



# THE SOUL OF INDIA

16 days | Departs Wednesday, returns Thursday

**M**onths, years, decades could profitably be spent exploring India's 812 million richly varietal acres. But few of us have time to follow our bliss indefinitely, so we created *The Soul of India* to provide a thoughtful, succinctly paced, and delightful look at some of the continent's most eye-brightening sights.

We begin in Delhi, "always interesting to all mankind" as Ved Mehta quoted a taxi wallah as saying. Then we pay homage to the Taj, whose praises we sing throughout this brochure. We peacefully search for what is perhaps the most splendid animal on earth in Ranthambore National Park, wander the glamorous Pink City of Jaipur, and witness intense spiritual devotion at Varanasi, "the most supremely potent pilgrimage site on earth." We end in the supercity of Mumbai, a distillation of India's incredible energy and ambition, its daily familiarity with and deep attachment to its many thousands of years of history.



*The Indian way of life provides the vision of the natural, real way of life. We veil ourselves with unnatural masks. On the face of India are the tender expressions which carry the mark of the Creator's hand.*

—George Bernard Shaw,  
*Science and Technology in  
India Through the Ages*



DAY 1 *En route*

DAYS 2–4 *Delhi*

“Charming, capricious, imperial” (as John Foster Fraser wrote), Delhi is one of the world’s most intriguing mega-cities. Based from the modern, centrally located **Taj Mahal Hotel**, we’ll visit the imposing war memorial India Gate as well as Humayun’s Tomb (an inspiration for the Taj Mahal of 73 years later). With our Travel Director at helpful hand, we’ll wend Old Delhi’s twisting maze of streets and narrow, bustling, breathtakingly colourful byways, and visit India’s largest mosque, the imposing Jama Masjid and the nobly friendly Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, second-most important shrine (after Amritsar’s Golden Temple) for India’s large and influential Sikh community.

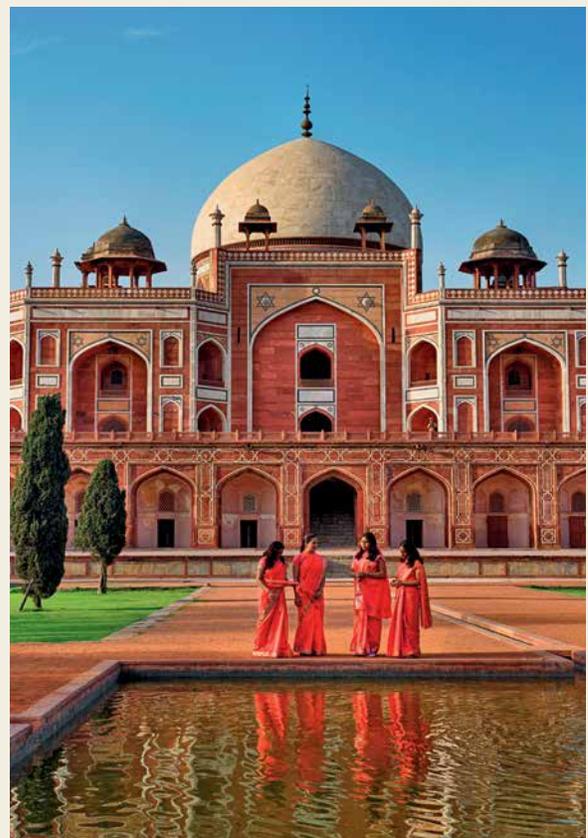
DAYS 5 & 6 *Agra*

There’s much more to Agra than the Taj Mahal.\* The Agra Fort is a masterpiece of Mughal architecture in its own right and the city itself is vivacious and engaging (which in India means *extremely* vivacious, *exceptionally* engaging). But “emeralds, rubies, and pearls...must pass away, yet still one solitary tear would hang on the cheek of time in the form of this white and gleaming Taj Mahal,” as India’s great laureate Rabindranath Tagore wrote.

