

INCREDIBLE INDIAN TOURS

Big Cats of India - Wildlife

&

Heritage Tour



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Big Cats of India - Wildlife & Heritage Tour

(20 days/19 nights)

Dossier Validity: 2021 - 2022

Welcome to our Big Cats of India Tour. Although famous for the endangered Bengal Tiger, India is also home to Leopard and is the last remaining home of the rare Asiatic Lion. On this unique tour, we provide you with exceptional opportunities to spot all three of these beautiful cats over 14 wildlife safaris across two states of North India.

Although we focus on the cats and wildlife of India visiting National parks and wildlife rich regions, on this trip we introduce you to some remarkable British, Portuguese, Rajput & Moghul heritage as well with time in cities and towns along the way. This is an incredible and truly original tour of India, one you do not want to miss. From Mumbai, we head north to the western states of Gujarat and Rajasthan, the Land of Kings, before we visit the wondrous Taj Mahal and Agra's Moghul monuments and the fascinating capital Delhi.

Highlights

- live it up in glitzy and glamorous **Mumbai**
- explore the traditional **Portuguese heritage** of Diu
- search for the **last remaining Asiatic Lions** in Gir
- explore the **rich heritage** of the old town of Ahmedabad
- wander the **charming streets** of Udaipur
- uncover the **leopards of rural Rajasthan**
- be left breathless by the majestic **Mehrangarh Fort** in Jodhpur
- be amazed at the **Rajput heritage** of Jaipur
- be enthralled by the **Tigers of Rajasthan**
- discover there's more to Agra than the **Taj Mahal**
- discover the many layers of the **eight cities of Delhi**

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Itinerary

Day 1 Mumbai

Arrival Day. There are no group activities today. We meet at 6pm for a short tour briefing before heading out for dinner.

Day 2 Mumbai

Known as Bombay until its recent name change, Mumbai is India's financial, commercial and industrial capital, and its property prices are some of the highest in the world. As such the city hums with activity and its more than twenty million residents seem to be constantly on the move. There is a distinct multicultural feel here, with people from all over India and abroad having gravitated to the metropolis in search of a better life.



Taj Hotel and Gateway of India - Mumbai

Our hotel is centrally located and only a short walk to the nearby Gateway of India and the famous Taj Hotel. A stroll along Chowpatty Beach at sunset is a must, where you can try the local street delicacies and experience the carnival-like atmosphere of the nightly markets here. We visit Crawford Market, the fascinating Dhobi Ghats – the city's laundry washers and the majestic British heritage buildings of Fort.

