiljii, in the thirteenth century. After a nine-year siege, the women of the fortress committed ritual suicide while their men rode out to certain death in saffron robes. Jaisalmer recovered economically from each conquest because it was strategically located on the trade routes to Central Asia. Only when the port city of Mumbai (Bombay) rose to prominence was it eclipsed.

One distinctive quality of the fortress palace, which was constructed over five centuries, is its large *jalis*, or intricate screens, which cover whole walls rather than just the palace windows. The purpose of these screens, which are particularly fine and delicate at Jaisalmer, is to filter the harsh desert light whilst at the same time maximising the flow of cooling air through palace rooms. Many of the *jalis* are topped by curved

eaves that derive from the distinctive pavilion domes of older Bengali palaces. Many people still live within the fortress precinct; it is not just a heritage monument, but a living community!

Dominating the forts, houses, shops and narrow alleyways is the Rajmahal, the seven-storey palace of the former Maharaja. We shall visit this palace and also some of the seven Jain temples within the citadel walls. The maharajas of Jaisalmer practiced tolerance toward the Jain population. These Jain temples, constructed between the 12th and 15th centuries, are particularly noted for their magnificent carvings.

The old city also has a number of wonderful, highly decorated merchant houses, *havelis*. Jain merchants who enriched themselves by trading jewellery and fine brocades built a number of these in the 19th century. Much older is the Salim Singh-ki-Haveli, built some 400 years ago by Salim Singh, the prime minister of Jaisalmer. (Overnight Jaisalmer) BLD

Bikaner - 1 night

Day 16: Saturday 15 February, Jaisalmer – Bikaner

Today we drive a long distance across the north of Rajasthan to Bikaner, once a great centre of power in northern Rajasthan. Tonight, we stay in another wonderful heritage building. Hotel Laxmi Niwas Palace was once the personal residence of Maharaja Ganga Singhji of Bikaner. The residential rooms have a richness befitting their use by the royal family itself or by the personal guests of the Maharaja (only guests of equal status to the Maharaja would be invited to spend the night in the palace). Most are lavishly decorated using gold wall paintings and have painted or carved wood ceilings. (Overnight Bikaner) BLD

Khimsar Fort - 2 nights

Day 17: Sunday 16 February, Bikaner – Khimsar Fort

- Junagarh Fort, Bikaner
- Karni Mata Temple (Temple of Rats)

This morning we explore Bikaner, a vibrant, dust-swirling desert town with a fabulous fort. The city of Bikaner, which was founded in 1488 by Rao Bika, a descendent of Jodha (founder of Jodhpur), has one of Rajasthan's greatest fortresses.

Junargarh Fort was built by Raja Rai Singhji, the sixth ruler of Bikaner (r. 1571-1612). Raja Rai Singhji could marshal the revenues of a kingdom increased by the conquest of half Marwar, and a grant of half Gujurat. It was to Akbar and Jahangir, who raised him to a high rank at the Mughal Imperial court, that he owed his wealth. As a reward for his service as military commander, he was granted the regions of Gujurat and Burhanpur. During his tenure in imperial service he also travelled extensively, which honed his understanding of art and architecture that informed the architectural styles of Junagarh Fort. The palaces within the fort were built over three hundred years from the early 17th to the 20th centuries. Bikaner has some of the richest of all palace interiors, which are also in good condition.

This afternoon we depart for the historic Khimsar Fort. Established in 1523 A.D, it is perched on the edge of the Thar Desert. En route, we make a brief stop to visit the Karni Mata Temple, also known as Temple of Rats, famous for the approximately 20,000 black rats (called *kabobs)* that live and are revered in the temple. (Overnight Khimsar Fort) BLD

Day 18: Monday 17 February, Khimsar Fort

- Panchla blackbuck 4WD safari
- Optional 2-hour Camel Safari
- Afternoon at leisure

This morning we depart Khimsar Fort for a two-hour 4WD safari. Our journey of 16 kilometres by open jeep aims to view herds of blackbuck, chinkara and blue bull antelope. Native to the Indian Subcontinent, the blackbuck is an antelope species that has been classified as endangered since 2003. Male blackbuck are dark brown, black, and white and have long, twisted horns, while females are fawn-coloured, with no horns.

