



High Places Tours
Journeys Beyond Adventure



HIGHLIGHTS OF NORTH INDIA

TOUR INFORMATION

Activity: Discovery

Tour Duration: 9 Days

Min Age For Trips: 12+



Fairly Easy

INCLUSIONS

- Night: Amritsar, Agra, Delhi, Varanasi
- Nights: Dharamsala)
- Meals (all Hotels B - Breakfast)
- Flight Delhi To Varanasi

This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.

Highlights

- Visit the most sacred shrine for Sikhs “the incredible Golden Temple “
- Encounter unique experience of traditional rural villages and their local crafts.
- Discover the area around Mcleod Ganj, experience the famous Indian railways.
- Visit the communities living on the banks of India's holiest river, Ganges.
- Puja Ceremony in Varanasi.
- A thrilling visit to the magnificent Taj Mahal - World Heritage Sites

What's included:

- Accommodation (1 Night: Amritsar, Agra, Delhi, Varanasi, 2 Nights: Dharamsala)
- Meals (All Hotels B - Breakfast)
- Guide (English speaking local Leader)
- Transfers (All transfers and Sightseeing as per the itinerary)
- Domestic Flights (Delhi - Varanasi)
- Overnight train Journey (Pathankot-Delhi & Varanasi-Agra)

What's excluded:

- Indian Visa Charges
- Insurances
- Tips for the local staff

India

India is a lovely place to move around and see the beautiful destinations. This trip will give you an opportunity to see the colorful India, where you can go through its reality and all uniqueness. In fact India's unique features are imbibed in its multiple cultures and diverse language and religion. The places are really beautiful and reveal its beauty through various prospects like the Golden Temple in Amritsar, where you feel God, see the Lord, listen to the Master and feel an experience of unification with Him; Dharamsala, best known as the home of the Dalai Lama of Tibet; Varanasi and the Ganges River, regarded as the holy city to Hindus and one of the oldest living cities in the world; Agra, to gape at the world's greatest monument to love, the legendary Taj Mahal; and Delhi, a strategic gateway city, which has long played a critical role in shaping the subcontinent's history.

Itinerary

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

Day 01: Arrive Amritsar

Following customs, immigration formalities and baggage collection, as we exit the arrival terminal building and you will meet representatives and will be transferred to the hotel.

Amritsar, literally meaning the 'Pool of the Nectar of Immortality', is one of the major cities of the Punjab state. The administrative headquarters of the Amritsar District, it is the major spiritual and cultural centre of Sikhs. The city, founded in 1577 by Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru, is mostly inhabited by the Sikhs. Amritsar has grown from a sacred village pool into a spiritual centre of Sikh culture. The original pool site by which the Golden Temple is built was granted by the Mughal Emperor Akbar. In 1761 Ahmad Shah Durrani sacked the town and destroyed the temple, which was rebuilt in 1764. One of the ancient and charming cities of India, Amritsar is an important distribution centre of dry-fruits in the country. Apart from an important pilgrimage centre, the city is also famous for producing some exquisite items like carpets, fabrics, handicrafts et cetera. If time permits, we will witness the "Change of Guards" ceremony at the Wagah border.

Wagah is the only road border crossing between Pakistan and India, and lies on the Grand Trunk road between the cities of Amritsar, Punjab, India and Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Wagah, named Wagha in Pakistan, is a village through which the controversial Radcliff Line, the boundary demarcation line dividing India and Pakistan upon the Partition of India, was drawn. The village was divided by independence in 1947. Today, the eastern half of the village remains in the Republic of India while the western half is in Pakistan. It is particularly known for the elaborate Wagah border ceremony that happens at the border gate before sunset each day. For 45 minutes every day at sunset the guards high-kick, stamp, speed march and bawl their way through a choreographed routine. It ends in the lowering of both flags and the slamming of the border gates. Overnight hotel

Day 02: Drive to Dharamsala (200 kms / 5-6 hrs)

Morning: Visit the Golden Temple (Sri Harimandir Sahib); thereafter, drive to Dharamshala. The Golden Temple is not only a central religious place of the Sikhs, but also a symbol of human brotherhood and equality. Everybody, irrespective of cast, creed or race can seek spiritual solace and religious fulfillment without any hindrance. It also represents the distinct identity, glory and heritage of the Sikhs. To pen-down the philosophy, ideology, the inner and outer beauty, as well as the historical legacy of Sri Harimandir Sahib is a momentous task. It is a matter of experience rather than of description.

