

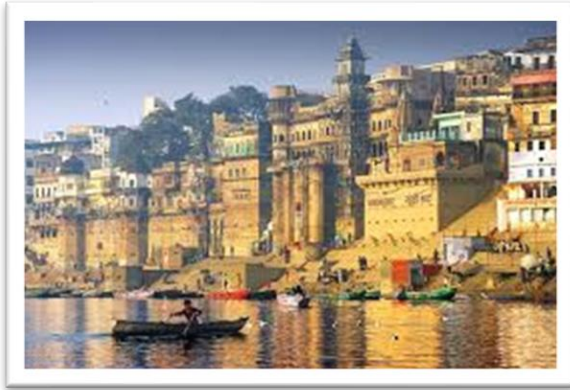


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## ESSENTIAL INDIA WALKING & DISCOVERY TOUR



### **13 nights**

*\*Delhi (1 night) Bharatpur / Agra (2 nights) – Jaipur (1 night) – Jojawar (2 nights) – Udaipur (2 nights) – Madurai (1 night) – Periyar (2 nights) – Backwater House Boat (1 night) – Kochi (1 night)*

*\*Additional pre-tour night in Delhi recommended*

**NAMASTE!** India has captured the imagination of travellers dating back to the spice trade and perhaps even prior to this. As a large and populous land mass in Eastern Asia with unshakable roots in a complex, yet peaceful religious system, India offers a virtual feast for adventurers of all disciplines and interests.

Adventurebug has travelled extensively in India and claims it to be the ultimate compliment to the discerned traveller's quiver. India is an authentic experience for the mind, body and soul. Blissful, tantalizing, colourful, and introspective on one hand yet overwhelming and potentially enduring at times on the other. It is the traveller's finest hour...



Striking the right balance for travel in India is a task and this customized program seeks to bring out the country's best. We have selected Delhi, Agra & Rajasthan - the heart of India to experience the finest blend of monuments, rural areas, cultural attractions, gastronomical delights and a secure infrastructure that lends itself to the comforts we are accustomed to on our international tour programs. In the south, we'll visit Kerala state in the tropics – enjoying the verdant Periyar National Park before spending a night on a houseboat in the Allepy backwaters.

Bright turbans, flowing skirts, twirled moustaches, graceful language, rustic forts, lakes and hillsides, history and culture embedded in every grain of its yellow sand. We find amazing sunsets and sunrises, tales of chivalry and courage and a welcoming culture that has so much to teach us. Strolling through colourful temples, jungle walks and meeting tribal communities all add to our fascinating journey of India.

Whether on foot or from our air-conditioned private coach, a historic train journey, rickshaw, evening boat tour and an internal flight transfer, we experience India using all mediums of transport! Add Intriguing visits to forts, palaces and monuments and find a stark contrast to our days in rural villages where we may visit a local school and witness life of a tribal community. This is truly a diverse program offering tremendous insight to the discerned traveller. We welcome you to join us on this very special journey!



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**THEME & COMFORT LEVEL:** *Discovery tour with easy daily walks and hikes and visits to both urban monuments and rural cultural areas. Transport in private air con bus with small excursions by boat (including house boat), train, 4x4 and one internal flight. Hotels are 3 and 4 star (Indian Tourist Class) and some unique heritage class hotels. Meals are superb and very well prepared to the highest levels of hygiene. Food is not spicy (unless requested!), and many vegetarian options are available throughout the tour.*

**INTENSITY:** *Gentle to Moderate – easy hiking and altitude gain is modest. Longest transfer day is 5 hours in bus (average is 2.5 hours). Altitude wise, the entire tour does not exceed more than 4000 feet above sea level – while most of our experiences are just above sea level. Therefore, no altitude preparation or medications are necessary. The areas of our visits require some travel vaccines and in the very south, some precautions with mosquitos.*

## ITINERARY

### Day 1 - Delhi (D)

Welcome to India! On your arrival at Delhi airport (normally early morning), you will be met by our tour driver for transfer to the hotel. Overnight Hotel Suryaa 5 stars. <http://www.thesuryaa.com/Index>. The afternoon can be spent strolling near the hotel and relaxing – alternatively, with our leader Kapil (KP), we can offer an additional tour of Delhi (transport and entrance fees not included in price). This evening will be an orientation talk followed by our first group dinner. Lunch and Dinner included today. \*Please note, for early arrivals (recommended), additional hotel bookings can be arranged.