Heartliftingly, almost hallucinatorily beautiful, the Taj Mahal is one of the first artifacts we would present to aliens as proof of humanity’s worth.

Our hotel, the universally admired **Amarvilas**, is a delight for those of us bewitched by the Taj: every window in the hotel looks out at the very nearby monument.

\* Pronounced Taj Meh-hel, by the way. Mahal is a palace, taj is a crown: hence the Taj is the crown of palaces.



DAYS 7 & 8 *Ranthambore National Park*

We drive in the morning to Ranthambore and the exquisite and intimate *Oberoi Vanyavilas*, named India's #1 resort hotel on *Travel+Leisure's* 2017 World's Best Hotels list. We come to subtly beautiful Ranthambore (thought by many to be the inspiration for Kipling's unforgettable *The Jungle Book*, of Mowgli and Bagheera fame) to see *Panthera tigris tigris*, an incandescent beast many consider the most impressive of Earth's many trillions of sentient beings. Our chances of life-sparking sightings are very good. We cruise the park under the guidance of our Travel Director and astute local guides, who can identify the park's super feline denizens by name and number, and sense their presence by the jungly warning cries that everywhere accompany Shere Khan. Micato, nine-time winner of *Travel+Leisure's* Number One Best Safari Operator award, has a natural affection for *Panthera leo*, the African lion. But we must admit that seeing Leo's Indian cousin amble imperially in Ranthambore is an almost shockingly exciting experience.

DAYS 9–11 *Jaipur*

Residents of the entrancing Pink City are Parisian in their pride of place, and the city is the historic home of what is probably India's most famous and flamboyantly rich ruling family. In fact, our three nights in Jaipur are spent in the *Rambagh Palace*, the fabulous former home of one of them, the great Maharajah Sawai Man Singh II.

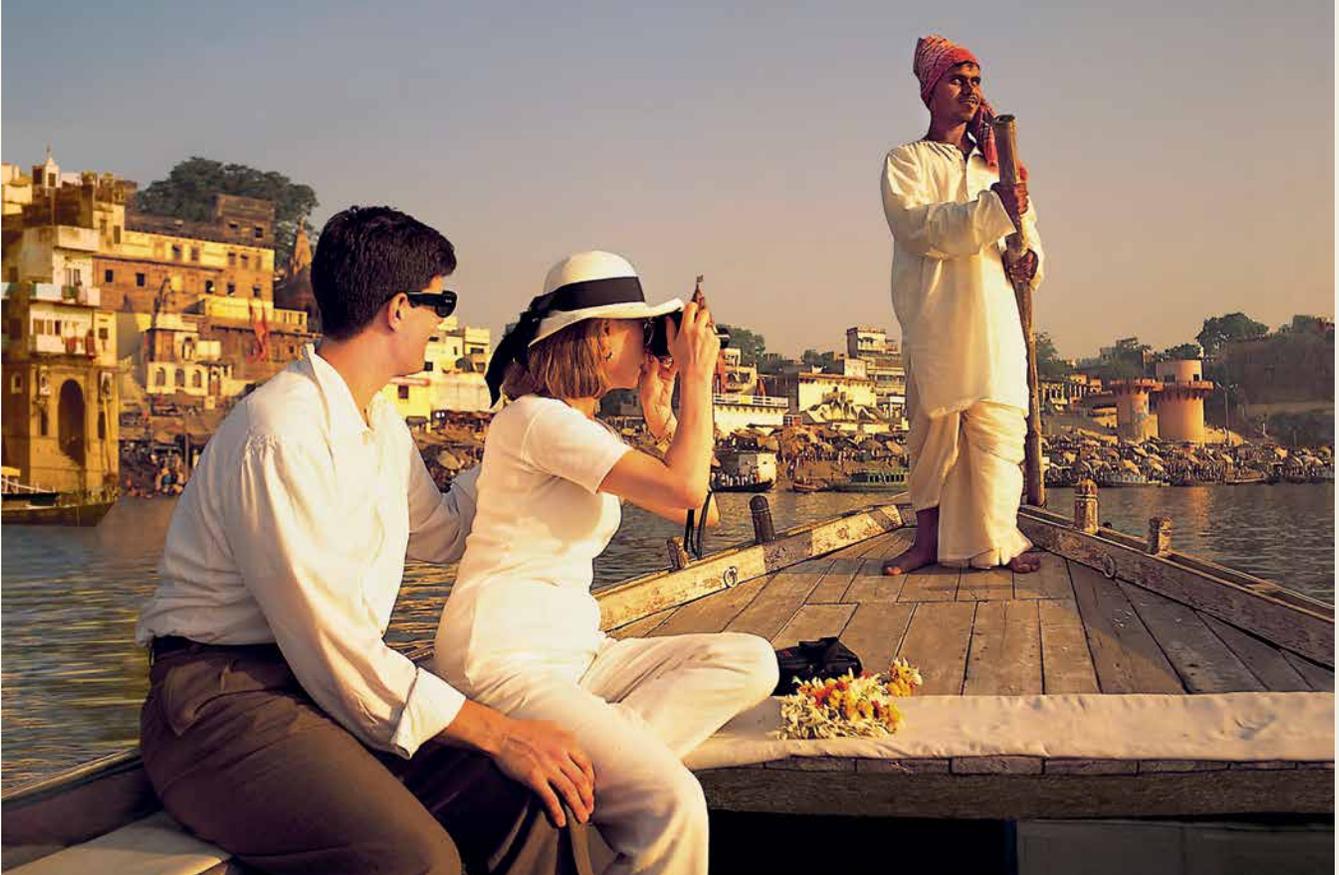
Monuments to the wealth and monumental ambition of Jaipur's maharajahs abound: grand City Palace, where members of the family still live; the Star Warsy observatory of Jantar Mantar, and huge yet lyrical Amber Fort, designed for

