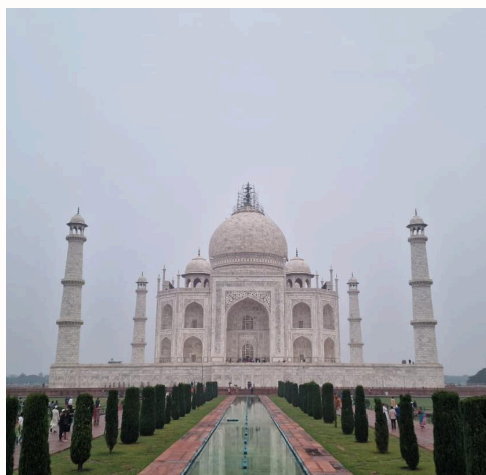




# Small Group Tours by **EMBARK**

18 DAY HOSTED TOUR WITH MICHELLE BARKER  
14 MARCH 2027 - 31 MARCH 2027

# INDIA - HOLI FESTIVAL





## *Let's explore India for the Holi Festival!*

Celebrate India in its most vibrant and evocative season on this 17 day journey through Delhi, Agra, Rajasthan and Varanasi. This immersive, luxury experience will be hosted by Michelle, who has personally travelled to India many times.

Designed around the spectacular festival of Holi, this carefully curated itinerary weaves together India's most iconic landmarks with intimate, off-the-beaten-path encounters that reveal the country's true spirit. We begin in Delhi, where ancient monuments rise beside bustling bazaars and the rhythm of daily life unfolds in vivid color. Here, the stage is set for a journey that is as culturally rich as it is visually breathtaking.

In Agra, stand before the timeless beauty of the Taj Mahal – a monument to love made even more magical in the celebratory atmosphere of Holi. Then journey into Rajasthan, the regal heart of India, where majestic palaces, desert landscapes and storied forts provide a royal backdrop to the festivities. Experience Holi not as a spectacle, but as a guest – sharing in authentic local celebrations filled with music, laughter and joyful splashes of color. From heritage properties to rural encounters, each destination adds a unique shade to the tapestry of your experience.

No journey through India would be complete without Varanasi, the world's oldest living city. On the sacred banks of the Ganges, witness the mesmerizing Ganga Aarti ceremony as firelight dances against the river at dusk. Wander through ancient ghats and labyrinthine lanes where chants, rituals and centuries-old traditions offer a profound spiritual dimension to our program.

Any given day in India reveals its beauty, diversity and humanity – cities and villages rising before dawn, lives unfolding in moments both tender and triumphant, humorous and humbling. This journey is about more than landmarks; it is about those subtleties. The quiet exchanges, the sensory richness, the stories behind the scenes.

Thoughtfully paced and meticulously hosted, this is slow, meaningful luxury travel at its finest – blending the quintessential sights with India's best-kept secrets. Inspiring, enriching, occasionally challenging, but always deeply rewarding.

### Itinerary Overview

3 nights **DELHI**, 2 nights **AGRA**, 2 nights **RANTHAMBORE**, 3 nights **JAIPUR**, 3 nights **NARLAI**, 2 nights **JODPHUR**, 2 nights **VARANASI**





## 14th March 2027 : Day One (light refreshment)

Today you can arrive in Delhi at any time and you will be transferred from the airport to your accommodation. An option for an air-inclusive package will be offered 10-months prior to departure.

Delhi is not one city. Within it lie several cities, each with its own distinctive allure. Historically speaking, what we see today is the composite of seven older cities that were built, looted, destroyed, and then rebuilt over a period encompassing several centuries. The thriving metropolis that you see today is testament to the spirit of Delhi a city that is unapologetically kitsch under its cultured veneer.



## 15<sup>th</sup> March 2027 : Day Two (B, D)

Most flights arrive late in the evening into Delhi, which means late to bed on the day you arrive! For this reason, we have a relaxed start today. The morning will be at leisure to enjoy breakfast, recover from travelling or even perhaps book in a massage at the hotel spa (at your own expense).



This afternoon, we'll enjoy a unique and immersive introduction to Delhi with the *Art and Heart – Loitering Lodhi* tour, led by a knowledgeable local guide. Our walk begins in Lodhi Colony, home to India's first open-air public art district. Here, vibrant murals by renowned Indian and international artists transform everyday buildings into powerful canvases. More than visually striking, the works explore themes ranging from climate change and social inclusion to community, identity, and even gentle reminders to call your mother. It's art that is accessible, inclusive, and deeply connected to modern India.

In a city where space is at a premium, open public areas are essential gathering places — and Lodhi is one such haven for Delhiites from all walks of life. We'll also wander through the serene Lodhi Gardens, an atmospheric necropolis-turned-park dotted with 15th-century tombs of the Lodhi dynasty. Today, this royal garden-graveyard is alive with morning walkers, yoga practitioners, picnicking families, and children at play — a beautiful juxtaposition of past and present.



Like much of Delhi, Lodhi Colony carries layers of history. Once linked to the capital of the Lodhi dynasty, it later became government housing and a refugee settlement after Partition in 1947. Over time, it has evolved into one of the city's most dynamic cultural quarters — where ancient legacies, contemporary creativity, and daily life unfold side by side.

