

INDIA AND NEPAL

15 DAYS



- Each departure limited to 16 guests
- Luxury hotels or best in each location
- 37 à la carte meals (table d'hôte, if unavailable) including beverages of your choice
- Professionally escorted
- All sightseeing, including entrance fees and special events as indicated in the itinerary
- Arrival and departure transfer by private car
- All gratuities included (also your tour manager's)
- Porterage of 2 suitcases per passenger
- Airport departure taxes

India greets you with a vibrant collage of warm pinks and oranges, yellow spices in the city markets, and fortress walls of burnished red. Arrive in Delhi and absorb the fascinating blend of East and West. In Jaipur, elephants bring you to the famous Amber Palace, you go to the Palace of the Winds and the Royal Observatory. Visit Taj Majal in Agra, and watch the sun rise over one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Go to the charming country of Nepal where you explore the fascinating capital of Kathmandu, nestled in the valley, and meet its gentle residents. The snowy white Himalayan Mountains – highest range on the earth – provide an impressive backdrop to the valley. You go on safari while staying at the world-famous Tiger Tops Lodge in the Royal Chitwan National Park.

Day 1

USA – LONDON

Depart the USA on your evening flight to London.

Day 2

LONDON

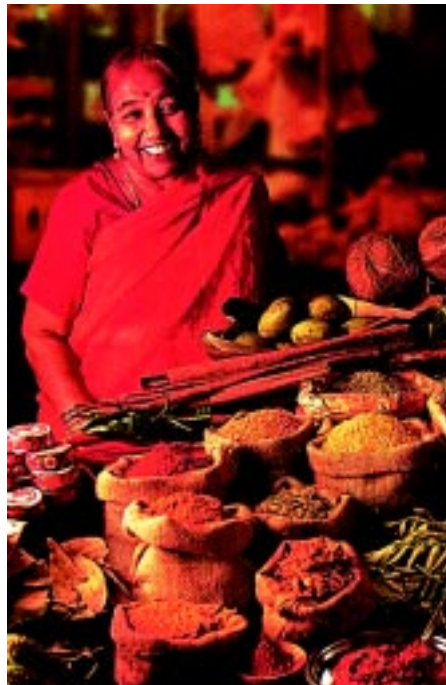
Upon your arrival at the airport, you are met and escorted to your day rooms at a nearby hotel for your relaxation and convenience. In the evening, you board your flight for India.

Day 3

DELHI

You are met upon your arrival at the airport and go by private car directly to your hotel, **The Taj Mahal**. The striking pink sandstone structure, on beautiful grounds, features a plush Mughal-theme lobby, with elegant tapestries and intricately carved marble. The spacious premium guest rooms feature traditionally inspired fabrics in peacock hues, art on the walls, and ornate carved furniture with adjoining baths with inlaid marble.

The afternoon is yours to settle in; your tour manager will be in the lobby to answer any questions you may have. This evening, you and your travel companions are invited to a cocktail reception and à la carte dinner in the hotel. (B,L,D)



Exotic spices

Day 4

DELHI

Delhi – ever changing and ever expanding – is a fascinating medley of sights, sounds, and smells; it is a unique blend of East and West. Old simple bungalows sit beside extravagant European-style villas; old monuments and ruins lie in the midst of modern neighborhoods.

Delhi has absorbed the land of former villages, but obvious signs of village life are boldly evident in every corner of the city.

In Old Delhi, you explore the Red Fort (*Lal Qila*), Emperor Shah Jahan's sprawling 17th century capital. A short distance away, you go to Moonlight Square, (*Chandni Chowk*), the old capital's famous thoroughfare and still one of Delhi's most important commercial centers. You ride on cycle-rickshaws down lanes, past Rajasthani women in bright *saris* and men in *lungis* (skirt-like wraps), through the hustling silver market and the wholesale spice market. And you visit the elegant Jumma Masjid, largest mosque in Asia.