### Day 2 - Delhi - Bharatpur

The capital of India, Delhi blends a historic past with a vibrant present. The Imperial city, planned for the British by Lutyens, is set amidst parks and shaded avenues. Legend has it that Delhi, then called Indraprastha, was originally founded around 1200 B.C. by the Pandavas.. Present day Delhi is built around the ruins of seven ancient cities. Amongst which Shahjehanabad or “Mughal Delhi”, still retains the charm of the famous Mughal era.

After breakfast, we take a panoramic tour of old Delhi in our private coach and visit the UNESCO Heritage Site Qutub Minor before we depart the city for Bharatpur. Our private bus journey is approximately 4 hours. Bharatpur is located at the entrance to the Keoladio National Park – a wonderful nature reserve in central Rajasthan. Time permitting, we'll take a hike in the region of our hotel and village area upon arrival – perhaps before sunset, to stretch our legs after the journey. Our next two nights are at the Laxmi Niwas Palace Hotel <http://www.laxmivilas.com/> Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.



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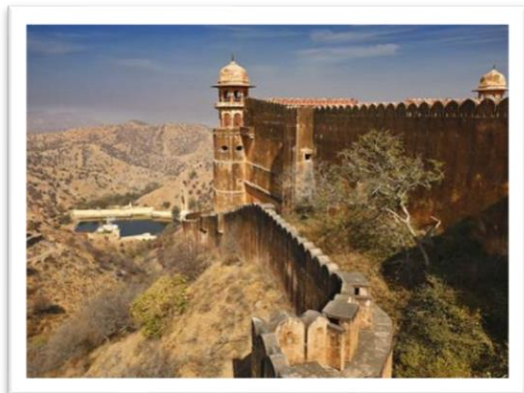
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## Day 3 - Bharatpur - Agra

Today we transfer 1 hour 15 minutes to the city of Agra where we visit the famous monument of love itself, the Taj Mahal - a perfect example of symmetry. Built by Emperor Shahjehan in 1631 for his wife Mumtaz, it is an unforgettable structure. It is also the place where both Shahjehan and Mumtaz are buried in peace and where their immortal love story is witnessed by thousands of people daily. On route we also visit the mystical Fatehpur Sikri, the famous Mughal monument

built by Emperor Akbar in the 16th century and known to be one of the most beautiful cities of the era. Afternoon return to Bharatpur and an easy guided 2 hour hike in Keoladio National Park for bird spotting and other possible fauna. The route is completely flat and we have optional bicycle rickshaws for the return portion. Overnight same hotel. Breakfast and dinner included.



## Day 4 - Bharatpur - Jaipur

After breakfast our private bus takes us 3.5 hours to Jaipur – Rajasthan State's colourful and majestic capital city. The Heritage Pink City has been the capital of erstwhile Jaipur since its inception in 1727 AD. It got the name from its founder Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II - who was not only a great ruler, but also a renowned mathematician and astrologer. His various talents are clearly exhibited around the city. Today Jaipur is not only significant for its various forts and palaces but is also a trading center for jewellery, gems and precious stones, block and tie & die printed textiles, carpets, blue

pottery etc. On route to Jaipur we'll visit the famous Abhaneri Step Well (historic water well) and take lunch. This afternoon we visit and hike up to Jaipur's imposing Amber Fort. The fort is built with white marble and red sandstone and looks even more attractive because of the Maota Lake in the foreground. The attractions at the fort include the famous Hall of Mirrors and the Hall of Victory. The Diwan-e-Khas and the fore square of the fort are also beautiful. Time permitting, we can walk further into the hills around the Amber Palace. Expect to be on our feet in hilly terrain exploring this fort region for some 3 hours. This evening we'll enjoy a Rajasthan cultural folk dance! Overnight at the central based Park Prime Hotel (1 night) <http://www.parkprime.net/aboutus.html> Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