This experience offers not just a tour, but a meaningful glimpse into the art, history, and human heartbeat of Delhi.



Afterwards we'll visit Khan Market - Delhi's most upmarket shopping enclave that is favoured by the elite and expats. Our dinner will be at the local restaurant in the market.

## 16th March 2027 : Day Three (B, L)

Today we'll experience the *5 senses of Delhi*. This experience urges you to surrender yourself and immerse in a 200 year old culture that continues to thrive in unique ways today.

With its rich archeological history that has been built over generations by kingdoms that ruled over the city, Delhi is a melting pot of cultures. It was bred on the milk of royal culture, brought up in the lap of kings, and reached maturity in an atmosphere of learning and knowledge. We focus on the blend of red and white of the Mughal architecture. You visit two monuments that are a must-do on any Delhi itinerary and historically became blueprints for architecture that followed.

Marvel at the sight of Mughal Era's Red & White: This tour starts with Humayun's tomb, which is one of the best preserved Mughal monuments. This spellbinding mausoleum is the first example of Mughal architecture in India. After a century from its construction, Humayun's tomb inspired the construction of the more famous Taj Mahal. Humayun's Tomb is a favourite for any Dilliwala (Person from Delhi), a few even prefer it to the Taj.

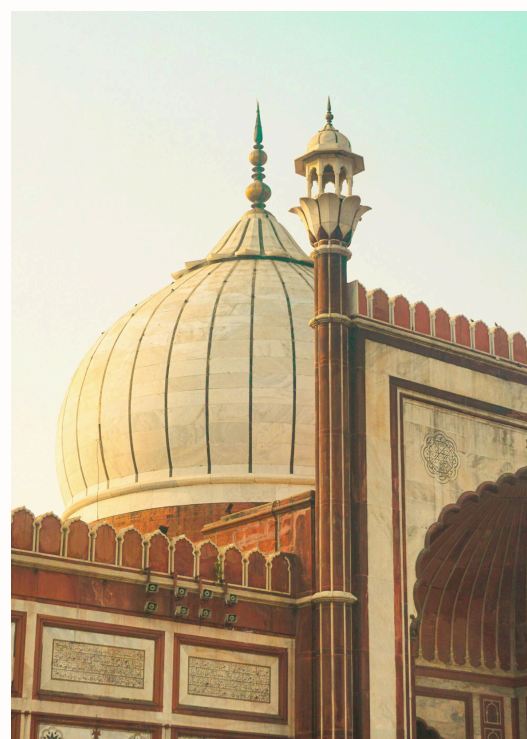
Let Kindness Touch your Heart: Your visit will be followed with a wonderful workshop organised with an all-women NGO group. The workshop will be inspired by the monument you just visited. A fantastic eye opening experience and a keepsake, this one will truly touch your hearts.

Ride like a local: Our Mughal conversation continues with a rickshaw ride through Shahjahanabad - the beautiful Mughal city built by one of the strongest rulers of the Taj fame: Shahjahan. In their glory years, the streets of Chandni Chowk were adorned with silver and gold jewellery in the midst of shops selling the most delectable food. Today, chaos thrives in the area, but as you cycle down the street you are transported by the magic in the air to the era of Mughals.

Bring the scent of nature to your home

For the smell element of the tour, you will indulge in a workshop that fires up your senses - the Ittar or perfume making workshop. There are several stories about the origin of ittar, including one involving Mughal emperor Jahangir, who is credited as the first patron of the industry because his wife, empress Noor Jahan, used to bathe in water perfumed with rose petals. Visit an 8th generation ittar studio where you will get to smell a wide range of ittars and mix your own unique concoction that can be named after you!

Admire the spectacular Friday Mosque: Witness the glory of the Jama Masjid: a beautiful pocket of calm at the heart of Old Delhi's mayhem. The capital's largest mosque is built on a 10m elevation, it can hold over 25,000 people. The marble and red-sandstone structure, known also as the 'Friday Mosque', was Shah Jahan's final architectural triumph, built between 1644 and 1658. A walk here takes you back in time with conversations that talk about various cultural, religious and historical aspects, including the uprising of 1857.





Listening Session at Delhi's biggest Gurudwara: It's time to move to possibly an oasis of service, solitude and syncretism: The Bangla Sahib. Our sound element of your senses. The magic that the Gurudwara envelopes you into is undeniable. What ties together this beautiful experience is the sweet sound of the gurbani playing in the background as you reflect on the experience your senses have gone through.



### Get a Taste of Delhi's quintessential cuisine

We follow this up with a break for our favourite sense: Taste. Here, we shall try quintessential food of Delhi as the New Delhi Snack at a contemporary Indian Restaurant in the location of New Delhi or Lutyens Delhi. From here on, you we make our way towards New Delhi and as we drive past British structures, learning about how the British envisaged their new capital. The palpable architecture along with the deep contrast to Mughal buildings make this stop not only one for colonial stories, but also a look into its architecture.