**PREVIOUS PAGE** *Indian ladies in front of the Palace of the Winds, or Hawa Mahal, one of Jaipur's many architectural masterworks. The Palace allowed sequestered women to look out at the—then as now—rambunctiously vibrant streets of the city.*

**OPPOSITE PAGE** *The Ganges riverfront, Varanasi, "perhaps the earth's most supremely potent pilgrimage site," and, below, Humayun's Tomb, Delhi.*

**BELOW** *Extremely royal Bengal tigers, Ranthambore National Park. No one ever said it better than Blake: "Tiger tiger, burning bright / In the forests of the night / What immortal hand or eye / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?"*





protection in case of war (which never came) and for royalty's never-ending quest for luxury. One morning we'll lift off on a heart-stirring hot air balloon ride, flying high, then low over Jaipur's awakening suburbs, waving to kids on the way to school, housewives putting up laundry, solemn old men on bicycles who break into big smiles as we waft overhead. We'll explore Jaipur's famous shopping bonanzas, and one evening we'll get up close and personal with a winsome *Elephas maximus* at a private estate, helping bathe and taking a short walk alongside the beautiful beast, ending with a festive open-air dinner.

#### DAYS 12 & 13 *Varanasi*

We fly to Varanasi in the morning, via Delhi. From our base at the **Taj Ganges** we'll venture out to the much-pilgrimage site at Sarnath, where the Buddha went public for the first time after his enlightenment at nearby Bodh Gaya.

But our focal point is Varanasi, in many ways the beating heart of the Hindu universe, perhaps the earth's most supremely potent pilgrimage site. We'll observe ancient rites at sunset, when tiny sacred lamps are ceremoniously lit on the sacred river Ganges during the timeless—and in the

Indian way, very contemporary—aarti ceremony. And we'll return for a quiet early morning boat ride, watching in the pink and gold light as devotees perform ritual sunrise baths and religious ceremonies, chant mantras, sing hymns, and go about the business of enlightenment. Perhaps nowhere in India, or the world, is it possible to witness so clearly, colourfully, and intensely many thousands of years of unbroken dedication to spiritual exploration.