As advised by Sri Guru Amar Dass Ji (3rd Sikh Guru), Sri Guru Ram Dass Ji (4th Sikh Guru) started the digging of Amrit Sarovar (Holy Tank) in 1577 A.D., which was later on brick-lined by Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji (5th Sikh Guru) on December 15, 1588 and he also started the construction of Sri Harimandir Sahib. Sri Guru Granth Sahib (scripture of the Sikhs), after its compilation, was first installed at Sri Harimandir Sahib on August 16, 1604 A.D. A devout Sikh, Baba Budha Ji was appointed its first Head Priest. The

Golden Temple has a unique Sikh architecture. Built at a level lower than the surrounding land level, the Gurdwara teaches the lesson of egalitarianism and humility. The four entrances of this holy shrine from all four directions, signify that people belonging to every walk of life are equally welcome. Overnight hotel (B)



Day 03: Today we take a walking tour of McLeod Ganj and the surroundings.

The attractions of McLeod Ganj center around Tibetan religious and cultural monuments and institutions:

Tsuglag Khang – the Dalai Lama temple complex, is the life-blood of the village. The complex houses the Namgyal Monastery (which trains monks for rituals associated with the temple), the main temple and a smaller shrine that houses a huge gilded statue of the Buddha, along with two smaller, but no less impressive statues of Chenresig and Guru Rinpoche.

In addition, the Dalai Lama's residence and administrative offices are in the complex; Namgyalma Stupa – located in the center of the village and surrounded by prayer wheels, this Buddhist stupa, is a memorial to those Tibetans who lost their lives fighting for a free Tibet; a short walk from the Dalai Lama's temple will bring you to Gangchen Kyishong, the administrative centre of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. An impressively ornate building, the Library houses the literary treasures of Tibet and has an ongoing exhibition on Tibetan history; the Tibetan Institute for the Performing Arts (TIPA) – is located a short walk from the center of town. The Institute trains Tibetans (and occasionally foreigners) in the traditional Tibetan forms of opera, theatre and dance; Dip Tse-Chok Ling Gompa – down a steep path from the bus station, the Dip Tse-Chok Ling Gompa is a jewel. Perched on a steep hillside overlooking the valley, the main temple is small and intimate, but houses an impressive statue; the Tibetan Children's Village – thousands of children flee Tibet each year and arrive in McLeod Ganj,

often without their parents.

The Tibetan Children's Village is where they live and study, along with other Tibetan children whose Indian-resident parents send them to TCV to receive a Tibetan education; Stitches of Tibet – the Tibetan Women's Association has developed a number of vocational training programmes to assist Tibetan refugees in developing employment skills. One such programme is Stitches of Tibet, where newly arrived Tibetan women and girls are taught sewing and weaving skills; Norbulingka Institute – the Norbulingka Institute is located about 15 kms from McLeod Ganj. Developed by the Dalai Lama as a centre for the continuation and training of traditional Tibetan arts and crafts; the Losel Doll Museum – an exhibition of intricately detailed, beautiful dolls depicting the costumes and activities of the people in each of the regions of Tibet.

St. John's Church in the Wilderness – a peaceful little remnant of the British Raj, is a few minutes' walk down the Dharamsala road. Tucked in among the pine forest, it has some beautiful stained glass and a monument of Lord Elgin, one of the Viceroy's of India, who died in Dharamsala and was buried here in 1863. Overnight hotel (B)



Day 04: Drive to Pathankot (100 kms / 3-4 hrs) & train to Delhi.

Morning: We have an option to take a short walk up to Bhagsu Nag temple Water fall.

Afternoon: Drive to Pathankot to board overnight train for Delhi.

Overnight train (B)

Day 05: Arrive Delhi & fly to Varanasi.

Early morning: We arrive in Delhi, and get time to freshen up and have breakfast. Thereafter, we will be transferred to the Airport in time to connect the flight to Varanasi.

Varanasi, or Benaras, (also known as Kashi) is one of the oldest living cities in the world. Mark Twain, the American author, who was enthralled by the legend and sanctity of Benaras, once wrote: "Benaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together."