In New Delhi, you visit the Imperial City, passing India Gate to the Presidential Palace and Parliament House. Traveling through the Diplomatic Enclave, you come to the 12th century, 234-foot high fluted minaret of Qutab Minar. Called the Seventh Wonder of Hindustan, it is the tallest stone tower in India.

Tonight you attend a Maharaja festival and are treated like royalty by hostesses in exquisite dress. You are welcomed to the Grand Durbar Hall as rose petals are sprinkled in your path. Samovars, hukkass, and lancers grace the surroundings; and the elaborate meal of traditional Mughal dishes is accompanied by a sitar and flute performance. (B,L,D)



Jama Masjid mosque, Delhi

Day 5

DELHI – JAIPUR

This morning, your flight from Delhi takes you to Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. You travel by caparisoned elephant up to the Amber Palace. It sits on a hill above the city, surrounded by ramparts. Within the walls, you see the Hall of Victory (which contains alabaster panels with fine inlay work), the Hall of Mirrors, the silver doors and marble carvings of Kali's temple, and halls with latticed windows and beautifully sculpted arches and pillars.

Your hotel tonight is the newly built **Rajvilas** – six years in the making; but the result is a masterpiece. Designed to resemble a small Rajasthani fort from the front, this intimate, exclusive resort has fountains, sculptures, walking paths, and a lily pond - set around a restored Hindu temple. Impressive attention to detail is evident throughout. The luxurious guest rooms incorporate a fluid mix of colonial and Rajasthani styling; nothing has been omitted for your pleasure. (B,L,D)



Colors of India

Day 6

JAIPUR

This morning, you tour Jaipur. Surrounded by the rugged Aravalli Hills, this city takes its name from Maharaja Jai Singh II, who was an avid scientist, architect, and astronomer. The city was enclosed by 20-foot fortified walls and guarded by eight gates that are still intact today. The streets, the height of the buildings, and the number and division of the blocks were all based on geometric harmony, climatic considerations and the intended use of each zone of the city.

You visit the City Palace, still the residence of the Jaipur Maharaja, with its pavilions, courtyards, and chambers. Its museum displays a fabulous collection of paintings, carpets, jewelry, musical instruments, and weapons. You also visit the Royal Observatory (Jantar Mantar); built in 1726, it is equipped with scientific instruments called *yantras*.

You continue on to the Palace of the Winds (Hawa Majal); this multi-storied pink sandstone building draws its name from the westerly winds that send cool breezes through the windows. It was designed so the ever-discreet women of the royal court could enjoy the breeze and watch the activities of the bazaars on the street below from afar. Later, you explore these same colorful bazaars yourself. The sheer variety of the items sold off the street is fascinating, ranging from the mundane to the exotic.

This evening you dine at the hotel in an opulent restaurant, full of cusped arches with painted detailing. You make your à la carte selection from a menu offering Indian food fit for royalty as well as the most inventive Continental dishes. (B,L,D)

Day 7

JAIPUR – AGRA

Today, your journey takes you to the magnificent deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri, the dream capital of the greatly loved Emperor Akbar. During his brief stay here,

in the second half of the 16th century, a great complex of palaces and mosques was built. The cluster of royal buildings sits atop a ridge overlooking the village of Sikri; the city was protected on three sides by massive walls, the fourth side was protected by a lake. When English delegates visited the city in 1583, it is said they were amazed to see a city that was larger and more luxurious than London. After ruling here for 15 years, Akbar was forced to abandon his dream city (probably due to the scarcity of water). The capital was then moved to Lahore (now in Pakistan) and eventually back to Agra. Fatehpur Sikri became a ghost town.