After a memorable day exploring Delhi, the evening is at your leisure



### **17<sup>th</sup> March : Day Four (B, L, D)**

Indian cuisine is a celebration of flavour, fragrance, and centuries of culinary tradition. Layered with aromatic spices such as cardamom, cumin, turmeric, coriander and saffron, each dish tells a story shaped by region, religion, trade and royal influence. From the rich, slow-cooked curries of the north to the coconut-infused dishes of the south, India's food is as diverse as its landscapes.

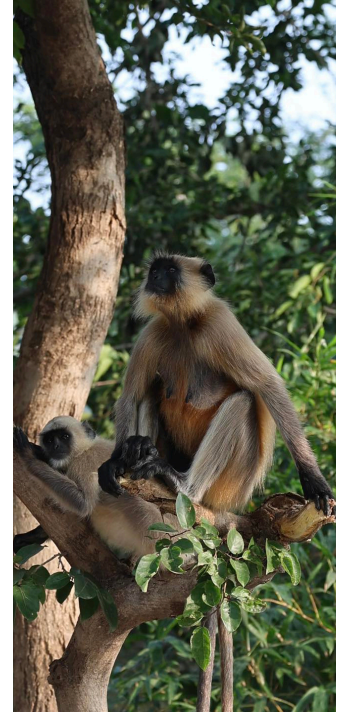
This morning we will have a hands-on cooking experience, where you will discover the delicate balance of sweet, sour, spice and heat that defines Indian cuisine. Guided by a local chef, you'll learn time-honoured techniques, the art of blending spices, and the secrets behind creating depth of flavour - before sitting down to savour the vibrant dishes you've prepared.

Afterwards, we will travel to Agra - which is approximately 4 hours drive... depending on the traffic!



Traffic in India is an experience in itself - vibrant, dynamic, and wonderfully reflective of the country's energy. On any given road, you may find cars, motorbikes, auto-rickshaws, bicycles, pedestrians, and even the occasional cow moving together in what appears to be chaos, yet somehow functions with its own unspoken rhythm. The constant hum of horns is less about frustration and more a form of communication — a gentle alert of "I'm here" rather than impatience. While journeys can take longer than expected, they offer a fascinating window into daily life: roadside tea stalls, flower vendors weaving through lanes, families of four on a scooter, and cities rising early and settling late.





Arriving in Agra, we will check in for our two-night stay.

Set along the banks of the Yamuna River, Agra is home to some of the finest examples of Mughal architecture, crowned by its most iconic masterpiece — the Taj Mahal. Once the capital of the Mughal Empire, the city flourished under imperial patronage until Shah Jahan moved the court to Delhi, leaving behind a remarkable legacy of grand forts, elegant mausoleums, and timeless artistry.

Dinner tonight will be at a local restaurant.

### 18<sup>th</sup> March 2027: Day Five (B, D)

We'll begin our day with a sunrise visit to the Taj Mahal, when the first light of dawn casts a soft glow over its luminous white marble. A masterpiece of Mughal architecture, the Taj Mahal has stirred the imagination of poets, artists, and travellers for centuries. Commissioned by the grief-stricken Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, this extraordinary monument to love took over 22 years and the craftsmanship of more than 20,000 artisans to complete, using marble transported from quarries over 200 miles away.

Explore the monument's perfect symmetry and refined proportions, admiring it from every angle. A closer look reveals exquisite pietra dura inlay work (semi-precious stones delicately set into marble in intricate floral patterns) a detail that never fails to captivate.

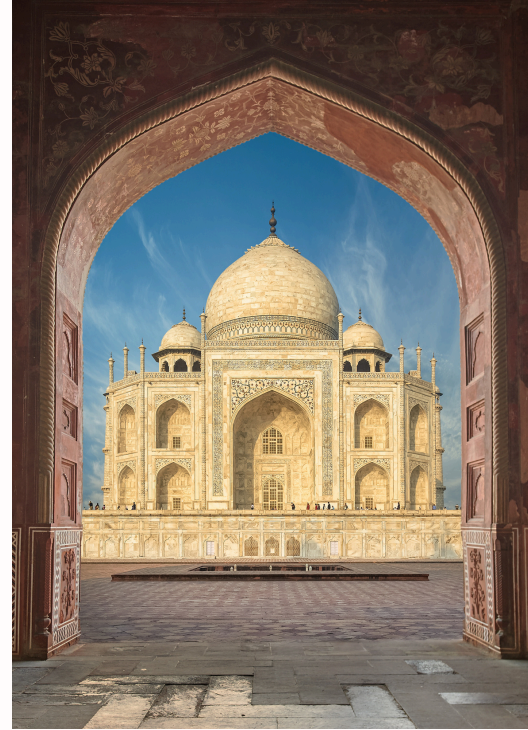
Return to the hotel for breakfast.

Later this morning, explore Agra Fort, an impressive UNESCO World Heritage Site and a superb example of Mughal imperial architecture. Serving as the residence of successive emperors for three generations, this grand red sandstone fortress encloses a remarkable collection of palaces, audience halls, mosques, and formal gardens. Its design reflects a harmonious blend of Islamic and Hindu architectural influences — a signature of Mughal craftsmanship — offering both historical insight and striking views across the river toward the Taj Mahal.