According to the 'Vamana Purana', the Varuna and the Assi rivers originated from the body of the primordial Person at the beginning of time itself. The tract of land lying between them is believed to be 'Varanasi', the holiest of all pilgrimages.

The word 'Kashi' originated from the word 'Kas' which means to shine. Steeped in tradition and mythological legacy, Kashi is the 'original ground' created by Shiva and Parvati, upon which they stood at the beginning of time. To be in Varanasi is an experience in itself...an experience in self-discovery...an eternal oneness of the body and soul.

After getting some time to relax we re-group in the late afternoon and take Cycle Rickshaw-ride through the old parts of the City up to the Ghats, to witness the evening prayer ceremony on Dasvamedha Ghat on the banks of River Ganges. The priests and the pious come together to chant slokas and recite bhajans (religious hymns), while lighted diyas float down the river casting a magical spell on the spectators.

Overnight hotel (B)



Day 06: Train to Agra

Early morning: Boat ride on the Ganges river to witness the sunrise, followed by a visit of the Ghats and the Kashi Vishwanath Temple (Golden Temple) from the outside (non-Hindus are not permitted inside).

Ganges River: Although officially as well as popularly called the Ganga in Hindi and in other Indian languages, internationally it is known by its conventional name, the Ganges. From time immemorial it has been the holy river of Hinduism. For most of its course it is a wide and sluggish stream, flowing through one of the most fertile and densely populated regions in the world. Despite its importance, its length of 1,560 miles (2,510 km) is relatively short compared with the other great rivers of Asia or of the world. Rising in the Himalayas and emptying into the Bay of Bengal, it drains a quarter of the territory of India, while its basin supports hundreds of millions of people. The Gangetic Plain, across which it flows, is the heartland of the region known as Hindustan and has been the cradle of successive civilisations from the Mauryan empire of Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE down to the Mughal Empire, founded in the 16th century. For most of its course the Ganges flows through Indian Territory, although its large delta in the Bengal area, which it shares with the Brahmaputra River, lies mostly in Bangladesh. The general direction of the river's flow is from northwest to southeast. At its delta the flow is generally southward.

Kashi Vishwanath Temple is one of the most famous Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva and is located in Varanasi, the Holiest existing Place of Hindus, where at least once in life a Hindu is expected to do pilgrimage, and if possible, also pour the remains (ashes) of cremated ancestors here on the River Ganges. The temple stands on the western bank of the holy river Ganges, and is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest of Shiva temples. The main deity is known by the name Vishwanatha or Vishweshwara meaning the Ruler of the universe. The temple town that claims to be the oldest living city in the world, with 3500 years of documented history is also called Kashi and hence the temple is popularly called as Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

Afternoon: Excursion to Sarnath.

The Buddha came to this hamlet, 10km north-east of Varanasi, to preach his message "Maha-Dharma-Chakra Pravartan" (in Buddhist terminology, 'turned the wheel of the law') after he achieved Enlightenment at Bodhgaya. Later, the great Buddhist Emperor Ashoka built here the Dharmarajika Stupa and near it erected a pillar surmounted by the magnificent capital of four adored lions, which today forms the national emblem of India. Ashoka erected several memorial towers or stupas. The Sarnath Archaeological Museum houses antiquities recovered from the ruins at Deer Park during excavations from 1905 onwards. Inside the museum, numerous sculptures of the Buddha and Bodhisatta, mostly of the Gupta period (4th-5th century AD) are displayed. (The Sarnath Archaeological Museum remains closed on Fridays.)

Late evening: We will be transferred to railway-station in time to board the overnight train for Agra.
Overnight hotel (B)

Day 07: Early morning: We arrive in Agra, where we will meet our representative and will be transferred to the hotel for breakfast (Hotel check-in time: 12 Noon.).