Driving on, you come to Agra, a flourishing capital of the Mughal Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries. At the Taj Mahal, you see one of the Seven Wonders



Room at Rajvilas, Jaipur

of the World; the Emperor Shah Jahan had the memorial built in memory of his favorite wife. Completed in 1652, twenty thousand craftsmen from Persia, Turkey, France, and Italy labored 17 years to create the monument on the banks of the Yamuna River. Pointed Mogul arches highlight the building's square corners. The detailed stonework on each tiny, intricate flower petal on the Queen's tomb is so fine it is impossible to see the little breaks between the stones. An individual one-inch flower contains 60 separate pieces. A single block of marble, carved into an intricate latticework as fine as lace, surrounds the tombs of Shah Jahan and his wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

You stay at the **Mughal Sheraton Hotel**, a wonderful resort styled like a red brick Mughal fort and surrounded by meticulously groomed grounds, including hanging gardens and secluded courtyards with views of the Taj Majal. This evening, you have the opportunity to watch the royal court dance of the Mughal kings (*Kathak*) and for dinner you select from an excellent variety of delicious local specialties. (B,L,D)



Taj Mahal

Day 8

AGRA

It is an early morning, but well worthwhile, as you take the rickshaw ride to the renowned Taj Mahal and watch the rising sun's pale rays give a soft pastel luster to the white marble. This is undoubtedly the best time to see this beautiful monument.

You also visit the Agra Fort, a reflection of the creativity of Akbar, his son Jahangir, and his grandson, Shah Jahan. Roughly shaped like a triangle, the fort was encircled by a massive 1½ - mile-long, 69-foot-high wall. In the palace inside, Hindu architecture blends with Central Asian styling. You see a traditional marble inlay workshop and watch artisans practicing their centuries-old craft of exquisitely detailed inlaid furniture and handicrafts.

The lavish, painstakingly tended grounds of your hotel are the perfect place to relax this afternoon. In addition, there is tennis, croquet, archery, mini-golf, and yoga classes. Many like to sit with the resident fortune teller to listen to predictions about their future. Swim in the courtyard pool or sit back with a good book; when you want a change of pace,

check out the extensive shopping area. (B,L,D)

Day 9

AGRA - VARANASI

Today, you board your flight to the oldest and most holy city in India – Varanasi. Referred to as Benares during the time of British rule, religion, art, and education flourished here long before the arrival of Europeans. In Indian mythology, the city is called Kashi, after the Kasha tribe, who first settled here 3,000 years ago. After independence from the British in 1947, the name Varanasi – which is from a combination of the names of the nearby Varuna and Asi rivers – came back into use. But the most important river for Varanasi is the Ganges, whose holy waters are said to wash away the sins of all who bathe in it. Most Hindus make a pilgrimage to the Ganges at least once in their lives. Of the many cities and towns along the 1,565 mile length of the river, Varanasi is the most favored destination.

The city is defined by its *ghats*, the block-long stairways down to the river, which are the focus of neighborhood life. As the first rays of the sun set on the gently flowing Ganges, thousands of the devout take the ceremonial dip; the ghats

come alive with people from all walks of life.

A few miles away, you visit Sarnath, where Buddha gave his first sermon; there are many Buddhist monks clothed in rich saffron and crimson robes visiting here as well. Archaeologists have uncovered many art treasures in the ruins of Sarnath's ancient monastery that you see at the museum here.

Your hotel tonight is the **Taj Ganges**. Set on over 70 acres, dotted with lovely English hedges, rose gardens, and mango groves, this attractive brick and marble hotel is a welcoming sight. The newly renovated marble lobby has a very pretty domed ceiling and Indian art. Private accommodations have colorful Indian features offset by pure white walls and antique furniture. Your à la carte dinner is served in the restaurant decorated with old Varanasi drawings with views of the garden and pool. The consistently impressive menu offers a delicious variety of International dishes. (B,L,D)

Day 10

VARANASI – KATHMANDU, NEPAL

Early this morning, you follow the footsteps of the pilgrims and take a boat along the holy river. The early morning sun illuminates the countless temples that

ACCOMMODATIONS

Delhi – Taj Mahal (2 nights), *Leading Hotels of the World '02*

This hotel has the most distinguished address in the Lutyens district of New Delhi. Centrally located, a few minutes from the Janpath shopping area and city center, your spacious guest room has panoramic views.

