

# GRAND TOUR INDIA

## DAY 1:

Departure from Brussels with British Airways via London connecting flight to Bangalore

## DAY 2: BANGALORE

Arrival to BANGALORE. You will be met and assisted on arrival in Bangalore and transferred to your hotel ROYAL ORCHID.



Later proceed with a city tour of Bangalore- the Garden city of India. We start with the visit of Tipu's Palace,



and completed by Tipu Sultan himself.

We continue our tour with the visit of Lal Bagh; spread over 240 acres of flowering glory. Lal Bagh has rare collection of tropical and sub-tropical trees, plants and herbs to quench the thirst of search for scenic beauty by both layman and horticulturist. Hyder Ali was the force behind laying out the park in 17th century. But Tipu Sultan was responsible for enriching the vast collection by importing several specimens from Afghanistan, France and Persia. We finish our tour with the visit of the Bull Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva's Vahana (vehicle), Nandi the bull. Overnight.

### DAY 3: BANGALORE - TRIVANDRUM

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to connect flight JET Airways to Trivandrum, on arrival to Trivandrum you are met and transferred to your hotel at KOVALAM- one of South India's finest beaches. The TRAVANCORE HERITAGE resort here is one of the best Ayurveda center, providing excellent opportunities to spoil yourself with a complete Ayurveda course, or, just a small rejuvenation therapy for a couple of hours. Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala and a pleasant city built over gently rolling coastal land, retaining a rural air away from the crowded centre. Your free time can be spent exploring the busy bazaar area along the central MG Road. The old fort and the large complex of the Padmanabhasvami Temple are to the south near the bustling bus stand, while the artistic and cultural heart, exemplified by the Museum building, is to the north. The remainder of your day is free to relax by the pool side.



### DAY 4 - DAY 5 : TRIVANDRUM

In the morning proceed for a guided half-day city tour of Trivandrum visiting the ancient temple of Sri Padmanabhaswamy is one of the major attractions in the city of Thiruvananthapuram. Move around the city and you get to see various picturesque spots besides the glimpses of the city's past. Some of the attractions that are not to be missed are the Napier Museum, Sri Chitra Art Gallery, Zoo, Observatory Hill, Science and Technology Museum, and Chacha Nehru Children's Museum. Free time to relax by the pool side

### DAY 6 : TRIVANDRUM - PERIYAR

This morning you travel approximately 3-4 hours by private vehicle to Thekkady, the main entrance to Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary.





Upon arrival check in at your resort **Spice Village** among tea / coffee plantations. Afternoon proceed for boat ride on Lake Periyar. Covering an area of 300 square miles Periyar is one of the largest and most frequently visited wildlife reserves in India. It is part of the Project Tiger campaign and animals inhabiting the area include elephant, deer, pig, tiger, leopard, bison, monkeys and Malabar squirrel. Whilst actually spotting an illusive tiger or leopard could prove difficult, the mix of wooded hills and valleys make it a wonderful place to enjoy the greenery. Return to your resort for breakfast then a local guide takes you to view spice plantations of cardamom, pepper and other local specialties. On 2nd day you will visit a few coffee and tea plantations and walk around to enjoy the tranquility of the place.

### DAY 7 - DAY 8 : PERIYAR - KUMARAKOM

This morning, proceed to Kumarakom, approximately 3 hours drive by private vehicle. An old rubber plantation set around the Vembanad Lake has been sensitively developed by the Kerala Tourism Department into a bird sanctuary. The Vembanad Lake with its majestic canals, streams and distributaries along its banks weaves an intricate and beautiful web. This area is a winter home for many migratory birds and species include the darter, little cormorant, night heron, golden-backed woodpecker, white-breasted water hen and many more wonderful birds. After lunch you visit the bird sanctuary with a local naturalist and if possible do your wildlife viewing by boat. Your overnight stay is at **Coconut Lagoon**, heritage resort on the banks of Vembanad Lake. Your ethnic cottage is centrally air-conditioned and set amidst acres of garden.



### DAY 9 : KUMARAKOM - ALLEPPEY

After breakfast you make a short trip to the ferry point where you board your houseboat.

Depending on the number of travelers in your party you will be on a one or two room houseboat that travels until sunset when it then anchors for the night.



Your boat has a private balcony with comfortable chairs (perfect for that G&T while the sun goes down!). The rooms are fully furnished with attached bathrooms.