This afternoon we have one of our favourite experiences - the '*Beyond the Taj - Kachhpura Walk*'. Step beyond the iconic façade of the Taj Mahal and discover the living heartbeat of Agra on the Kachhpura Village Walk — an enriching, community-based experience that offers a rare glimpse into everyday life in the monument's shadow.

Led by young members of the local community, this meaningful initiative not only provides authentic insight into village traditions and livelihoods, but also directly supports local welfare projects, including school improvements, sanitation facilities, and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities.

The walk begins at Gyarah Sidi and continues to the village chaupal, the traditional gathering space at the heart of community life. As you wander through narrow lanes, you'll gain a deeper understanding of local





customs, time-honoured practices, and the rhythms that shape daily life here. Along the way, visit a historic mosque carved from the old Tope-Khana (cannon store), a hidden architectural gem that speaks to the layers of history embedded in this neighbourhood. The experience concludes near the gates of Mehtab Bagh, offering a peaceful vantage point from which to reflect on the contrast between village life and the grandeur of the Taj beyond.

Dinner tonight is at the Infini Sky Lounge, offering uninterrupted views of the Taj Mahal.

### **19<sup>th</sup> March : Day Six (B, L, D)**



We have a 6 hour drive from Agra to Ranthambore today. Enroute we will visit Fatehpur Sikri. This deserted red sandstone city was built by the great Mughal Emperor Akbar as his capital in the late 16th century. It was abandoned soon after it was built when the local wells went dry and it remains today in much the same condition that it was over 300 years ago. It is complete with palaces and mosques and used to be a town larger than London when it was originally constructed. Now it is an extraordinary place to wander around with its buildings in near perfect condition.



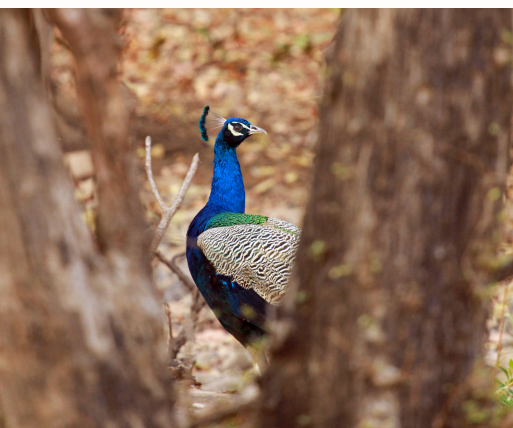
Lunch will be along the way, before we arrive at Ranthambore in the afternoon. Ranthambore National Park is one of India's wildlife destinations and among the best places in the country to spot the elusive tiger in its natural habitat. Once the private hunting grounds of Jaipur's maharajas, today it is a protected sanctuary where nature reigns supreme.

### **20<sup>th</sup> March 2027 : Day Seven (B, L, D)**



Start the day with an early morning safari into the National Park. Set against the dramatic backdrop of the rugged Aravalli and Vindhya hills, the park's landscape is wonderfully atmospheric - dotted with ancient banyan trees, serene lakes, open grasslands, and crumbling stone ruins that seem frozen in time.

This is one of the best places to catch sight of a tiger in the wild in Rajasthan. Apart from tigers, there are a variety of deer including Sāmbhar, Chital, barking deer, and Nilgai. There are over 300 species of birds that you can spot here and reptiles like crocodiles. A naturalist will accompany you and help you spot the wildlife.



Adding to the park's mystique is the magnificent 10th-century Ranthambore Fort, which rises dramatically above the forest. Its weathered walls and temple ruins overlook the wilderness below, creating an almost cinematic setting where history and wildlife intertwine. Every safari here is a true adventure — a blend of suspense, raw beauty, and the exhilarating possibility of locking eyes with a tiger in the wild.

## 21<sup>st</sup> March 2027 : Day Eight (B, Snacks)

After breakfast we'll travel to Jaipur - which is close to 4hours drive. Jaipur is fondly known as the Pink City, and is one of India's most captivating and sought-after destinations. Beloved by both locals and international visitors, it is renowned not only for its regal heritage and architectural splendour, but also for its vibrant bazaars filled with textiles, gemstones, handicrafts, and artisanal treasures.

In 1876, Maharaja Ram Singh ordered the old city to be painted in a welcoming shade of rose pink to honour the visit of the Prince of Wales and Queen Victoria. The colour, traditionally associated with hospitality, gave Jaipur its enduring nickname — as the city quite literally blushed pink in celebration of its distinguished guests. Today, the terracotta-hued facades remain, lending Jaipur its distinctive charm.

Later in the afternoon, we'll take an *Evening Bazaar Walk with Starlit Spirits - A Royal Heritage Experience*. This is such a unique afternoon as we set off in open air jeeps to discover Jaipur!