Jaipur – Oberoi Rajvilas (2), *Leading Hotels of the World '02, Small Luxury Hotels of the World*

Once a favorite retreat of the majarajas, the northwestern city of Jaipur is the setting for the luxury resort of Rajvilas. Resembling a traditional Rajasthani fort — high walls and turreted towers — the hotel sits on 30 garden acres graced by a 250-year-old Hindu temple.

Agra – Mughal Sheraton Hotel (2)

Recipient of the prestigious Agha Khan Award for Architectural Excellence, the Mughal Sheraton delights literally at every corner. Guest rooms overlook verdant gardens with sparkling waters and a variety of leisure facilities.

Varanasi –Taj Ganges (1)

At Nadesar Palace Grounds, set amidst 12 acres, the hotel is an oasis of greenery in this bustling temple town.

Kathmandu – Hotel Yak & Yeti (2)

This is a premier five-star deluxe oasis in the heart of Kathmandu. Modern-day sophistication greets cultural heritage on the beautifully maintained grounds of the 100-year old palace and newly designed structure of the hotel.

Royal Chitwan National Park – Tiger Tops Lodge (2)

This is one of Asia's richest and most spectacular wildlife sanctuaries. Tree houses and bungalows lie deep in the heart of the Park. The Nepalese style dining hall, lounge area, with its huge domed roof and central open hearth will be your special place for relaxation.

New Delhi, India – Taj Palace (1) *Leading Hotels of the World '02*

form the river bank's skyline. You glide past buildings that silently hold the history of this holy city. There is a simplicity in the air, a spiritual beauty that has sustained the country and its people through the centuries.

This afternoon, you fly to Kathmandu, Nepal. Checking into the **Hotel Yak & Yeti**, (unquestionably the best hotel in Kathmandu), you are treated to a warm welcome in the 18th-century palace. The sound of trickling water carries through the lovely gardens; the ornate grand lobby combines brick, pink



Mt. Everest (left) and Lhotse

marble flooring, and stucco and wooden pillars. (B,L,D)

Day 11**KATHMANDU**

The kingdom of Nepal, closed to the outside world between the mid-19th century and the early 1950s, has always been considered a mysterious land. The Himalayas form the country's northern border with the Tibetan autonomous region of China. Wedged between China and India, it has become a popular destination for mountain climbers who come here for Mt. Everest and Anapurna. The country has an incredible range of altitude – from 29,028 feet at the summit of Everest to a low of 220 feet in the southern part of the country. Early history of Nepal is interwoven with Hindu and Buddhist mythology; and it is often difficult to determine what is historical fact and what is myth.

Kathmandu sits in a small mountain-sheltered valley that is the historical center of Nepal. Kingdoms have risen and fallen, palaces and temples have been built and rebuilt, art and culture have been developed and refined. Kathmandu has a history of being a cultural and racial melting pot, with people coming from the east and west to settle here. The result is the unique Newari culture that has contributed so much to the art and architecture of the area.

This morning, on your tour of the city, you stop at Durbar Square – the heart of Old Kathmandu and site of one of the greatest concentrations of temples, shrines,



'Kumari', the living goddess, Kathmandu

and old palaces anywhere in the world. One of these buildings displays an outstanding example of the art of intricately carved wood for which the Kathmandu Valley is famous; notice the two peacock windows on the second floor. Some visitors find the resident of this fine house even more interesting; this is the home of the highly regarded *Kumari* – the "living goddess". You also see the famous Buddhist Monkey Temple.