Hotel: Hotel Fariyas or similar



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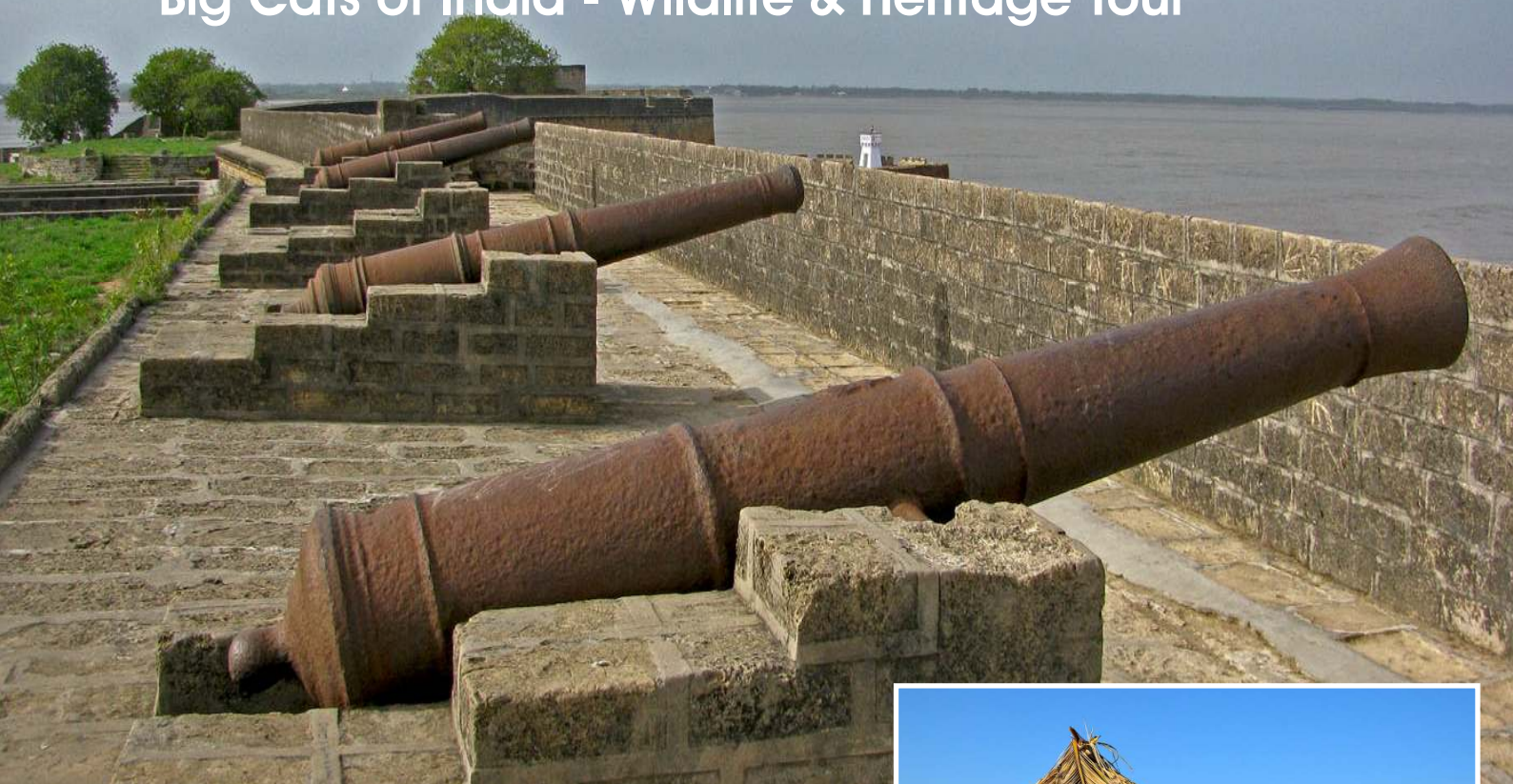
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Itinerary

Day 3 Diu

Travel time: 1 hour

After a leisurely morning, we take an afternoon flight to Diu, spending the afternoon and evening enjoying the unassuming and laid back charm of this Portuguese heritage island town and fort, only a part of India since 1961. Diu is a union territory, and although surrounded by the state of Gujarat, is governed directly from New Delhi and as such attracts many holiday makers and tourists to enjoy the sea, sun and readily available alcohol in an otherwise dry state.

Hotel: Radhika Beach Resort or similar



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Itinerary

Days 4-5 Sasan Gir

Travel time: 1.5 hours

After breakfast we have a morning drive to Sasan Gir, the last refuge of the critically endangered Asiatic Lion. One of the oldest wildlife parks in India, Sasan Gir Wildlife Sanctuary was set up in 1965 to save the endangered cats that were at the threshold of extinction at the start of the twentieth century. Gir has a protected area of 1413 square kilometres and is home to 39 species of mammals, as well as many reptiles and birds.

Arriving in time for lunch and then on to an afternoon safari, we have two nights and four safaris to maximise our chances of some quality sightings of this majestic creature.



Hotel: The Fern or similar

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Itinerary

Day 6 Ahmedabad

Travel time: 6 hours

After a last morning safari, we drive take an afternoon train to Ahmedabad, a city with six centuries of rich heritage and cultural diversity. The historic fortified city is a multicultural melting pot with a unique character provided by its many community settlements. Ahmedabad is on UNESCO's tentative list for inclusion as a World Heritage City.