Each boat has a fully equipped kitchen and an experienced cook to prepare authentic Kerala cuisine with seafood specialties and fresh vegetables. This is your chance to pick up some fabulous cooking tips! The entire state of Kerala is blessed with plenty of rivers and the resources of many are still untapped. The waterways of Kerala play a major role in the economy of the state as they link remote villages and islands with the mainland. It is an incredibly different experience to cruise in the backwaters in country boats, absorbing the beauty of Kerala's villages. Houseboats, also known as kettuvallam or rice boats, are today one of the major tourist attractions in Kerala, but these boats were used to carry rice bags in their earlier days. These houseboats are uniquely designed using local materials like bamboo poles, coconut fiber ropes, bamboo mats, carpets etc. and are a fabulous way to enjoy exploring the fascinating beauties of backwaters. With their languid grace and quaint design adding another dimension to your cruise in the shimmering blue waters. Overnight is in a houseboat, your floating hotel, with your private crew at your disposal.

### DAY 10 : ALLEPPEY - COCHIN

Around midday you depart from your majestic rice boat home at Alleppey. Your private driver will meet you and take you directly to your hotel **Le MERIDIEN** in Cochin.



Cochin (KOCHI) is one of the most interesting towns in South India. A trading port since Roman times, it was on the main trade route between Europe and China. Fort Kochi, a Portuguese fort, founded in 1503 is now in ruins. Mattancherry Palace was built by the Portuguese in 1557 as a gift for the Raja of Kochi in exchange for trading rights and in 1663 it was substantially rebuilt by the Dutch. The cosmopolitan history is still evident as well as European intervention. The Jewish synagogue is in Mattancherry and the Jews claim to have settled here in 587 BC and some legends

trace their origin to King Solomon 1030 BC. The earliest evidence of their presence and importance is a copper inscription dated AD 388.

### DAY 11 : COCHIN

This morning proceed for a guided tour of Cochin visiting the Dutch Palace, Jewish Synagogue, Fort Kochi, St. Francis Church, Santa Cruz Basilica, Dutch Cemetery, the Chinese Nets, Willingdon Island, and Hill Palace Museum. In the afternoon, you will be taken for an hour show of Kathakali the ancient dance from Kerala. Return to Le Meridien for overnight stay.



### DAY 12 : COCHIN - MUMBAI - UDAIPUR

Fly this morning by Jet Airways via Mumbai to a beautiful city in RAJASTHAN called UDAIPUR. It is the city of lakes, also known as "the Venice of the East" and the second most visited city in Rajasthan, after Jaipur. A royal past makes itself evident in every nook and corner in Udaipur. Whether it is the ornate doors that are entrances to people's homes or the palaces, gardens and monuments, Udaipur gives one a glimpse of what the place would have looked like in its time of glory. Founded by Maharana Uda Singh in 1568 and considered the jewel of Mewar, Udaipur's air is filled with a strong sense of romance, adventure and the best of Rajputana, your **hotel Lake Palace**.



### DAY 13 : UDAIPUR

Udaipur is also a centre of historic arts and crafts of Mewar, like the Mewar School of Miniature Painting. There is of course the modern face of Udaipur that one can look at if interested, but given the other sights from a glorious past, modernity is no real distraction. This is a place that will hold you in its thrall no matter Who you are or where you come from. During a guided tour you will visit the CITY PALACE





Built in 1725, the grand City Palace is actually a conglomerate of eleven palaces overlooking the sprawling Lake Pichola. One of the largest, most beautiful palaces in the state of Rajasthan, it is now a museum, royal residence and a luxury hotel. This intricately designed monument is an architectural wonder in granite and marble; JAGDISH TEMPLE built in 1651 by Maharaja Jagat Singh, this temple is dedicated to Lord

Vishnu and is located in the centre of the old city. The temple has a black marble image of Lord Vishnu, which is unusual for the northern part of the country, where statues of Gods are normally in stone; FATEH SAGAR originally built in 1678 by Maharana Jai Singh, Fateh Sagar was rebuilt by Maharana Fateh Singh after the rains destroyed the dam. The garden island in the middle of the lake is Nehru Park, which also has a cafe.

In the evening you will enjoy a leisurely boat ride (subject to water level) on LAKE PICHOLA. With its main attractions being the two palaces on the islands in the lake, Jagniwas and Jagmandir Lake Pichola is about 4 km in length and 3 km wide. Jagniwas was earlier the summer retreat of the prince of Mewar and now a five-star hotel. The city palace extends along the eastern shore of the lake and you can go for a boat ride from Bansi Ghat.