Following our safari you may wish to join an optional camel safari. The remainder of the day is at leisure for you to relax and enjoy the various facilities provided at the Khimsar Fort. (Overnight Khimsar Fort) BLD

Jaipur - 1 night

Day 19: Tuesday 18 February, Khimsar Fort – Ajmer – Jaipur

- Dargah Sharif, Ajmer
- Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra, Ajmer

This morning we set out for the great Muslim devotional centre of Ajmer, famous for its shrine, Dargah Sharif, surrounding the tomb of the great Sufi Holy Man, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (1143-1235), who introduced the Sufi Chishti Order to India from Central Asia. The saint's marble-domed tomb was built by his most famous devotee, the Mughal Emperor Akbar; the centre was also patronized by Shah Jahan. Akbar used to make bare-foot pilgrimages to the tomb; he once walked 363 kilometres from Agra to Ajmer in thanksgiving after the birth of his son Salim, the future Emperor Jahangir. Millions of pilgrims come to Ajmer for the anniversary of the saint's death in October; chaotic crowds jam into his mausoleum to circumambulate and throw flower petals upon his tomb.

Nearby, Ajmer's architectural masterpiece is the Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra, ('Hut of Two-and-a-Half Days') whose name seems to derive from the duration of a religious fair once held here. The ruins of this early 13th-century mosque complex include an exquisite, intricately carved seven-arched screen fronting its colonnaded prayer hall. Each arch takes a different shape and the myriad columns within the hall are elaborately carved. In the mid-afternoon we continue our journey east to Jaipur. (Overnight Jaipur) BLD

Agra - 2 nights

Day 20: Wednesday 19 January, Jaipur – Fatehpur Sikri – Agra

- Fatehpur Sikri

Today, we depart Jaipur and drive to Fatehpur Sikri. During his long reign, Akbar made no commitment to a permanent capital. Over the years, three cities filled that role: Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore. For long periods, the centre of the empire was a vast military encampment, a tent capital that moved with the emperor on campaign across northern and central India.

In 1571, Akbar moved from Agra to his newly built capital at Fatehpur Sikri, some 40 kilometres distant. His imperial palace complex, standing on a low sandstone ridge, is one of the most remarkable architectural assemblages in India. It comprises gardens, courtyards and pavilions that stand as one of the high points of Mughal culture. During the 15 years that he resided at Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar directed some of his major conquests and took far-reaching initiatives in the areas of land revenue, trade and financial policy, military organisation and provincial administration. In 1585, Akbar moved his capital to Lahore. Though he later

resided in Agra, the imperial court never returned to Fatehpur Sikri and the city was abandoned.

The design of Fatehpur Sikri was intended to emphasise the Islamic nature of the Mughal state, but also Akbar's accommodation of Hindu culture. The city is dominated by a huge congregational mosque. In the courtyard stands the tomb of a widely revered Sufi saint, Salim Chisti, from whom the young Akbar frequently sought spiritual advice. In this way, institutional and mystical Islam were combined in the core of the imperial capital to reinforce the legitimacy of the ruling house.

Yet Fatehpur Sikri was primarily a courtly city, whose cultural masterpieces were very much the product of the young emperor's passion for architecture and building. The buildings of Fatehpur Sikri are loaded with decorative motifs which derive from earlier Indic culture, in particular Hinduism. These images reflect Akbar's genius for melding together a culturally diverse state which served as the basis of his power. Varied traditions of music, painting, calligraphy, poetry – and open religious debate – all flourished in the sophisticated palatial setting of Fatehpur Sikri. The site visit will take about two hours. In the late afternoon, we continue our journey to Agra, the premier city of the Mughal Empire. (Overnight Agra) BLD

Day 21: Thursday 20 February, Agra

- Taj Mahal
- Agra Fort
- Tomb of the Itimud-ud-Daula

Agra is of ancient Hindu origin. It was chosen for a capital by Sikander Lodi, Sultan of Delhi, whose son lost the empire to the founder of the Mughal dynasty, Babur, at Panipat in 1526. Akbar (1556-1605) was the first Mughal emperor to have sufficient security of tenure of office to be able to embellish a capital. He chose Agra, which continued intermittently as the imperial capital until the emperor Aurangzeb moved to Delhi.