Swaminarayan Temple



Hotel: House of MG or similar

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Itinerary

Days 7-8 Udaipur

Travel time: 4-5 hours

This morning we have a walking heritage tour of Ahmedabad's old city before driving north to the lake city of Udaipur. Named the No. 1 tourist destination in the world in 2011, Udaipur's setting in the southern Aravalis, with lakes, hills and whitewashed palaces lining the banks of Lake Pichola make this town one of the most picturesque and romantic places in all of India. Taking the time to enjoy the sights of this charming town, this is a chance to relax and soak up the atmosphere of one of India's most popular tourist destinations.



Lake Palace Hotel - Udaipur

We visit the Udaipur City Palace, the fascinating streets of the Old Town, take a cruise on Lake Pichola and enjoy a sunset drink overlooking the stunning City Palace and iconic Lake Palace.

Hotel: Udaigarh or similar



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Itinerary

Days 9-10 Pali District

Travel time: 3 hours

We travel northwest of Udaipur to a very quiet part of rural Rajasthan, home to the Rabari tribesmen, traditionally nomadic goat herders who have now settled throughout this region. The continuing settlement of farmers has encroached drastically on the territory of leopards and has caused the leopards to retreat to small pockets of rocky outcrops from where their main source of food is goat. Accordingly, our local contacts and trackers have come to know precise locations of various leopard lairs and on all of our previous visits to this location we have had exceptional leopard sightings - on average three out of every four safaris.

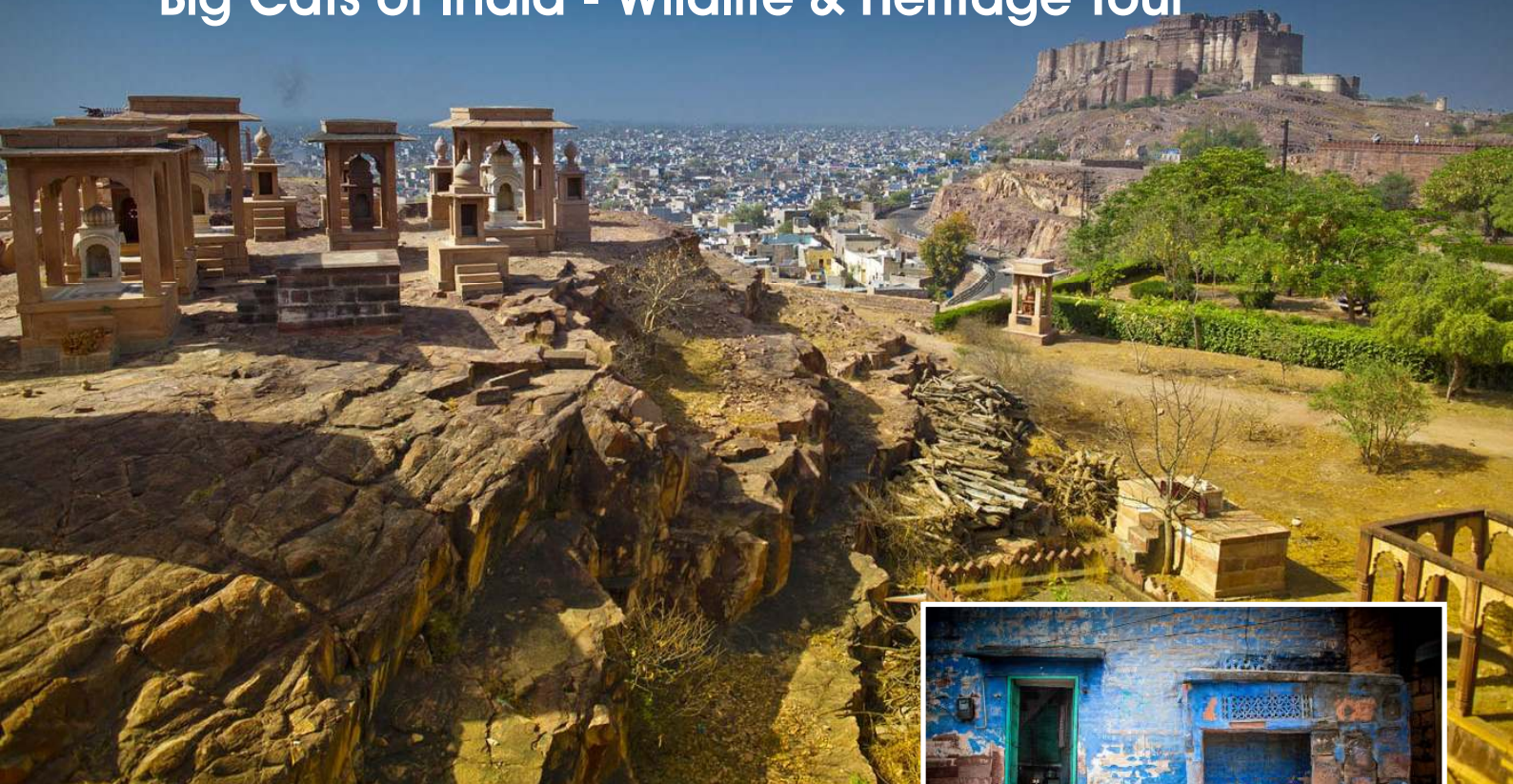
We stay at a small lodge owned and run by the local Thakur (lord). We take four jeep trips into the heart of leopard territory and search out various well-known sighting locations. This area is not a national park nor a wildlife reserve. It is private farmland and as such there will be very few other tourists in the area, and our hosts have free rein to take us anywhere the leopards are known to be.