## **DAY 14 : JODHPUR**

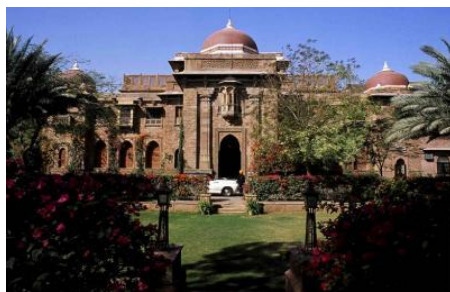
Today drive 220kms to Jodhpur. Call it by its many names and they will not do Jodhpur justice. An oasis in the arid Thar Desert, Jodhpur is the second largest city in the state of Rajasthan. Representing this colorful city with shades of blue, Jodhpur has a history that is rich and a present that beckons strongly to the discerning tourist. Forts and palaces, temples and havelis, culture and tradition, spices and fabrics, color and texture, Jodhpur has them all and in plenty. Situated in western Rajasthan, Jodhpur has long attracted both the domestic and outside tourist. It not only offers tangibles, in terms of what you can see and buy but also fills one with a sense of history and the splendors of an era gone forever. The hospitality of the locals, the demure women, the colorful turbans -all set against the unmerciful desert is something to feel, not just see. Every pore of Jodhpur tells its own tales of heroic tales that made legends out of kings and soldiers, romances that continue to warm the heart and a time when epics were lived out on the streets by everyday man.



## DAY 15 : JODHPUR

In the morning after breakfast proceed with a city tour of Jodhpur. Exploring the forts gives you a feel of the times when the Rajput might was at its peak. The gates and the walls of the forts speak of the battles they have witnessed. One needs to spend enough time with these historical monuments to fully grasp the grandeur of the Rajput era. Situated at an altitude of about 125 metres, THE MEHRANGARH FORT is spread over an area of 5 sq. km in the heart of the city. The fort has seven gates of which the noted ones are the Jayapol, built by Maharaja Man Singh in 1806; Fatehpol or the Victory Gate built by Maharaja Ajit Singh; and the Lohapol or the Iron Gate. The 15 handprints, the sati marks of Maharaja Man Singh/'s widows who threw themselves upon his funeral pyre in 1843, can be seen beside the Lohapol. On the wall, one can see the strategically located cannons. Inside the fort, a series of courtyards and palaces greet the visitor. The palace apartments house a splendid collection of the trappings of the Indian royalty. JASWANT THADA: It is a white marble memorial built in memory of Maharaja Jaswant II in 1899 A story goes that Maharaja Jaswant succumbed to injuries in this place while fighting the Mughal king Jahangir.

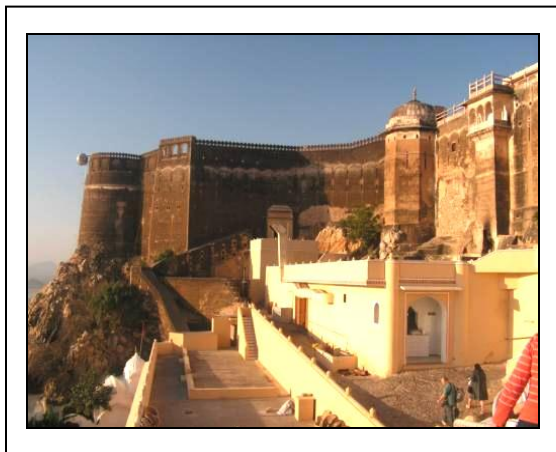
Set in the serene desert of Rajasthan, Ajit Bhawan stands as an oasis of hospitality and warm Rajput charm.



Built exclusively for Maharaja Sir Ajit Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Umaid Singhji of the erstwhile Jodhpur state. Ajit Bhawan offers you Old World elegance, with the modern comforts of a classic heritage hotel and the essence of being a guest of the Maharaj's family.