This immersive experience offers a unique opportunity to explore the city's vibrant bazaars, renowned for their exquisite textiles and distinctive artisanal goods. Step into the world of Rajputana elegance and unwind in true Rajput style on our perfect evening tour in Jaipur. For Rajputs, jeeps and a good glass of liquor are more than just passions—they are symbols of their rich heritage and lifestyle. Join us for an evening Jeep adventure through the night, where you'll discover the enchanting beauty of Jaipur's architecture under the starry sky.

As we set off on our open jeep safari, you'll understand why the jeep holds such significance for Rajputs. It represents freedom, adventure, and a connection to the rugged terrain of Rajasthan. Feel the wind in your hair as we pass by iconic landmarks and insignias of Jaipur's regal past, each illuminated in the night, creating a mesmerizing spectacle. No Rajputana evening is complete without a taste of the state's royal legacy—heritage liquor. Historically, Rajput royal families had their own distilleries, guarded recipes, and a tradition of crafting exquisite liquors. We take you to the ancestral home of one such erstwhile royal family, where you'll be welcomed with open arms for a heritage liquor-tasting experience. Indulge in local snacks as you interact with the family, soaking in the stunning view of Jaipur's old city and illuminated monuments that add a magical touch to the night.

For those looking to savour more, you can extend the evening to a contemporary bar nestled in the heart of the city where mixologists craft cocktails using heritage liquors (drinks at your own expense).

## 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2027 : Day Nine (B, L)

Happy Holi! Known as the Festival of Colours, Holi is one of India's most joyful and exuberant celebrations. Marking the arrival of spring, it symbolises the triumph of good over evil and the renewal of life, love, and



hope. Rooted in Hindu mythology - particularly the legend of Prahlad and Holika — the festival commemorates the victory of devotion and righteousness over darkness. Celebrated with vibrant clouds of coloured powder, music, dancing, and shared मिठाई (sweets), Holi dissolves social boundaries as friends, families, and communities come together in a spirit of unity and laughter. It is a time of forgiveness, fresh beginnings, and collective celebration - when the world, quite literally, is painted in joy.

We'll celebrate the festive at an a venue near Jaipur with lunch included.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> March 2027: Day Ten (B, D)**

This morning, drive just beyond Jaipur to the ancient capital of Amber and discover the magnificent Amber Fort, ascending its hilltop setting by Jeep. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this remarkable fortress is a stunning fusion of Mughal and Rajput architecture. Wander through its grand gateways, cobbled pathways, ornate courtyards, and sweeping ramparts, taking in breathtaking views over the surrounding hills and Maota Lake below.

Returning to the city, explore the resplendent City Palace — an extraordinary complex of elegant palaces, tranquil gardens, and intricate courtyards. Admire beautifully carved doorways and refined decorative details before visiting the palace museum, home to rare manuscripts, royal costumes, armory, carpets, and exquisite miniature paintings. As a special privilege, enjoy access to the residential areas of the palace, where we will stop for a cup of tea (or coffee) in regal surroundings — a memorable and exclusive experience.

Continue on foot to the nearby Jantar Mantar, the 18th-century astronomical observatory built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. One of five such observatories constructed across India, its monumental instruments continue to make remarkably accurate astronomical calculations to this day.

### **24th March 2027 : Day Eleven (B, L, D)**

This morning will be special as we soar above Jaipur's picturesque landscape in a hot air balloon! As you drift gently over forts, palaces, rural villages, and rolling hills, take in a breathtaking panorama of the city often regarded as the crown jewel of Northern India's Golden Triangle. From this serene vantage point, Jaipur's rich heritage and vibrant charm reveal themselves in an entirely new and spectacular way.

After returning to the hotel for breakfast, we will check out and begin our journey to Narlai — a true hidden gem nestled in the arid countryside between Udaipur and Jodhpur. We have intentionally included three nights here to allow time to pause and unwind. After ten days exploring the vibrant cities and cultural treasures of India, Narlai offers a welcome change of pace — an opportunity to slow down, relax, and fully absorb your surroundings. This tranquil interlude provides space to catch your breath and savour a more intimate, rural side of Rajasthan before we continue on to the final chapter of our journey.



## 25th March 2027 : Day Twelve (B, D)

Today unfolds at a gentler pace, with time throughout the day to relax and enjoy the serene surrounds of our beautiful five-star boutique heritage resort.

Join an escorted village walk through Narlai, visiting its main temples and wandering quiet lanes where daily life unfolds much as it has for generations. Meet friendly locals, step inside traditional homes, and gain insight into village customs and the rhythms of life in this timeless corner of Rajasthan.

In the afternoon, set out on a leopard-sighting jeep safari in the nearby Godwar region. Accompanied by expert naturalists and trackers, venture into rugged terrain renowned for its population of elusive leopards. The area is also home to over 130 species of birds, as well as jackals, hyenas, antelope, caracals, sloth bears, and wild boar. As the sun begins to dip, conclude your safari with tea or coffee and homemade snacks served in the heart of the wilderness — a magical moment of stillness amid the wild beauty of Rajasthan.

## 26th March 2027 : Day Thirteen (B, D)

For the active, early risers - today we can scale iconic elephant hill, which offers breath taking vistas of the surrounding countryside and the village. Accompanied by a local Rabari, ascend 750 steps to arrive at a 300-year old statue dedicated to a local chieftain. Or perhaps just have a sleep in!