We begin this morning with a visit to the Taj Mahal. The most famous of all Islamic shrines, it was built by an architect from Shiraz (Iran) for Shah Jahan to commemorate his wife, Mumtaz Mihal, who died in childbirth in 1610. The distraught emperor planned to build a black tomb for himself to mirror the white Taj Mahal across the Yamuna River. He was deposed by his son before he could achieve his grandiose plan.

Next, we visit Agra's powerful Red Fort. As busily as he was reducing the fortresses of his enemies, Akbar was building his own strategic network of strongholds across northern India. Chief amongst these was the fortress at his capital, Agra, which accommodated his court, the imperial family, a massive arsenal, a granary and the vaults that held the Mughal treasure hoards.

After lunch we travel to one of the most remarkable of Mughal buildings, the tomb of the Empress Nur Jahan's father, a senior noble of Persian lineage whose long and capable service to the emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan earned him the title *Itimud ud daula*, 'pillar of the state'. The building, a milestone in the development of Mughal architecture, was the first to be clad in white marble, which was then entirely decorated in *pietra dura* floral and geometric designs.

We finish our day's program with a trip across the river to view the Taj Mahal from the riverbank. Here, the wonderful building can be viewed away from the trappings of the modern city, and it seems to float up from the water. (Overnight Agra) BLD

Day 22: Friday 21 February, Agra – Delhi Airport

- Morning at leisure

- Farewell Lunch
- Transfer from Agra to Delhi Airport arriving at 1730hrs

This morning is at leisure. After a special farewell lunch, we commence the three-hour drive to Delhi Airport arriving at 5.30pm. Note: Singapore Airlines flight SQ403 is scheduled to depart at 2150hrs. BL

Accommodation

Accommodation is in a range of 3- to 5-star hotels, many of them in heritage buildings and palaces. All rooms have en suite bathrooms; several hotels have swimming pools and provide foreign exchange and internet service. In Jodhpur accommodation at the hotel is in a mixture of deluxe rooms and luxury tents (see link below for details). Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel List' given to tour members prior to their departure.