## Day 5 - Jaipur – Jojawar

This morning we drive to Jojawar (about 5 hours with stops on route). Jojawar is set amidst the beautiful surroundings of the Aravali hills. Our visit to Jojawar offers an authentic rural experience to regions of India that have little in the way of 'monuments or palaces' but offer a more personal insight into 'real' life of Indian tribal communities. Rawla Jojawar is an aristocratic family house now converted into a beautiful home stay, where the charm is meeting the family of the owners and the various villagers who reside there. Here we also visit the neighbouring villages of tribal



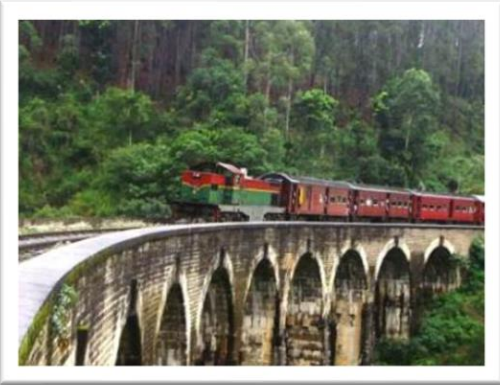


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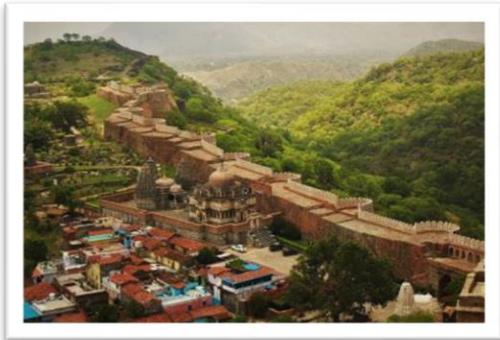
communities living in the Aravali ranges and take a countryside tour with more opportunities for hiking in this authentic Rajasthan landscape. Upon arrival we'll have a guided village walk to explore the local area – 1 to 2 hours approximately / easy level and no altitude gain. Overnight at Heritage Hotel Rawla Jojawar (2 nights) <http://www.jojawar.com/index.htm> Breakfast and dinner included.



## Day 6 - **Jojawar**

This morning we take a jeep ride in the countryside to visit hamlets of Rabari tribes where we do some exploring on foot. We also take a scenic tour (45 min) on a local train that passes through this unique hilly countryside where monkeys greet us on route! Today's visits offer us opportunities of close interaction with Rabaris, Bhils and Gadulia Luhar tribes of India. The Rabaris are a nomadic tribe which take their cattle to various parts of the country during summers. The Bhils are hunters and a martial tribe. The Gadulias are nomadic ironsmiths. Today expect to walk through the rural villages – covering perhaps

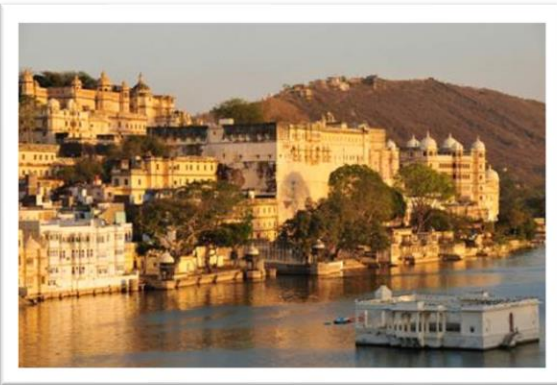
3 miles today in total. Overnight at same accommodation. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included.