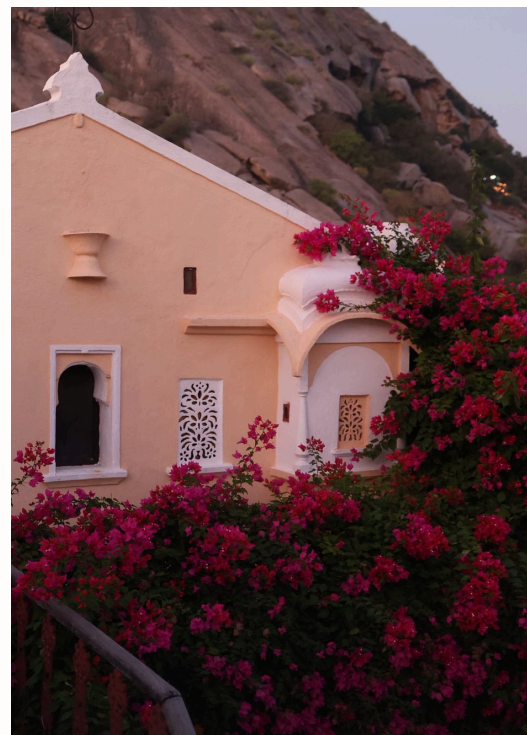
Relax by the pool, indulge in a spa treatment, or simply soak in the tranquil rural setting. Additional activities will be offered by the resort if you wish to be a bit more active today.

This evening we have a special dinner at the Historic Stepwell. Arriving by bullock cart (a charming echo of a bygone era), journey to an 11<sup>th</sup> century stepwell located near the manor. Lit up with hundreds of flickering lamps, the stepwell takes on an ethereal ambiance that transport you to a world of fairytales. Experience the gracious hospitality and attention-to-detail as you savour a carefully curated four-course menu! With live music and the magic play of lights - this is an unforgettable evening.

## 27th March 2027 : Day Fourteen (B, D)

Today we will travel 2 ½ hours to Jopdhur. Rising dramatically from the edge of the Thar Desert, Jodhpur is a city of vivid colour, royal legacy, and timeless desert charm. Known as the “Blue City” for the sea of indigo-washed houses that cluster beneath its mighty fort, Jodhpur offers one of Rajasthan’s most striking and photogenic landscapes.

Once we’ve checked into our hotel, we’ll embark on a city tour - starting with the magnificent Mehrangarh Fort which dominates the skyline.





This is one of the most impressive and best-preserved forts in India. Founded in the 15th century and expanded over the next five centuries, Mehrangarh — meaning “Fort of the Sun” — rises dramatically from a sheer rocky outcrop high above the Blue City. Stretching over 500 yards in length, its formidable walls, up to 70 feet thick and soaring as high as 120 feet in places, stand as a powerful testament to Rajasthan’s warrior heritage.



Within the fort’s massive gates lies a treasure trove of exquisitely adorned palaces, intricately carved lattice windows, expansive courtyards, and beautifully curated galleries showcasing royal artefacts, textiles, armour, and miniature paintings. From its ramparts, enjoy sweeping panoramic views across the indigo-hued old city and the vast desert plains beyond.



A short distance away stands Jaswant Thada, the royal cenotaph built in the 19th century in luminous white marble. This elegant memorial to Maharaja Jaswant Singh II is a refined example of Rajputana architecture, harmoniously blending Hindu and Mughal design elements. Its delicate marble latticework, peaceful gardens, and tranquil lake setting create a striking contrast to the imposing fort above — offering a moment of quiet reflection amid Jodhpur’s regal splendour.

### **28<sup>th</sup> March 2027 : Day Fifteen (B, D)**

This morning we have such a fun experience planned for you - *The Bandhani Art of Jodhpur*. We will take you to meet the artisans who have been involved in the art of tie and dye, called Bandhani, for generations. Bandhani is an ancient art practiced by people mainly of Rajasthan and Gujarat. They practice the Bandhani technique on a daily basis and have been catering to merchants and wholesalers for centuries. You’ll be able to create your own masterpiece to take home you, a little piece of Jodhpur.



Afterwards we will take a walk around the clock tower, and hop in a tuk tuk to reach Sadar Bazaar. This is a city that buzzes with energy — a maze of narrow lanes, spice-scented markets, and vibrant bazaars filled with textiles, handicrafts, and silver jewellery. Spend as much time as you like in the Bazaar before returning to the hotel for a relaxing afternoon.

### **29<sup>th</sup> March 2027 : Day Sixteen (B, D)**

After breakfast we will be transferred to Jodhpur airport for a flight to Varanasi, via Delhi.



With a spiritual intensity that lingers long after you depart, Varanasi is one of the world’s oldest continuously inhabited cities and the sacred heart of Hindu India. Set along the revered River Ganges, this ancient city has drawn pilgrims, seekers, and travellers for millennia, all coming to witness the profound rituals that unfold daily along its ghats.

