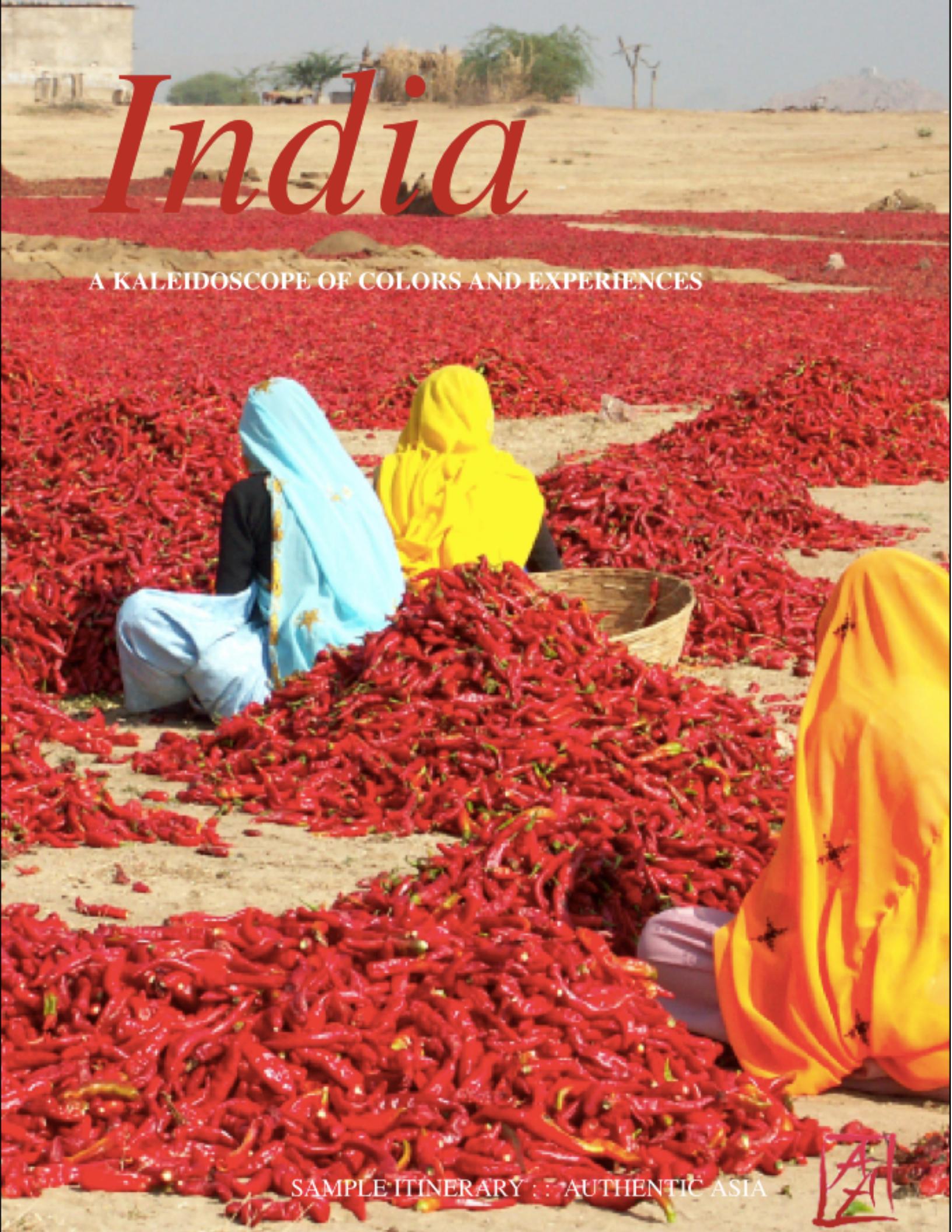


India

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF COLORS AND EXPERIENCES



SAMPLE ITINERARY :: AUTHENTIC ASIA

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On this journey we will take you through Rajasthan, India's largest state. Here one can trace the courtly history and Rajput power dating back to the 6th century A.D. as you wander through noble palaces and strikingly beautiful temples in the wind swept desert cities of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur. Traveling overland you will catch glimpses of village life that has remained unchanged for centuries and in the small town of Marwar you will wander off the tourist path and immerse yourself for a few hours in the "comings and goings" of the local people. No trip to India would be complete without experiencing the magic of a morning boat ride down the Ganges River when thousands of devout pilgrims bathe in the river for their daily ablutions. Here lies the heart and soul of India!