Hotel: Castle Bera or similar

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Itinerary

Day 11 Jodhpur

Travel time: 3-4 hours

Jodhpur is known as the Blue City, is famous for Makhani (Butter) Smoothies and yes, it is where the pants come from.

The capital of the Marwar region of Rajasthan, Jodhpur is in the Thar Desert, and is known as the Land of Death. As such, Jodhpur is a hot, dry city with the intensity of life only found in those such climates. The intensity is evident in the colours of the city and the colours worn by the locals. An intensity with the flavours of their food and also an intensity with their architecture, the most intense and awe-inspiring of which is the Mehrangarh Fort, which overlooks the city. Kipling once described Jodhpur's fort as "The Work of Giants".



Meherangarh Fort - Jodhpur



After your morning safari and a late breakfast, we drive to Jodhpur in time for a late lunch. In the afternoon we visit the majestic Mehrangarh Fort, arguably the most impressive hilltop fort in all of India. We wander down through the Blue City and check out the local wares for sale in the Clocktower market.

Hotel: Haveli Pal Inn or similar

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Itinerary

Days 12-13 Jaipur

Travel time: 6 hours

The capital of Rajasthan, the Pink City, home of the Jaipur Royal Family, one of the most famous of Indian erstwhile royalty is a fabulously busy, energetic and modern city. Founded in 1727 by Jai Singh who came from nearby Amer, Jaipur was painted Pink in honour of the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1876 and today all buildings within the walled city must maintain their colourful façade.



Jal Mahal

After a morning drive from Jodhpur, we make an afternoon trip up to Tiger fort for sunset views. On day 13, we visit the beautiful Amer Fort, stop to admire the Water Palace and the Wind Palace, learn the secrets of the Astronomical Observatory built by Jai Singh and wander the markets of this bustling city.

Hotel: Diggi Palace or similar

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Itinerary

Days 14-16 Ranthambore

Travel time: 3 hours

More than the other big cats, the Tiger is the symbol of India and Ranthambore National Park is arguably the best reserve to see Tigers. With a relatively high population of tigers the park offers excellent chances for sightings. One of 47 Project Tiger reserves in India, Rajasthan is a beautiful forested region with many other species of mammals, reptiles, insects and birdlife.



We arrive in time for lunch and an afternoon jeep safari in the park. Days 15 and 16 we have morning and afternoon jeep safaris to maximise our cat and wildlife sighting chances. Six safaris here will provide plenty of chances for tiger sightings.