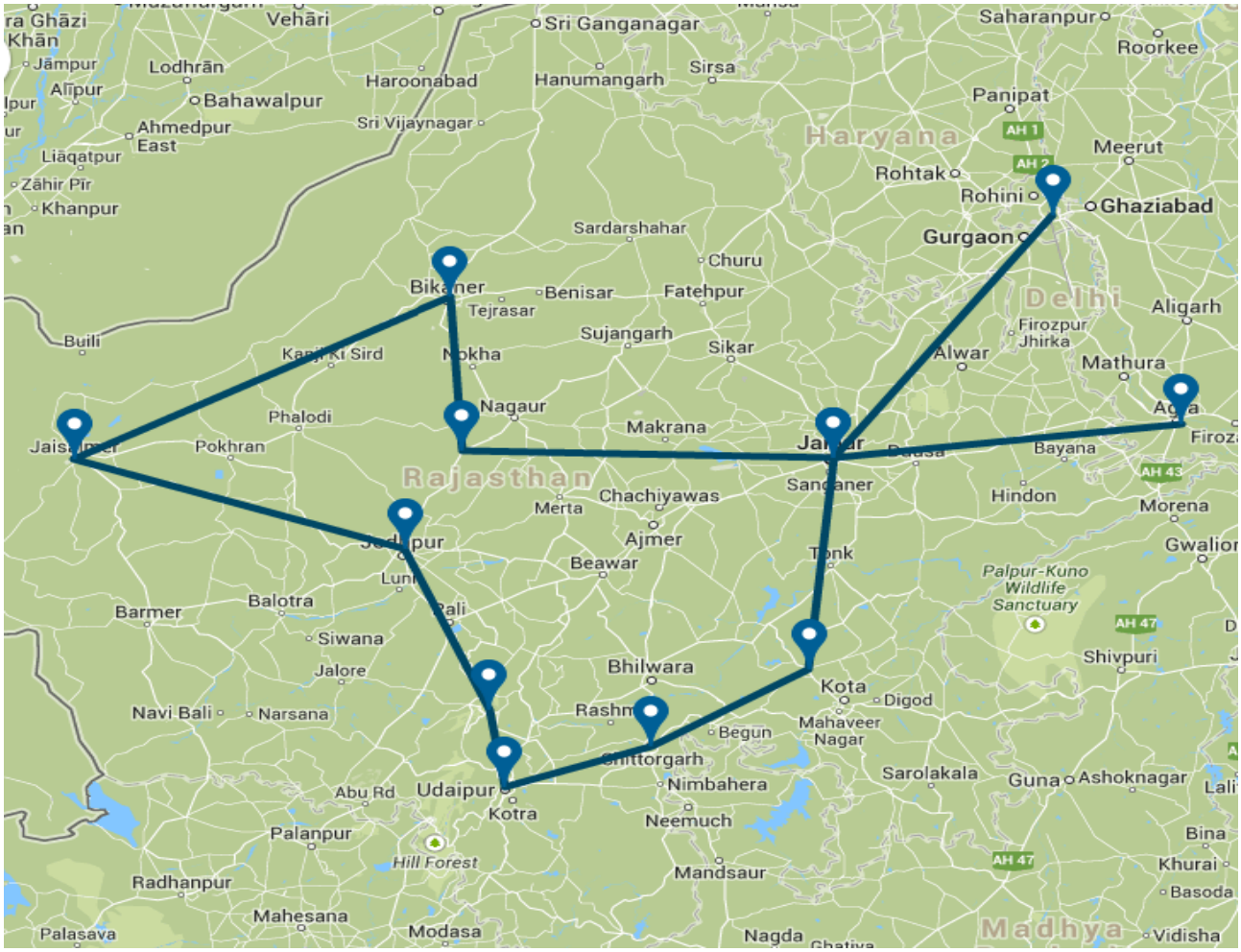
- New Delhi (3 nights): 5-star The Claridges – graceful architecture, elegant décor, and a seamless blend of old-world charm and contemporary facilities have made this hotel one of the best addresses in Lutyens' Delhi since the 1950s. Room type: Cabana rooms. www.claridges.com
- Jaipur (3 nights): 4-star Alsisar Haveli – a small heritage hotel with antique furniture and medieval Rajasthani-style fabrics. Situated in the centre of Jaipur. Room type: Deluxe www.alsisarhaveli.com
- Bundi (1 night): 4-star Hadoti Palace Bundi – a family-run hotel built in the colonial style and situated in the city centre. Room type: Executive www.hadotipalace.com
- Bijaipur (1 night): 3-star Castle Bijaipur – built in the early 16th century to defend the frontier against invading Mughal & Maratha armies. Now an enchanting heritage hotel with spectacular architecture, the castle offers breathtaking views of the surrounding area. Room type: Deluxe castlebijaipur.co.in
- Udaipur (2 nights): 5-star Radisson Blue Udaipur Palace Resort and Spa – nestled in the heart of the city, offering breathtaking views of the Aravalli Mountains and Fateh Sagar Lake. www.radissonhotels.com
- Kumbhalgarh (1 night): 4-star The Wild Retreat – a nature resort perched on a cliff overlooking the famous Aravali Ranges. thewildretreat.com
- Jodhpur (2 nights): 4-star Ajit Bhawan Palace Resort – a heritage hotel and home to the present Maharaja Gaj Singh and members of the Jodhpur royal family. The hotel offers old-world elegance with the modern comforts and boasts a beautiful pool and garden area. Room type: mixture of Deluxe rooms & vintage tents. https://ajitbhawan.com/rooms-suites/
- Jaisalmer (2 nights): 4-star Mandir Palace – a heritage hotel with exquisitely carved balconies, canopies and screens. Located in the heart of the city, the hotel's terraces offer breathtaking views of the Jaisalmer Fort. Room Type: Deluxe www.welcomheritagehotels.in
- Bikaner (1 night): 4-star Narendra Bhawan – a grand residence that housed the last reigning Maharaja of Bikaner His Highness Narendra Singhji. Room Type: Residence www.narendrabhawan.com
- Khimsar (2 nights): 4-star Khimsar Fort – a heritage hotel housed in a 16th-century fort perched on the edge of the Great Thar Desert. Room type: Standard www.itchotels.com
- Jaipur (1 night): 4-star Alsisar Haveli – a small heritage hotel with antique furniture and medieval Rajasthani-style fabrics. Situated in the centre of Jaipur. Room type: Deluxe www.alsisarhaveli.com
- Agra (2 nights): 5-star Tajview, Agra-IHCL SeleQtions – a contemporary boutique hotel in the historic heart of Agra, in close proximity to the Taj Mahal. Room Type: Deluxe www.seleqtionshotels.com