Day 1 | Delhi

Upon arrival you will be transferred to your hotel.

Accommodations: Imperial Hotel

Day 2 | Delhi

Begin your day of sightseeing with a visit to the Red Fort (1639-1648), which reflects the grand but stultifying court etiquette of Shah Jahan. From here set out by bicycle rickshaw to India's largest mosque, the Jami Masjid, the spiritual center of Shahjahanabad. At this red sandstone mosque with bold marble carvings and intricate



calligraphic inlay, the faithful stream in and out from the surrounding bazaars during all hours of the day. Return to the hotel and en route visit the Gandhi Memorial at Raj Ghat.

In the afternoon spend time at one of Delhi's most famous landmarks, the fluted red sandstone tower of Qutb Minar. Started in 1199, the tower tapers upwards from the ruins, covered with intricate carvings and deeply inscribed verses. Stop by the Sikh Temple during the hours of communal food service, which allows worshippers from across the continent to arrive and have both lodging and food while visiting their temple to pay homage. Next, visit Humayun's Tomb – the most arresting example of the synthesis of two of the great building styles of Asia – the Persian and the Indian.

Time permitting explore the most grandiose and elegant Victorian section of New Delhi which contains the majestic government buildings conceived by Sir Edwin Lutyens and assisted by Herbert Baker.

Accommodations: Imperial Hotel

*"The world is a book and those who do not travel
read only one page."*

- St. Augustine

Day 3 | Agra

Drive a distance of 125 miles in 4 ½ hours through scenic countryside to Agra. Upon arrival check-in at the Oberoi Amarvilas Hotel, where you can indulge with your own private view of the greatest monument of love and wake up to the glorious sight of the Taj Mahal, bathed by the first rays of dawn.

Agra was the seat of Imperial Mughal court during the 16th and 17th centuries before the capital was shifted to Delhi. The city, strategically located on the banks of the Yamuna, flourished under the patronage of the great Mughal Emperors attracting artisans from Persia, Central Asia and also from other parts of India who built luxurious forts, palaces, gardens and mausoleums.

Enjoy an afternoon visit to the Agra Fort. This imposing structure of palaces, mosques and audience halls all contained within its massive walls, was founded by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1565. The high red-sandstone ramparts of Agra Fort dominate a bend in the River Yamuna northwest of the Taj Mahal.

At sunset make your way to the Taj Mahal when the monument appears to change its hue, tinted by the glow of the setting sun. In the memory of his favorite wife Mumtaz



Mahal who died at the age of 39 while giving birth to their 14th child, the great Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan built this most extravagant and incomparable monument of love.

Accommodations: Oberoi Amarvilas Hotel

Day 4 | Jaipur

Leave India's most famous landmark behind and drive to Jaipur (4 hours), the flamboyant capital of the state of Rajasthan. Famous for its colorful culture, forts, palaces, and lakes, this historic city basks in the glory of a rich and eventful past. Arrive in Jaipur and check-in at the Oberoi Rajvilas Hotel located in 32 acres of beautiful gardens, pools, and fountains in the peaceful Rajasthani countryside. It is an oasis of elegance and luxury. With Jaipur as its backdrop, the hotel recreates the magnificence of princely Rajasthan in a beautiful fort setting with rooms, luxury tents, and villas with private pools clustered around private courtyards.