Hotel: Ranthambore Regency or similar

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Itinerary

Day 17 Agra

Travel time: 4 hours

The Great Moghuls were a Muslim dynasty who arrived in India from Central Asia in 1525. Although the Dynasty remained until the British overthrew them in 1857, the first six Emperors (until 1707) were the most powerful. Agra was one of the capitals of the Moghuls during the 16th to 18th centuries (along with Delhi and Lahore) and as such has some remarkable architectural heritage thanks to those supreme builders. The Taj Mahal is of course the best known, but the Agra Fort, Akbars Mausoleum and the Itimud-U-Dualah (Baby Taj) are also remarkable and worth a visit.

After this mornings safari, we take an afternoon train to Bharatpur. We spend a couple of hours visiting the Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur, home to many migratory birds before later travelling the 60km to Agra by road, arriving in time for dinner.



Hotel: The Retreat or similar



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Itinerary

Days 18-19 Delhi

Travel time: 4 hours

We are up early for a dawn visit to the incomparable Taj Mahal. One of the seven wonders of the world and perhaps the greatest testimonial to love ever built by man, the Taj is arguably the most beautiful building in the world. After a leisurely morning at the Taj, we will also visit the Agra Fort and perhaps the Baby Taj before we head by road for Delhi.

On day 19 we have a full day of sightseeing, including New and Old Delhi. Delhi is first believed to have been settled in the third millennium BC, and was known as Indraprastha. Subsequently, seven cities have been developed over the past two thousand years, and although most of the remains of Delhi's previous cities date from the 12th century. Delhi is divided into an Old and New city. Old Delhi is a congested, bustling area with the Jama Masjid, Red Fort, Chandni Chowk and the spice market. New Delhi has more of the older ruins, with the Qutab Minar, Humayans Tomb and the Purana Qila located amongst the upmarket villages of South Delhi. Modern India is evident in the shopping enclaves and villages that have sprung up, in addition to the central shopping district of Connaught Place. Dilli Haat, Khan Market and Haus Khas Village are just three worth exploring. Last but not least is of course Delhi's spiritual life, and there are numerous Temples, shrines, mosques and places of worship of many faiths that are worth a visit.

Our day of sightseeing will cover just the main sights of Old Delhi, Humayans Tomb and the Bangla Sahib Gurudwara. You might wish to stay on another day or two to discover more of what Delhi has to offer and you'll also have the opportunity to take a little time to enjoy the burgeoning restaurant and nightlife scene or shop in some of Delhi's exciting village market places.

Hotel: Hans Plaza or similar

Day 20 Departure Day

There are no organized activities today. You are free to depart at any time.

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general tour information

group size minimum 4, maximum 10

days 20 days 19 nights

starts in Mumbai **finishes** in Delhi

price includes

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation as specified
All transportation between overnight stops and to and from included sightseeing
All Safari park entrance and guide fees
Entrance fees for all sites listed as part of the itinerary
Tips & Gratuities
Meals as specified

price does not include

Visa costs
Meals other than those listed
Drinks, meal tips, laundry and other items of a personal nature
International flights

accommodation

Hotels (19 nights)

optional single supplement

If you are a single traveller, you are not required to pay a single supplement as we will match you up with other travellers. If we are unable to match you up with another traveller of the same sex, we will pay your single supplement for you. Should you not wish to share accommodation at all, but would like to guarantee your own room throughout the tour a single supplement of USD1050 will be payable.

transport

Flight, Train, Private Bus, Boat, Auto rickshaw, and Cycle rickshaw.

Train travel in India is virtually essential considering it is such

an efficient and extensive network, and is also such a part of India's culture and heritage.

Train journeys by day give us an opportunity to experience Indian life by rubbing shoulders with the locals. Travelling locally is always exciting and fascinating – you never know who you will meet. We will be taking flights and private vehicles for our other journeys.

activities included

The following is a list of included activities on this trip. Other activities are optional and will be at your own expense.