Beyond its spiritual significance, Varanasi is also celebrated for its masterful craftsmanship. The city is famed for its exquisitely woven

Banarasi silk sarees, prized for their intricate brocade work, fine silk, and delicate gold and silver thread. These textiles, still crafted on traditional handlooms, are an enduring symbol of India's artistic heritage.

As dusk settles over Varanasi, step aboard a private boat and drift gently along the sacred River Ganges to witness one of India's most captivating spiritual rituals — the evening Ganga Aarti. Performed nightly by priests in flowing robes, this devotional ceremony is an offering of light and gratitude to Mother Ganga, seeking her blessings and expressing reverence for the life-giving river.

Your boat will pause at an ideal vantage point on the water, allowing for uninterrupted views of the ceremony as it unfolds along the ghats. Against a backdrop of temple bells, rhythmic chanting, and the fragrance of incense, synchronized movements of flaming brass lamps illuminate the twilight sky. The reflections of firelight dancing upon the river create an atmosphere that is both intimate and awe-inspiring.

### **30<sup>th</sup> March 2027 : Day Seventeen (B, D)**

At sunrise, the banks of the Ganges awaken in a beautiful ritual of light, sound, and devotion. As the first rays of the sun touch the water, devotees gather along the ghats to chant prayers, perform sacred rituals, and bathe in the holy river, offering gratitude to the rising sun.

Cruise gently along the River Ganga by boat to witness this serene yet deeply moving spectacle unfold before you. From the water, observe scenes of daily life interwoven with ancient tradition — pilgrims immersed in prayer, priests conducting ceremonies, locals taking their morning dip, and vendors quietly preparing for the day ahead. It is a moment of remarkable tranquility and authenticity, revealing the spiritual soul of Varanasi at its most evocative.

After breakfast at the hotel, it's time to explore the *Northern Bazaars and Hidden Alleyways of Varanasi*. We will venture beyond the well-trodden paths and lose ourselves in the atmospheric bazaars and winding gallis of Varanasi's northern old city — an area rarely explored by visitors. Here, a labyrinth of narrow lanes leads deep into the sacred heart of Banaras, revealing some of the city's oldest surviving structures and most authentic neighbourhoods.

As we meander through these intimate alleyways, you'll glimpse daily life unfolding much as it has for generations — shopkeepers tending tiny storefronts, priests attending hidden shrines, and families whose roots on these very streets stretch back decades. The experience is immersive and deeply human, offering insight into a side of Varanasi that few travellers encounter. Eventually, the maze opens toward a quieter stretch of the riverside, steeped in layered history. It is said that the great mystic poet Kabir once composed his verses here, and nearby stands a powerful symbol of India's complex past — the site of an ancient Krishna temple, later replaced by a mosque rising above it. With its countless twists and turns, this bazaar is as disorienting as it is fascinating



This afternoon, travel to Sarnath, one of the four principal pilgrimage sites of Buddhism and a place of profound historical and spiritual significance. It was here, in the Deer Park, that Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment — setting in motion the spread of Buddhist philosophy across the world.

In the 3rd century BCE, the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka, a devoted patron of Buddhism, commissioned magnificent stupas, monasteries, and the famed Ashokan pillar to honour this sacred site. Over time, and particularly following the decline of Buddhism in India and subsequent invasions, Sarnath fell into obscurity by the 12th century. It was rediscovered in the early 19th century by British archaeologists, revealing a remarkable archaeological treasure.

Today, Sarnath once again draws pilgrims and visitors from around the globe. Amid peaceful gardens and ancient ruins, the towering Dhamek Stupa stands as a powerful symbol of the Buddha's teachings, while nearby monasteries built by various Buddhist nations reflect the site's enduring international reverence. Quiet, contemplative, and deeply moving, Sarnath offers a meaningful complement to the spiritual intensity of Varanasi.

Returning to the hotel this evening, we gather for a special farewell group dinner — a fitting celebration to mark the final night of our extraordinary journey through India.