Note: *Hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation is for sole occupancy throughout the tour. The number of spaces available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Map


Saharanpur
Roorkee
Vehāri
Sri Ganganagar
Jāmpur
Lodhrān
Haroonabad
Hanumangarh
Sirsa
Alīpur
Bahawalpur
Panipat
Ahmedpur East
Sri Vijaynagar
Haryana
Meerut
Liāqatpur
Rohtak
Zāhir Pīr
Rohini
Ghaziabad
Khanpur
Sardarshahar
Gurgaon
Churu
Bikaner
Benisar
Fatehpur
Delhi
Aligarh
Tejrasar
Buili
Sujangarh
Firozpur Jhirka
Sikar
Alwar
Mathura
Nagaur
Phalodi
Makrana
Pokhran
Bayana
Rajasthan
Chachiyawas
Hindon
Merta
Morena
Ajmer
Beawar
Gwalior
Tonk
Palpur-Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary
Barmer
Balotra
Siwana
Shivpuri
Jalore
Bhilwara
Navi Bali
Narsana
Kota
Digod
Mahaveer Nagar
Begun
Sarolakala
Guna
Ashoknagar
Abu Rd
Udaipur
Kotra
Nimbahera
Neemuch
Palanpur
Hill Forest
Mandsaur
Khurai
Basoda
Radhanpur
Mahesana
Palasava
Modasa
Nagda
Madhya
Vidisha

Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD $13,490.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 31 March 2024

AUD $13,690.00 Land Content Only

AUD $2800.00 Double (as single) supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share or double rooms (in Jodhpur this is a mixture of deluxe rooms and luxury tents) with private facilities in 3-5-star hotels
- All meals, indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may only include tea, coffee and bottled water.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach; 4WD safari (Day 18)
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Tour handbook
- Bottled water provided daily during site excursions
- Services of a National Indian Tour Manager and local guides
- Entrance fees (excl. optional late afternoon Camel Safari Day 18)
- Tips for the coach driver, National Indian guide and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Delhi, Delhi-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights with Singapore Airlines
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas as applicable

Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless, all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 22-day Cultural Tour of North India involves:

- Extensive walking through narrow streets and busy markets, and some walking on rough ground.
- Travelling long distances by coach with variable road conditions.
- Regular early-morning starts.
- Risk of gastric ailments.
- 3- to 5-star hotels with eleven hotel changes.
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotel porterage includes 1 piece of luggage per person. Assistance with luggage can be slow on occasion.

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to

direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the ASA Reservation Application Form.

Visas

Australian, New Zealand and British passport holders will require a tourist visa for India. You must apply for a visa before arrival. Check your eligibility and apply online for an e-visa by visiting the Government of India's Indian Visa Online website.

Weather in Rajasthan

Extending from December to March is the winter season. The coldest month of the season is January. The temperature ranges from 10° C to 27° C. However, there may be considerable difference in the maximum and minimum temperatures.

Use of Professional Video/Camera Equipment

There are strict regulations with regard to the use of 'professional equipment' in India. For example, when using equipment such as large video cameras, photographic or filming materials normally associated with TV or movie shooting, special authorisation from the government is required. Generally speaking, the use of cameras, and tripods etc. used by photography enthusiasts is not a problem.