Gateway of India, Dhobi Ghats, Crawford Market, Chowpatty Beach (Mumbai)
Heritage tour of Diu Fort and old town (Diu)
4 jeep safaris (Sasan Gir)
City Palace, Lake cruise, Heritage walk (Udaipur)
4 jeep safaris (Pali district)
Mehrangarh Fort, Heritage walk (Jodhpur)
Amber Palace, Jantar Mantar, Galta, Market Walk (Jaipur)
6 jeep safaris (Ranthambore)
Visit to Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur)
Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Baby Taj (Agra)
Old Delhi visit, Humayans Tomb, Rajpath, Bangla Sahib Gurudwara, (Delhi)

meal inclusions

19 Breakfasts, 7 Lunches, 8 Dinners

meals

Traveling with Incredible Indian Tours we ensure that you will experience a vast array of the gustatory treats available in India. Generally, meals are not included in the trip price when there is a choice of eating options. This allows you to choose where, and what to eat. More often than not however we eat together as a group. Your tour guide will offer suggestions for favourite restaurants throughout the trip.

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general tour information

money exchange

As at May 2019

AUD1 = 48 INR
CAD1 = 52 INR
EUR1 = 78 INR
GBP1 = 89 INR
NZD1 = 45 INR
USD1 = 70 INR

There are many ATM machines (which accept both Cirrus/Maestro debit cards and Visa and MasterCard) throughout India. This is a safe and convenient way to access money in India, however we suggest that you bring a small amount of money in cash (suggested \$300) in case there are times that ATMs are not available. The major currencies, including AUD and CAD are no problem in general to exchange. Travellers cheques are no longer commonly accepted. Visa & MasterCard credit cards are accepted in major shops and restaurants in the bigger cities.

spending money

Although entrance fees to specified sites are included in the tour price, there are additional sights that you may like to visit. Some sites may levy camera and video fees.

Spending money requirements will differ from one person to the next. You will need to take into consideration your spending habits when allowing for drinks, shopping, and optional activities.

You will need to allow enough money for the following:

Meals – USD350 (or equivalent)

Optional Activities – USD100 (or equivalent)

Money for drinks, shopping and incidentals.

Tipping is an integral part of Indian life and is essential to a smooth trip. To make things easier we cover tips for hotel room boys, local guides and for drivers of private transport we use. This does NOT cover restaurant tips.

physical rating ●●●●●

You may need to carry your bag/pack up and down railway station and hotel stairs. There will be plenty of walking around towns or sites, which due to the warm to hot weather in India at this time of year will make general sightseeing a little more strenuous.

culture shock rating ●●●●●

Conditions in India are not always as comfortable as in other countries. You may need to occasionally deal with a squat toilet, cold showers or power failure

travel insurance

Travel Insurance is highly recommended whilst traveling to India and is compulsory for any group tour with Incredible Indian Tours.

visas

All foreign nationals require a visa to enter India. Most nationalities can apply for an e-Visa. Validities available are 30 days, 1 year and 5 years. You can apply up to 30 days before the date of travel for the 30 day e-Visa and 120 days before the date of travel for the 1 and 5 year e-Visas. The visa is issued online (you do not need to send your passport away) and takes up to 3 days. The 30 day e-Visas are double entry with validity commencing from the date of arrival. The 1 and 5 year e-Visas are multiple entry with validity running from the date of issue with stays of maximum 90 days at a time allowed with the exception of US, UK, Japanese and Canadian passport holders who can stay for up to 180 days at a time.

When applying for your e-Visa, be aware of a number of commercial websites offering e-Visas that do not belong to the Government of India and will charge you additional service fees to issue your visa.

The official Government of India e-Visa website is

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>



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general tour information

health

We recommend that you consult your doctor for current medical travel information about before departure. Your leader will be carrying a basic first aid kit, but we suggest you bring along your own as well as any personal medical requirements.

The following websites have up-to-date information about health requirements.

Australia <https://www.travelvax.com.au/>

New Zealand <http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/travelling>

USA <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

UK <http://www.travelhealth.co.uk/>

Canada <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/vaccines>

communications

Most of our hotels have Wifi, as do many restaurants and cafes.