For the remainder of the day you will have time to visit the markets of Jaipur, famous for gold and silver jewelry and gemstones, particularly emeralds, rubies, sapphires, and diamonds. The artistic delicacy and elaborateness in the manufacturing of Rajasthani jewelry made of the purest and finest materials is world-renowned. Rajasthan became famous for its jewelry industry from very early times, being an important source of precious and semi precious stones. Sophisticated jewelry, set with precious stones using the ‘Kundankari’ technique, or decorated with bright enamel work, known as ‘minakari’, were made for the Rajput courtiers and affluent people. Skillful artisans from Lahore, Delhi, Gujarat, and Bengal attracted by the liberal patronage of the kings, came to work in Jaipur, Bikaner, Udaipur, and Jodhpur. Jaipur is the centre for gold ‘kundan’ work and a renowned centre for diamond and emerald cutting. Jaipur merchants also specialize in printed cotton handicraft, carpets and durries, embroidered leather footwear, and blue pottery.

Accommodations: Oberoi Raj Villa

“One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.”

- Henry Miller

Day 5 | Jaipur

This morning drive 7 miles north of Jaipur to visit Amber Fort, the ancient capital of the Rajputs from 1037 until 1728. Fortified by natural hills, high ramparts, and a succession of gates ascend the Fort on elephant back and visit Amber's magnificent palaces. The building of the fort-palace was started by Raja Man Singh, a noted Rajput general in Akbar's army in 1600, and the architecture shows distinct Mughal influence. The practice of covering walls with mosaics of mirrors was first introduced to India by the Mughals.

Continue on elephant back to Kukas Village in the Amber Forest valley. The safari route takes you through the riverbed camouflaged by elephant grass, a series of local farms, fields and a few villages tucked away in the countryside. The safari ends at a private farm in Dera Amer with sumptuous lunch.

Return to Jaipur in the afternoon for a visit to Jaipur's most famous monuments - the Palace of Winds and Jantar Mantar Observatory - both within the City Palace Complex, at the heart of the Pink City. The city's single most striking feature, its pink color, did not form part of the original design. The buildings were sallow yellow and first given a pink wash - traditionally the color of hospitality - when the city was spruced up for the

visit of Prince Albert from England in 1856. The exhibits and interior design of the City Palace have lost none of the pomp and splendor of their glory days. Each door and gateway is heavily decorated, each chandelier intact and each hall guarded by turbaned retainers decked in full royal livery impressing the continuity of a living royal presence.

Accommodations: Oberoi Raj Villas

Day 6 | Chatra Sagar

Leave the hustle and bustle of Jaipur behind and set out on a 145 mile drive through scattered villages to Chhatra Sagar. Surrounded by lush green fields and vast grazing pastures, this hundred-year-old reservoir was a hunting preserve of the Nimaj Estate. Upon arrival at Chhatra Sagar check-in at the tastefully and well-appointed tented accommodations, each equipped with a private veranda overlooking the lake.

After lunch, a jeep safari will take you to the Seervi & Gujar settlements around Chhatra Sagar where you will have a chance to meet with the local tribesmen dedicated to the preservation of their natural habitat and social customs.

In the evening the chef will prepare a delicious Rajasthani meal cooked with fresh farm vegetables in the family kitchen.

Accommodations: Chatra Sagar

Day 7 | Jodphur

A two hour drive takes you to Jodhpur, the second largest city in Rajasthan which lies on the once strategic Delhi-Gujarat trading route. This historic city was founded in 1459 by Rao Jodha, the Rathore ruler of the Kingdom of Marwar. With the majestic Meherangarh Fort towering over opulent palaces, colorful bazaars, and the sands of the Thar Desert, Jodhpur epitomizes all the romance and feudal splendor of Rajasthan.

On arrival check-in at the Umaid Bhawan Palace. Perched high above the desert capital of Jodhpur, the Umaid Bhawan Palace is the last of the great palaces of India and one of the largest residences in the world – set amidst 26 acres of lush gardens.

Named after Maharaja Umaid Singh, grandfather of the present Maharaja of Jodhpur, this golden-yellow sandstone monument was conceived on the grandest possible scale, in the fashionable Art Deco style of that time. After 15 years in construction, the 347-room palace was finally completed in 1943 – and has served as the principal residence of the Jodhpur royal family since. Designed by renowned Edwardian architect Henry

Lanchester, the palace is a blend of eastern and western architectural influences. Its majestic 105-foot high cupola is influenced by the Renaissance, while the towers draw inspiration from Rajput tradition.