## Day 7 - **Jojawar - Udaipur**

This morning we transfer to the regal lakeside city Udaipur, the Venice of India. Famous for its elegant waterfront palaces, Udaipur captures all the imagination of classical India. From Elephants strolling side streets to verdant hillsides and breathtaking sunsets, this is one of Rajasthan's finest destinations. On route we stop at the magnificent Kumbhalgarh Fort where we'll have lunch and a 3-4 hour hike through the hillside made famous by the 2<sup>nd</sup> longest wall on earth. Arriving late afternoon to Udaipur, we can relax in our Hotel or cool off in the

pool. Hotel Mahenda Prakash (2 nights) <http://www.hotelmahendraprakash.com/index.htm>.  
Breakfast and dinner included.



## Day 8 - **Udaipur**

Our visits today are focused on Udaipur's cultural highlights and its unique natural environs. We start the day with a 2 hour hike from our hotel to the lakeview temples offering us 360 degree views of Udaipur! (500 foot gain). Later we take a highlights tour of Udaipur's imposing City Palace. The City Palace which towers over Pichola Lake was founded by Udai Singh, the founder of the city, and was added to by every ruler who ruled Udaipur. Thus, today it is a truly amalgamated architecture. This evening we'll have a boat

tour on the lake of Udaipur offering another perspective of this special region and a chance to explore the culture that relies on the lake. Accommodation in same hotel. Breakfast and dinner included.



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## Day 9 - Udaipur – Madurai (Tamil Nadu State)

Around midday, we fly to the southern state of Tamil Nadu – India's tropical destination and the historic city of Madurai. Normally arrival time to the hotel is 17:30. Our bags will be checked through. Normally we have a 15 kg check bag limit (33 pounds) and 7 kg (15 pounds) carry on (\*additional baggage weight would be paid directly by participant). (\*note – flights subject to airline schedule)

Madurai is an Ancient Hindu Capital and is adorned with temples and colourful pilgrims from all over India. Today we begin a complete circuit of south central India and the scenery is spectacular! Today is largely a travel day from central to south India however we can make a morning hike of up to 2 hours through Udaipur's natural areas before journeying on. Accommodation (1 night) Hotel Royal Court <https://www.royalcourtindia.com/> in Madurai city. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included.



## Day 10 - Madurai: Periyar National Park

This morning we'll visit on foot Madurai's famous Meenakshi Amman Temple, one of the Hindu world's most important pilgrim sites. Following this we travel by road to Periyar National Park (4 hours). India is blessed with many Nature Reserves and in the southern tropics, the Periyar National Park is one of the finest. Known for its elephants, tigers, macaques, jaguars, deer,

bison and wonderful tropical vegetation - our visits here include hiking, a panoramic boat ride and tours of a spice plantation and a tea estate. Today's bus journey takes us through the Cardamom Hills to the Periyar hillside and Thekady village. Located at a refreshing 4000 feet above the tropics of Kerala, Thekady and the National Park are wonderful places to visit. This afternoon we'll hike around the spice gardens, tea plantations and Thekady village and countryside upon arrival. Expect to be hiking for up to 3 hours today including visiting the temple. Hotel Ambadi (2 nights) <http://www.hotelambadi.com/> Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.





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## Day 11 - Periyar National Park

Today we divide our day between a sunrise panoramic boat safari around the lake for wildlife spotting followed by a late afternoon hike in the Periyar National Forest to spot flora and fauna with designated rangers. We have many opportunities to get up close to nature in this wonderfully protected reserve. Today will also be time to explore the local souvenir and craft markets near our hotel in

Thekady village. Our hiking time is approximately 3 hours today – mostly in the dry jungle areas of Periyar and through the village of Thekady itself. Same hotel as last night. Breakfast and dinner included.