Type of Touring

This program includes extensive coach travel using either a 27-seater (if group size is less than 15 people) or 34-seater deluxe air-conditioned coach. A small number of site visits are undertaken by 4WD safari jeeps. Travelling includes:

- New Delhi-Jaipur: 266km – 6 hours on highway
- Jaipur-Bundi : 210km – 3-3.5 hours on poor road
- Bundi-Kota: 60km – 1 hour on poor road
- Bijaipur-Udaipur: 145km – 3 hours on good road
- Kumbhalgarh-Jodhpur: 40km – 1 hour
- Jodhpur-Jaisalmer: 280kms – 5 hours on good road
- Jaisalmer-Bikaner: 330kms – 7 hours on good road
- Bikaner-Khimsar: 155km – 3-3.5hrs on poor road
- Khimsar-Pushkar: 155km – 3-3.5 hours on good and poor road
- Pushkar-Jaipur: 150km on good road
- Agra-Delhi Airport: 226km – 3-3.5 on Express Way

Booking Conditions

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD $1000.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.

Reservation Application

TOUR NAME Mughals, Rajputs & Villages: The Cultural Heritage of North India

TOUR DATES 31 January - 21 February 2025

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ Other _____

FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____

MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____

POSTAL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____

TEL. (AH) ( ) _____ TEL. (BH) ( ) _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Date of birth / / _____ GENDER Male ☐ Female ☐

Passport

Number _____ Expiry date / / _____ Nationality _____

☐ Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed ☐ I'm renewing my passport ☐ ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Covid Certificate

☐ A copy of my current international certificate enclosed

Travel Plans

☐ I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date / / _____

☐ I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: ☐ a twin-bedded room ☐ a double-bedded room ☐ a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: ☐ on my own ☐ with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

☐ I do not have any specific dietary requests

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

☐ fish ☐ poultry ☐ red meat ☐ dairy products

☐ eggs ☐ pork ☐ nuts

☐ Other _____

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence ☐ Postal Mail ☐ Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person MUST be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____

Address _____

TEL. (AH) ( ) _____ TEL. (BH) ( ) _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Medical Information

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at **www.asatours.com.au**
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel:1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. **You must also be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.** If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

	YES	NO
1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions?	◯	◯
2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces?	◯	◯
3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted?	◯	◯
4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted?	◯	◯
5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage?	◯	◯
6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places?	◯	◯
7. Can you administer your own medication?	◯	◯
8. You do NOT have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour?	◯	◯

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

	YES	NO
1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

_____

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

	YES	NO
1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

_____

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

_____

Do you carry an epipen?	◯	◯
3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

_____

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

	YES	NO
1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

_____

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine?	◯	◯

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic?	◯	◯
Are you insulin dependent?	◯	◯
4. Do you suffer from travel sickness? Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.	◯	◯

Declaration, Liability and Booking Conditions

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept the inherent dangers, risks and uncertainties in travel and those beyond ASA's control and understand they may occur before or during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but only for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services associated with the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of booking, preparing for, travelling to, on and from or cancelling any tour.

I release and indemnify ASA with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour;
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
   a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
   b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
   c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally; and
   d. any event or happening beyond ASA's control
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of any tour, part of a tour or of my continued participation on a tour for any reason (subject to ASA's refund conditions below).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products, services, terms and conditions. If a service provider cancels or does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, and does not give a refund, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (e.g. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, border closures, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any tour service provider or authority however caused (contingencies). You must take out such travel insurance as is available against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour cancelled or changed will be limited to the partial refund of amounts you have paid, less an administration fee of $500 and other costs and charges of third party service providers. No compensation will be payable to you by ASA where ASA cancels or changes a tour, or any part of a tour.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate and in the best interests of health, safety and wellbeing of tour participants. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A non-refundable deposit of $1000.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 120 days before departure: your initial deposit of $1000.00 is non-refundable.**

120-46 days prior 30% of total amount due

45-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

**$500.00 of this amount (ie 50% of your deposit) may be credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions or services of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 120 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 120 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

☐ I accept the conditions on this booking form

☐ I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name

Dated

ASA CULTURAL TOURS

Payment Form

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of $ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

- ☐ Intention to Travel
- ☐ Tour Deposit
- ☐ Balance of Payment
- ☐ Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit
- ☐ Travel Insurance
- ☐ Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation) _____

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- *via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate*
- *via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg.Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.*

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank	ANZ
Branch	420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code	ANZBAU3M
BSB	013-423
Account No	3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

_____

Date Money Transferred _____

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____ Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

_____

Postcode _____

State _____ Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____

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