An afternoon of sightseeing includes visits to Meherangarh Fort and Jaswant Thada, the 19th-century cenotaph, royal cremation ground of the former rulers of Jodhpur, and the medieval markets selling textiles, antiques, and spices.

Later in the day stroll through the market and bazaar that are famous for its *Jodhpuri* coats, *safas* (turbans), tie-and-dye fabrics, embroidered camel leather footwear, lacquer work, and cast toys. Jodhpur's bazaar lies clustered around a clock tower and is a fascinating area to explore with its little shops selling silver jewelry, lacquer bangles, tie-dyed fabrics, soft camel leather shoes, puppets, clay figurines, and colorful heaps of sweets and spices. The sidewalks are lined with henna artists who decorate women's palms with intricate, lacy patterns.

Accommodations: Umaid Bhawan Palace

Day 8 | Deogarh.

Today you are venturing off the tourist path for an unforgettable and authentic Indian experience!

Take a morning drive to the Marwar Junction to catch the regional train to Deogarh. Made famous by Rudyard Kipling's classic tale, "The Man Who Would be King", this wonderful two-hour train journey takes you high up through the spectacular Khamli Ghats and onto the central Aravelli Plateau. Not only is this a nostalgic journey taking you back in time but not too many Westerners know about this gem. A jeep will be waiting for you at the station from where you will be taken by the local ruling family to Deogarh Mahal, another sensational heritage hotel. Enjoy an early evening walk through this lovely quiet town or, time permitting, a jeep safari to the surrounding local villages.

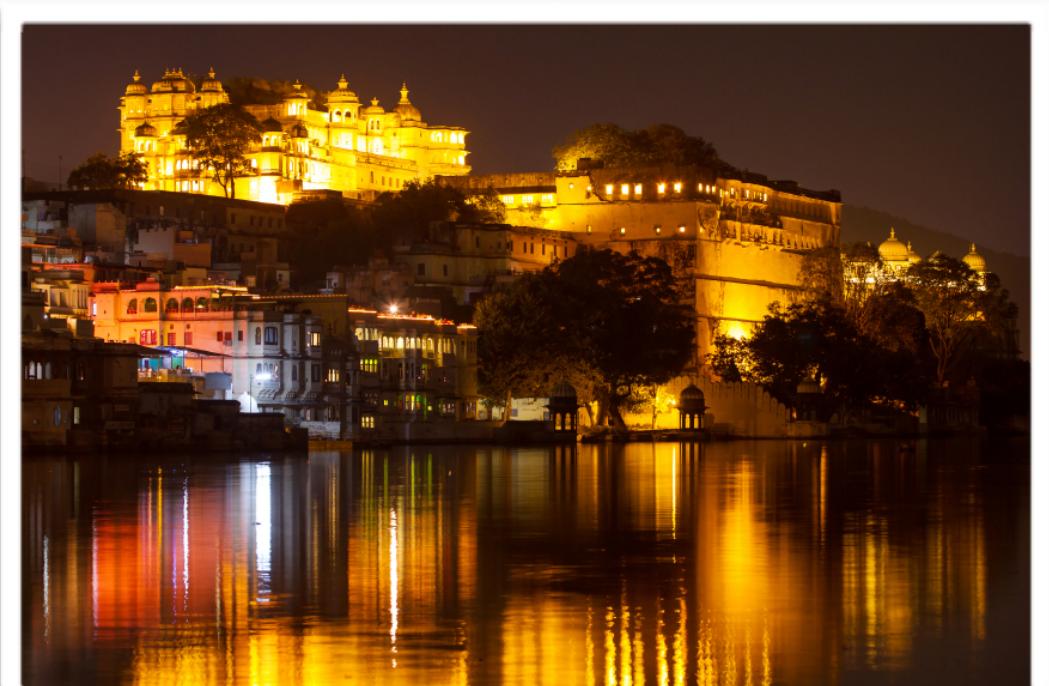
Note: The train to Deogarh is a "real Indian train" without comfortable first class compartments. There are very few tourists on this train and most likely you will be able to witness some of the monkeys jumping on the roof or holding on to the windows while being fed some treats by the local travelers.