This afternoon is yours to explore some of the smaller lanes – to shop for carpets, fabrics, wooden carvings, silver jewelry, or to browse in one of the many quaint bookshops. This evening, you have another treat – a traditional Indian and Nepalese dinner, accompanied by folkloric performances at the **Naachghar Theater Restaurant** which is in a grand, Baroque room with high ceilings, marble, gilt mirrors, and ornate plasterwork; it was once the formal reception room of a palace. (B,L,D)

Day 12**KATHMANDU – SYANGBOCHE – ROYAL CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK – TIGER TOPS**

Early today (weather permitting) you take a flight over the imposing Himalayan range for a very close look at Mount Everest. The surrounding view is absolutely breathtaking.

Then you continue on your flight southwest from Kathmandu to Megahuly Airfield and then to the Royal Chitwan National Park; this is one of Asia's richest and most spectacular wildlife sanctuaries. When people think of Nepal, they usually

INCLUDED EVEREST FLIGHT



Kathmandu

think of soaring snow-clad mountains, not warm sub-tropical plains. Despite this, nearly half the country's population lives on a narrow strip of flat and fertile land that lies between the Indian border and the mountains; this is called the *Terai*.

Your destination in this fertile plain is the world-famous **Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge** – a tree-top hotel constructed on stilts and made from local materials deep in the heart of the jungle. The domed Nepalese style dining room, lounge, and bar with open hearth are straight out of a Kipling novel, along with the thatched roofs, rustic beams, cobblestone walls, and historic photographs. Your guest rooms are simple but comfortable; they are attractively furnished and include solar-heated baths, ceiling fans and lighting. The main reason for stopping here, however, is the magnificent Chitwan Park itself. From the beginning of the 19th century, British and Nepalese aristocrats made the Chitwan Valley a center for their hunting trips. The park contains more than 400 rhinos and 80 tigers, in addition to 50 other species of mammals and more than 400 different types of birds.

After settling in and having lunch, you start off on your afternoon safari. There are Nepalese and Western dishes served this evening by candlelight before the fireplace. (B,L,D)

Day 13

TIGERTOPS

Today, your guides accompany you on a safari as they introduce you to the incredible array of flora and fauna in the park. Riding on the backs of elephants, you explore the tall grasslands and forests searching for the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros, wild boar, sloth bear, and the elusive, nocturnal Royal Bengal tiger.



The elusive tiger at Tigertops

There are afternoon excursions by 4-wheel-drive vehicle and boat, and a stop at the Lodge's elephant camp. If you like, you can also help give the eleven Lodge elephants their daily bath! Then unwind back at the Lodge; relax in a comfortable armchair in the lounge and gaze out over the scenery. After dinner, there is a very interesting slide presentation by a noted naturalist. (B,L,D)

Day 14

TIGERTOPS – DELHI

Today, on your morning safari, you have another opportunity to see the varied wildlife of the Chitwan Park. In addition to the "big" animals, there are over 400 species of birds here. Also, look for the handsome gray, black-faced langur monkeys, some of the many species of deer, and the "blue cow" (*nigai*), which is actually Asia's largest antelope. In the rivers, you might see Gharial crocodiles and the extraordinary Gangetic dolphin.

In the afternoon, you fly back to Delhi and check into **The Taj Palace**. Relax in the marble and brass lobby, with tent-like domes over the sitting areas that resemble Rajasthani encampments. This evening, you dine in an elegant restaurant at the hotel, set in a reproduction of an Orient Express railway car, where you and your travel companions gather for a festive farewell dinner prepared by a French chef.

Day 15

DELHI – USA

This morning, as your journey comes to an end, you are escorted to the airport for your return flight home. (B)

DATES

Depart-THU (from USA)	Return-THU
Nov 18, 2004	Dec 02
Apr 14, 2005	Apr 28
Nov 17, 2005	Dec 01

COST PER PERSON

Land Portion (Double occupancy)	\$ 5,500
Single supplement	\$ 1,800
Domestic Airfare	\$ 580
International Airfare (New York)	\$ 1,590

All airfares are subject to availability and to change by the airlines. Cancellation penalties and surcharges may apply. Fares from other U.S. cities, as well as First and Business Class rates, are also available.