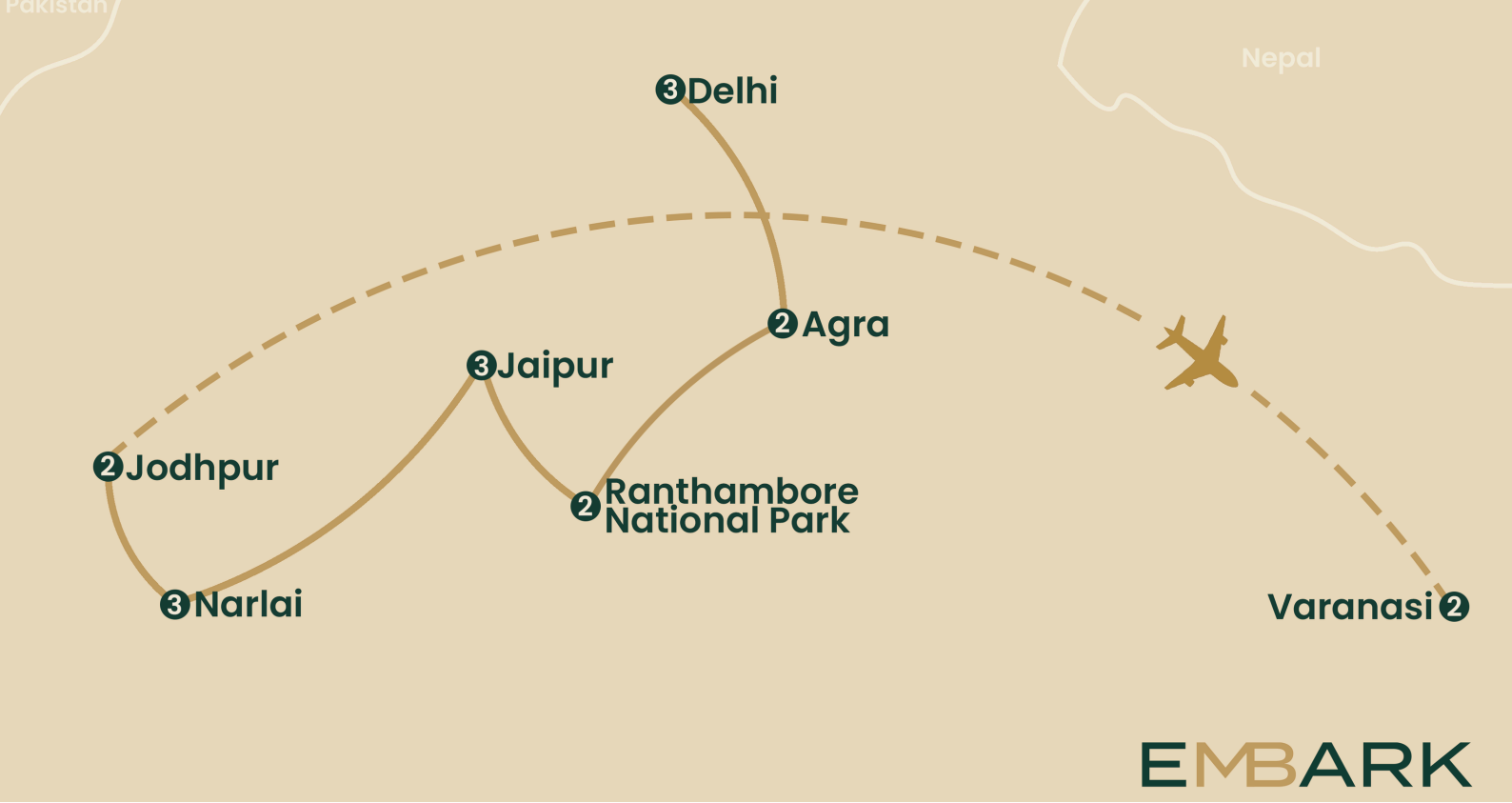
A final toast together, we'll reflect on the vibrant colours of Holi, sunrise at the Taj Mahal, leopard safaris in Rajasthan, serene moments on the Ganges, and the countless spontaneous encounters that have made this adventure so memorable. There will be laughter over shared stories, favourite moments revisited, and perhaps a little disbelief at just how much we have experienced in two remarkable weeks.

It is a time to celebrate new friendships formed, perspectives broadened, and the rich tapestry of sights, sounds, flavours, and emotions that India has gifted us. As our journey comes to a close, we honour not just the places we've visited, but the shared experience that has brought them to life

### **31st March 2027 : Day Eighteen (B)**

Today we will fly to Delhi and officially end the tour. Here we can arrange connecting flights home to Australia or perhaps you want to extend your trip in India to Mumbai or the South.





## Your 2017 Embark Tour includes

### INCLUDES

- Arrival Transfer in Delhi
- 17 nights minimum 4star+ accommodation
- TWO luxury palace stays - Ajit Bhwan in Jodhpur and Rawla Narlai
- Sightseeing and transport as per the itinerary - all entrance fees included
- Meals: Breakfast (B), Lunch (L) and Dinner (D) where indicated in the above itinerary
- Small Group of only 20 (plus guides and Embark Travel representatives)
- Embark Travel tour manager, travelling with you
- Local sightseeing experts throughout
- Hot Air Ballooning in Jaipur
- Pre-tour get together
- All tipping throughout
- Departure Pack (luggage tags, luggage straps, ticket wallet etc)
- Indian Tourist Visas

### PACKAGE COST: \$9,700 per person twin/double share

Solo Supplement - \$2500 (limited solo rooms available)

First deposit is \$2,000 per person (due within 7 days of booking)

Balance due 4 months prior to departure. All payments are non-refundable unless otherwise specified.

Airfares from Sydney will be offered 10 months prior to departure.

Please note that twin share option is only offered when you are booking with the person you are sharing with. If you are a solo traveller, the solo supplement must be paid. Please request full terms and conditions of our group tours for further details.



**ARE YOU READY TO EMBARK?**

TO SECURE YOUR PLACE, CALL  
0402335919

OR EMAIL  
[MICHELLE@EMBARK-TRAVEL.COM.AU](mailto:MICHELLE@EMBARK-TRAVEL.COM.AU)