Accommodations: Deogarh Mahal

Day 9 | Udaipur

After breakfast continue by jeep to Kumbulgarh for a visit to the spectacular fort, perched extraordinarily on a mountaintop at the highest point in Rajasthan. After exploring the fort, drive through charming village countryside, through forests and down to the exquisite marble Jain temples at Ranakpur. From there continue on to Udaipur and the Udai Villas.

Accommodations: Udai Villas



Day 10 | Udaipur

Udaipur, often referred to as the “Venice of the East” and the “Most Romantic City in India”, was the capital of the former princely state of Mewar and remained so until the state was merged with the Republic of India in 1947. Set around the shimmering Pichola Lake and dominated by dramatic palaces, Udaipur's alleys and narrow streets lend it an almost medieval charm.

Spend the day exploring Udaipur's fascinating City Palace, molded in soft yellow stone, its windowless base crowned with ornate turrets and canopies. Part of the Palace is now a museum with its marble and granite walls laden with brilliant miniature paintings and decorated with colored glass and mirrors. Continue to Sahelion-Ki-Bari Park or the Garden of the Maids of Honor on the shores of the second major lake of

Udaipur, Fateh Sagar. The park was constructed for forty-eight young ladies-in-waiting who were sent to the royal house as a part of a lavish dowry. It is beautifully laid out with extensive lawns and shady walks representing an excellent example of the Hindu art of landscaping.

Later in the afternoon embark on a cruise of the calm waters of Lake Pichola on a shared boat with views of the fabled city of Udaipur rising majestically above the lake in the middle of the Rajasthan desert or, you may want to drive to the temple market at Nadthwara (28 miles from Udaipur) which is the best place to buy silver “kundan” and “meenakari” jewelry.

Accommodations: Udai Villas

Day 11 | Varanasi

Transfer to the airport for a flight to Delhi connecting with a flight to Varanasi. Upon arrival check-in at the Nadesar Palace Hotel. This evening visit the Ghats and watch *Ganga Aarti*, a much awaited daily ritual, where the river Ganges is propitiated for all the bounty that she bestows on the Indian plains. The Ghats along the banks of the river look breathtakingly beautiful as earthen lamps and marigold flowers illuminate the holy waters.

Accommodations: Nadesar Palace Hotel



Day 12 | Varanasi

Stretched along the crescent of the holy river Ganges – born in heaven and descended to earth - Varanasi's waterfront is dominated by "landings" where the devout come for their daily ritual ablutions. Early this morning take a boat cruise on the river Ganges as thousands of pilgrims come for their morning bathing rituals. From here continue on to visit Vishwanath Temple and take a walk through the old city bazaars.

After breakfast drive 6 miles northeast of Varanasi to visit Sarnath, where in the 6th century BC Siddhartha Gautama – who came to be known as the Buddha, the "Awakened One" - gave his first sermon and set in motion the Wheel of Law. Finally conclude your day at the ancient site of Banaras Hindu University, once one of the largest campus universities in India and founded as a center for the study of Sanskrit, Indian art, music, and culture.

Return to Varanasi in the afternoon.

Accommodations: Nadesar Palace Hotel

Day 13 | Departure

You will be transferred to the airport for your departure flight.

End of services.

The above is a sample itinerary which covers the highlights and also takes you off the beaten path. We would be happy to discuss your individual travel preferences and amend the itinerary accordingly.

Pricing is dependent on your choice of accommodations, time of the year that you will be traveling, the final itinerary, and the number of people in your group.

Should you wish to discuss your individual travel plans to India please do feel free to reach to us via e-mail at info@authenticasia.net or by phone at 1. 888.586.9958.



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