#### DAYS 14 & 15 *Mumbai*

A world vanguard city, Mumbai is India's unquestioned financial and commercial hub, a gleaming magnet for India's millions of go-getting entrepreneurs: We'll encounter the famous dabbawallahs of Churchgate Station, who prepare and deliver upwards of 175,000 lunches a day. We may do some spirited bargaining at Chor Bazaar, or the Thieves Market, where everything and anything is available. We'll roam the former Prince of Wales Museum, one of India's premier art and history museums, and enjoy a leisurely walk through Colaba market near our lodgings, the exquisite **Oberoi, Mumbai**, before dinner and our flights homeward.

#### DAY 16 *Arrive home*



**OPPOSITE PAGE** Boating on the Ganges at Varanasi.

**ABOVE** A bit of Mughalesque pageantry. We're reminded that the Mughals proudly took their name from their all-conquering predecessors, the Mongols. Hence when we call a big league businessperson a mogul, we're calling her or him a Mughal, by way of saying he or she is a powerhouse in the mold of the Mongols.

**BELOW** A beautifully designed stepwell, or reservoir, in Jaipur.

## Tariff 2020

Land arrangements, per person

	Balance of Year	December 15-31
Double Occupancy	\$16,950	\$20,950
Single Supplement	5,150	8,350
Internal Flights within India	500	500

Jaipur / Delhi\* / Varanasi / Mumbai

\*Denotes business class when available

## 2020 Dates

From and To Home | All dates guaranteed departures; some departure days vary

Jan. 08 – Jan. 23	Feb. 26 – Mar. 12	Sept. 30 – Oct. 15	Nov. 18 – Dec. 03
Jan. 15 – Jan. 30	Mar. 04 – Mar. 19	Oct. 07 – Oct. 22	Nov. 25 – Dec. 10
Jan. 22 – Feb. 06	Mar. 11 – Mar. 26	Oct. 14 – Oct. 29	Dec. 02 – Dec. 17
Jan. 29 – Feb. 13	Mar. 18 – Apr. 02	Oct. 21 – Nov. 05	Dec. 09 – Dec. 24
Feb. 05 – Feb. 20	Mar. 25 – Apr. 09	Oct. 28 – Nov. 12	Dec. 16 – Dec. 31
Feb. 12 – Feb. 27	Apr. 01 – Apr. 16	Nov. 04 – Nov. 19	Dec. 23 – Jan. 07
Feb. 19 – Mar. 05	Sept. 23 – Oct. 08	Nov. 11 – Nov. 26	Dec. 30 – Jan. 14

## 2021 Dates

From and To Home | New rates may apply; some departure days may vary

Jan. 06 – Jan. 21	Feb. 24 – Mar. 11	Sept. 29 – Oct. 14	Nov. 17 – Dec. 02
Jan. 13 – Jan. 28	Mar. 03 – Mar. 18	Oct. 06 – Oct. 21	Nov. 24 – Dec. 09
Jan. 20 – Feb. 04	Mar. 10 – Mar. 25	Oct. 13 – Oct. 28	Dec. 01 – Dec. 16
Jan. 27 – Feb. 11	Mar. 17 – Apr. 01	Oct. 20 – Nov. 04	Dec. 08 – Dec. 23
Feb. 03 – Feb. 18	Mar. 24 – Apr. 08	Oct. 27 – Nov. 11	Dec. 15 – Dec. 30
Feb. 10 – Feb. 25	Mar. 31 – Apr. 15	Nov. 03 – Nov. 18	Dec. 22 – Jan. 06
Feb. 17 – Mar. 04	Sept. 22 – Oct. 07	Nov. 10 – Nov. 25	Dec. 29 – Jan. 13

## Make it Private

The Soul of India can be transformed into a fully private trip for a family or a group of friends.

You'll have your own Travel Director and your pick of departure dates. Contact your travel advisor or our India experts to find out how to make The Soul of India a Private Indian Journey.