## DAY 16 - DAY 18 : KUCHAMAN

Drive 3 hours to beautiful KUCHAMAN FORT. The Kuchaman fort in the Nagaur District of Rajasthan, is a rare master piece of royal heritage. An erstwhile garrison, built by the Gujar Pratiharas to Control the ancient trade route from Central Asia, between 450 to 750 A.D., it was later taken over by the Chauhans of Ajmer in 950 A.D., then by the Gaurs who subsequently surrendered to the Rathores. The direct descendent of the former Rathore ruler brought about a major metamorphism in the fort to regain its splendid glory. The Fort is now a Super Deluxe Heritage Hotel but its original architectural character and magnificence remain unchanged. The superlative luxury of the hotel, set amidst centuries old setting of royal splendor, presents an amazing contrast of the modern with the ancient. Rest of the day is at leisure or just to walk around in the fort. Overnight is at **Kuchaman Fort** .



## DAY 19 : JAIPUR

Continue today by road taking 3 hours to JAIPUR and arrive in the capital of Rajasthan by afternoon. Jaipur is known as the "pink city" with its buildings of pink and orange hues and it's a wonderful place to see the colour of Rajasthan and its people. The palaces and forts of yesteryear that witnessed royal processions and splendor are now integrated into the daily life of Jaipur. Rest of the day is at leisure and free for independent activities. Your hotel **Trident Hilton**.



## DAY 20 : JAIPUR

This morning you will drive 11kms in the outskirts of the city to visit Amber Fort, the ancient capital of the State until 1728.



Visit the Temple of Kali, the Hall of Victory or Jai Mahal and Jagmandir. You can have the unique experience of traveling on elephant back to and from the top of the hill on which the fort is situated. Rest of the day is free to explore the colorful town independently. Spend time in crowded lanes & by lanes of pink city, haggling and souvenir-hunting. In the afternoon visit the Observatory,

the Palace of Winds and the City Palace and Museum. The museum has an interesting textile section, which contains dresses and costumes of the Mahatajas and Maharanis of Jaipur. Return to hotel for overnight stay.



## DAY 21 : DELHI

Drive 4 hours to New Delhi today. Living testament to the glory of the Mughal days, patron of palaces and tombs and the capital of India, New Delhi is all of this and more. Situated about 160 kms south of the Himalayas and on the west bank of the Yamuna River, a tributary of the Ganges, Delhi has the distinction of being the historic hub of politics. Delhi is as modern or ancient as you want it to be. Today's Delhi is cosmopolitan, modern and fun-loving. With feasts for art and theatre lovers, concerts for the musically inclined and food that can make a gourmet cry with delight, Delhi is a place with something for everyone. People from all parts of the country inhabit Delhi. There are different cultural pockets with Punjabi's being the most dominant section here. The most common languages spoken here besides English are Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. Overnight at **The Imperial hotel.**



## DAY 22: TO DELHI

In New Delhi visit the Qutab Minar, a Tower of Victory that was built in the 12th century by Qutbuddin Aibak. Within its spacious courtyard stands the Iron Pillar, which dates back to the 4th century AD and bears a Sanskrit inscription in the Gupta style.



The Humayun's Tomb - the magnificent structure in red sandstone and white marble is one of the finest examples of the garden tomb, and a precursor to the Taj Mahal. Its proportionate spaces, double dome and refined elegance are characteristic of Mughal architecture. Also visit India Gate, the memorial of the First World War



and the road that leads from there to President House, which is flanked by The house of Parliament.

In Old Delhi visit the historic Red Fort - Shah Jehan's elegant citadel in red sandstone, which was built as an octagon measuring 900m by 550m and surrounded by a 9-meter deep moat which was at its inception fed by the waters of the Yamuna river. Very near the Fort is the Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque), India's largest mosque, also built by Shah Jahan.

Take an interesting rickshaw ride through the famous bazaars of Chandni Chowk, which is adjacent to both the Fort and the Mosque.



Also visit Raj Ghat - the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi.

### DAY 23 : DELHI - VARANASI

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to connect flight Jet Airways to Varanasi. Meet, assist and transfer to the hotel **Taj Ganges**.

In the afternoon visit Sarnath, an important Buddhist pilgrimage point and famous for site where Buddha preached his first sermon. Overnight is at the hotel.



### DAY 24 IN VARANASI

Early in the morning enjoy a boat ride on river Ganges. The most important facet of this holy city is the river and the ghats lining its southern bank in the city. From dawn to dusk the ghats are thronged by thousands of devotees, who



perform their holy rituals in the hope of attaining eternal salvation, the 'Nirvana'. Also visit temples like Kashi Vishwanath dedicated to Lord Shiva; Bharat Mata Mandir dedicated to Mother India; Durga Temple, dedicated to the Goddess

Durga; Alamgir Mosque- originally a temple dedicated to Vishnu but now an odd mixture.