After breakfast, we will visit the Agra Fort. Agra Fort (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) is located on the right bank of the river Yamuna. It is one of the most important and robustly built strongholds of the Mughals, embellished with number of richly decorated buildings encompassing the imposing Mughal style of art and architecture. It was constructed by the third Mughal emperor Akbar on the remains of an ancient site known as Badalgarh. When Babur sent his son Humayun to Agra, he captured the fort and seized a vast treasure, which included the world famous 'Koh-i-noor' diamond as well. Shah Jahan, a great builder, raised white marble palaces here. Aurangzeb imprisoned Shah Jahan, his own father, in the fort for 8 years until he died in 1666 and was buried in the Taj Mahal. Though Shah Jahan had formally transferred his capital to Delhi, in 1638, he continued to live here. But after his death, Agra lost its grandeur. Aurangzeb remained busy in the regional conflicts and wars. Yet, time and again, he lived here and held the durbar. Shivaji came to Agra in 1666 and met Aurangzeb in the Diwan-i-Khas. Aurangzeb died in 1707 and 18th century history of Agra Fort is a saga of sieges and plunder during which it was held by the Jats and the Marathas and finally the British captured it from the latter in 1803.

Late afternoon: Visit to the Taj Mahal.

The postcard picture of Taj Mahal does not adequately convey the legend, the poetry and the romance that shrouds what Rabindra nath Tagore calls "a teardrop on the cheek of time". Taj Mahal (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) means "Crown Palace" and is in fact the most well-preserved and architecturally beautiful tomb in the world. It is best described by the English poet, Sir Edwin Arnold, as "Not a piece of architecture, as other buildings are, but the proud passions of an emperor's love wrought in living stones." It is a celebration of woman built in marble and that's the way to appreciate it.

Taj Mahal stands on the bank of River Yamuna, and was built by the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan in 1631 in memory of his second wife, Mumtaz Mahal, a Muslim Persian princess. Construction began in 1631 and was completed in 22 years. Twenty thousand people were deployed to work on it. It was designed by the Iranian architect Ustad Isa and it is best appreciated when the architecture and its adornments are linked to the passion that inspired it. It is a "symbol of eternal love". So exquisite is the workmanship that the Taj has been described as "having been designed by giants and finished by jewellers". As a tribute to a beautiful woman and as a monument for enduring love, the Taj reveals its subtleties when one visits it without being in a hurry. The rectangular base of Taj is in itself symbolic of the different sides from which to view a beautiful woman. The main gate is like a veil to a woman's face which should be lifted delicately, gently and without haste on the wedding night. In Indian tradition the veil is lifted gently to reveal the beauty of the bride. As one stands inside the main gate of Taj, his eyes are directed to an arch which frames the Taj. The dome is made of white marble, but the tomb is set against the plain across the river and it is this background that works its magic of colours that, through their reflection, change the view of the Taj. The colours change at different hours of the day and during different seasons. Like a jewel, the Taj sparkles in moonlight when the semi-precious stones inlaid into the white marble on the main mausoleum catch the glow of the moon. The Taj is

pinkish in the morning, milky white in the evening and golden when the moon shines. These changes, they say, depict the different moods of a woman. Different people have different views of the Taj but it would be enough to say that the Taj has a life of its own that leaps out of marble, provided you understand that it is a monument of love. As an architectural masterpiece, nothing could be added or subtracted from it. (The Taj Mahal remains closed on Fridays. Overnight hotel (B)



Day 08: Drive to Delhi (205 kms / 4-5 hrs)

After breakfast, we drive to Delhi; check-in at the hotel.

Afternoon we have a half-day city tour on foot / in a rickshaw around Old Delhi. Delhi, the capital of India blends within its folds the great cultural variety, an unceasing range of activity. In time the city conceals within its bosom annals of civilizations that flourished for more than three thousand years. Indraprastha, according to legends, the city founded by the Pandavas in the times of the epic Mahabharata (circa 1500 B.C.), was located near the Old Fort that stands on a large mound overlooking the river. Today, the city is a narrative blend of the traditional and modern, skyscrapers, beautiful gardens and wide tree-lined avenues perpetuate the Mughal passion of landscaping and architectural excellence. Overnight hotel (B)

Day 09: Transfer

Airport Transfers to connect our flight back HOME

India Visas

A full passport is required to apply for the Indian visa, with a validity of at least 6 months beyond the intended duration of stay in the country. It is the client's responsibility to complete all the application procedures and obtain their visas before the intended date of departure. A simplified facility of applying for an eVisa is now available to British passport holders, this will entitle the applicants to a 60 day tourist visa, for more details please log on to the official website of Indian Government <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/> Alternatively UK passport holders can apply themselves for Indian Visa through India High Commissions Visa service VFS by logging on to <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/>. Current visa fee for British passport holders