You can purchase a local prepaid sim card (for unlocked cell phones) and data sticks (for mobile internet on your laptop) inexpensively in India. Recommended are Vodafone, Airtel and Reliance. You will need extra passport photos for this as well as photocopies of your photo and visa page from your passport.

your tour manager

Your tour manager is there to organise and streamline your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. Whilst they are not a guide per se, they will share their local knowledge, give you suggestions for your free time and manage the day to day running of the tour. They will introduce you to their local friends and recommend great local restaurants and experiences. They will have a broad general knowledge of India, so do feel free to tap into their wisdom. At some sites, local guides may be hired where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting.

your wildlife naturalist

Mike Luck of Mike Luck Wildlife, a South African born naturalist who now calls India home will be your Big Cat guide on this trip. Mike is an avid naturalist with a passion for big cats, his greatest love being the leopard. Along with Incredible Indian Tours, Mike has set up a trust to minimize the animal-human conflict arising from the encroaching of man upon the leopards traditional <http://www.mikeluckwildlife.com>

responsible travel

We believe strongly in responsible travel. This includes being respectful to the local culture (ie dressing appropriately, and learning a few basic cultural do's and don'ts), being mindful of the environment, and leaving a positive image behind. Remember we are ambassadors for our country. Bringing a few photos of your family and home with you is a great way to interact with the locals by giving them a glimpse of your world whilst you visit theirs.

joining hotel

Fariyas Hotel
25, Off Arthur Bunder Road,
Colaba, Mumbai 400025
Ph: +91 22 6141 6141

transfer/joining instructions

Your airport transfer pickup will await you holding a sign with your name when you exit the baggage claim area of the arrivals hall. There may be large crowds here so please look carefully for your transfer.

arriving early

Situated in South Mumbai, our joining hotel is just minutes away from the city's bustling center. Close to the financial and business district, Colaba is the tourist, shopping and entertainment centre of Mumbai. The Hotel is just minutes away from historical sites like the Gateway of India and the Taj Mahal

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general tour information

Hotel, as well as the Jehangir Art Gallery and Prince of Wales Museum.

early arrival information

If you are arriving earlier than day 1, extra accommodation in Mumbai is available from USD200 Single/Double (or equivalent) per night per room. Please notify us as early as possible if you require extra accommodation as hotels in Mumbai tend to be heavily booked up well in advance.

finishing point

Hans Plaza
15 Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place
New Delhi 110001
Ph: +91 11 6615 0000

staying on

If you are staying on in Delhi after the tour, extra accommodation is available at The Hans Hotel from USD170 Single/Double (or equivalent) per night per room.

what to take

We will be on the move a lot, so try to pack as lightly as possible. The smaller your bag in India the better, as our transport has limited storage space. Indian domestic airlines allow 15kg of checked in luggage. If you have extra weight in your luggage be prepared to pay an excess of around USD8 per kilo.

India is very conservative and we ask that you dress accordingly. As a guideline, shoulders and knees should always be covered. The wearing of shorts is looked upon by locals as akin to wearing your underwear and will limit your entry into mosques, temples and other places of worship. Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool. Singlets, tank tops and short shorts are not suitable attire for India.

laundry

Inexpensive laundry facilities are offered by most hotels we use and you will be able to avail of them anywhere we have a 2-night stop.

weather

The weather during our journey should be great. Daytime temps will be warm to hot, in the range 25-35°C. Night time temperatures will be comfortable. An umbrella, sunblock and a hat are essentials.

checklist

Travel documents: passport, visa, travel insurance (don't forget your emergency insurance contact details), air tickets.
Photocopy of above documents
Day pack
Health vaccinations/medication
First aid kit
Money: ATM card (widely available and easy to access); credit cards (widely accepted in big cities); cash (for emergencies).
Money pouch
Alarm clock and torch/flashlight
Mosquito repellent
Ear plugs can be useful if you are a light sleeper
Lock for your back pack or bag

We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt to store your passport, air tickets, credit cards and cash. Avoid bringing valuable jewellery with you. Some hotels we use have safety deposit boxes.

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