### DAY 25 : VARANASI - KHAJURAHO

Morning is free. Transfer to the airport to board your flight Jet Airways for Khajuraho. Meet and assist upon arrival and transfer to the hotel **Taj Chandela**.

The Khajuraho of today is more familiar to today's monuments to commercialization - hotels, restaurants and shops - signs of ordinary civilization. The past with all its grandeur, in the form of the temples gaze benignly at a city that



continues to thrive because of what its rulers gave it. Of course, the city comes alive every year during the Dance Festival in March, when the maestros of classical dance, Birju Maharaj and Kelucharan Mohapatra and their disciples perform against the dramatic temple backdrop. Beyond doubt, Khajuraho is not an Indian destination you can afford to miss.

Today visit the Eastern & Western group of temples. The Western Group of Temples is the most elaborately carved of the three. The temples here are mentioned here in brief. The Lakshmi and Varaha Temple is dedicated to Lakshmi and the Varaha (boar) avatar of Vishnu. The Lakshmana Temple, intricate in its workmanship; the Kandariya Mahadev, largest and architecturally the most perfect, where the interior has 872 spectacularly carved statues; the Mahadeva Temple is the smallest; the Devi Jagadamba Temple was first dedicated to Vishnu, then Parvati and finally to Kali. The Chitragupta Temple is dedicated to the Sun God, Surya, while the Vishwanath Temple is dedicated to Shiva and his faithful vehicle, Nandi the bull. The Matangesvara Temple, the only temple in this group, where worship continues, dedicated to Shiva and the Chausath Yogini Temple, presently in ruins and believed to be the oldest temple in Khajuraho. Eastern group, other than housing the other temples also contains the Jain Temples. Of the attractions, there is the Parasvanath Temple, the largest and finest Jain temple in the city. Comparatively the Adinath Temple is smaller in size with its sculptures forming a tri-band formation, similar to Hindu temples. The Shantinath Temple is again comparatively modern and was built a century ago with raw materials from older temples. The Ghantai Temple is now mostly in ruins with only the graceful carvings of the bell and chain motifs remaining. The Javari Temple dates back to AD 1075-1100 and is dedicated to Vishnu.



The Vamana Temple is slightly older than the Javari Temple, standing alone in the middle of a field. And there is the Brahma and Hanuman Temple, the name confusing since the temple is actually dedicated to Vishnu. Return to your hotel in the evening.

## **DAY 26 : KHAJURAHU - JHANSI - AGRA**

After breakfast depart for Jhansi and upon arrival proceed straight to the Railway station in time to board your train for Agra. Meet, assist and transfer to the hotel **Jaypee Palace** upon arrival in Agra - overnight .



## DAY 27 : AGRA

Agra replaced Lahore as the capital of the Mughal Empire in 1599, and the city contains some of India's most superb monuments, including the Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort. You will tour both of these magnificent structures. One of the world's most beautiful monuments, the Taj took 18 years to construct and was an expression of Emperor Shah Jehan's love for his wife.

After breakfast Visit the red sandstone Agra Fort, which stands like a crescent on the banks of the Jamuna River enclosed by forbidding 20-meter high walls, with a 12-meter moat between them. Three successive Mughal emperors - Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan - helped create this massive structure which contains Hindu and Muslim architecture. Then proceed for the famous white marble mausoleum, which was built in the middle of the 17th century by the Moghul emperor Shah Jehan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal. Visit the Taj Mahal surely the greatest monument to love and one of the wonders of the modern world. Completed in 1652, skilled craftsmen from Persia, Turkey, France and Italy and some 20,000 labourers worked for 17 years to build this edifice, constructed by Emperor Shah Jehan as a mausoleum for his beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal. Marble was brought from Makrana, near Jodhpur and precious stones of onyx, amethyst, malachite, lapis lazuli, turquoise, jade, crystal and mother of pearl were carried to Agra from Persia, Russia, Afghanistan, Tibet, China and the Indian Ocean. Rest of the day is at leisure.



## DAY 28 : DELHI

In the morning depart for Delhi by car and upon arrival check in at The Imperial hotel.

## **DAY 29 : DELHI**

In time transfer to the International airport to board your flight for onward destination