## Day 12 - Thekady – Alleppy (House Boats)

Departing Thekady's highlands, we transfer through hilly tea plantations where we'll stop to hike a short distance in the manicured groves - followed by a 4 hour drive to Alleppy in Kochi's tropical backwaters. Here we board a houseboat that offers furnished bedrooms with attached bathrooms, an in-house chef, and a lounge area in which to relax and enjoy the sights on the shore. We start our journey through scenic backwaters, passing one of the few areas in the world where

farming is done below sea level. The houseboat will cruise through the Chambakulam area by mid-afternoon and anchor to explore the boat yard, which displays the traditional long snake boats used in races and perhaps visit St. Mary's Church - established by St. Thomas in 1721. In the evening, the boat will pass through picturesque stretches of the backwaters of Alleppey where we will hike the rice terraces to stretch our legs and meet community members of this unique destination. A highlight of today is the evening happy hour when we can enjoy sunset from our boat lounge under the tones of Indian Gin and Tonic! Stay overnight on boat. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included.

## Day 13 - Alleppy - Kochi

After a morning sunrise hike along the water courses, we leave our house boats and depart for a 1.5 hour bus to Kochi, the thriving capital of Kerala State. Kochi is a destination for globe-trotters and explorers. Blessed by one of the finest natural harbours in the world, it has been eulogised as the Queen of the Arabian Sea. In and around Kochi are several cities of monumental value, but step into Fort Kochi, and you are in a totally different world. The Chinese fishing nets, the Jewish Synagogue, the Dutch Palace, the Portuguese and British Architecture - all finely blend with the





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rich heritage of the land, intricately woven folklore and fact. We'll explore some of this delightful town on foot for a few hours this afternoon and (Tuk Tuk) rickshaws if necessary. In the evening we witness the oldest living opera of the world – The Kathakali Dance Drama which owes its transnational fame to a nearly 1300 year old classical dance form which combines facets of ballet, opera, masque and the pantomime. It is said to have evolved from other performing arts like Kootiyattam, Krishnanattam and Kalarippayattu. Kathakali explicates ideas and stories from the Indian epics and Puranas.

Time permitting, we can drive to Fort Kochi beach area to visit St. Francis Church originally dedicated to Santo Antonio, the patron saint of Portugal. Vasco da Gama died on the site in 1524 and was originally buried in the cemetery. Our final visit can be to huge Chinese fishing nets lining the entrance to the harbour mouth. Chinese traders are believed to have originally introduced them in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century although. Grand Hotel Cochin <https://www.grandhotelkerala.com/> Breakfast and our farewell dinner included.

## Day 14 - Kochi/Cochin (Departure Day)

Today, pending your final flight time we may explore more of Kochi (perhaps what we didn't get done yesterday), before being transferred to Kochi's (Cochin) International Air terminal for departure. Expect transfer time of approximately 1 hour to reach the airport. Breakfast only included today.

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## TOUR INCLUSIONS

- 13 nights accommodation (twin share) **all** rooms have internal ensuite facilities
- All meals as per itinerary (all breakfasts and dinners / limited lunches)
- All land transport in private A.C. microbus with driver / including baggage transfers to / from hotels.
- Private airport-hotel transfers at beginning and end of tour.
- Additional Transfers built into tour include a train ride, scenic boat tour, houseboat experience and one internal flight (Udaipur to Madurai with changeover in Chennai).
- Guiding and Tour management services team.
- Entrance Fees and / or guided visits as per itinerary
- All Tips included - covering all meals, baggage handlers, hotel services, guides, general assistance, drivers, restroom stops, etc.
- Taxes and Administration fees

## NOT INCLUDED

- Air transport (International to and from India)
- Internal Flight baggage allowance (normally) restricted to 1 PIECE checked 33 pounds / 15 kg on internal flight (additional weight to be paid individually to airline at check in) carry on is 15 pounds / 7 kg
- Indian Visa (see note below)
- Private insurance (emergency, evacuation and / or cancellation)
- Medical expenses and / or services required on tour
- Additional services such as telephone, laundry, private transfers, etc.
- Lunches not covered in the itinerary (all dinners are provided)
- Beverages at meals and personal drink such as alcohol, mineral water, soft drinks.
- Optional housekeeping tips



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## INDIA – The Facts

India has more than a billion people yet it does not feel over-crowded due to its immense size. It is desperately poor yet emerging as an economic powerhouse in some areas. However, wealth like in all capitalistic societies is held by less than 2% of the entire population. It is largely a rural – agricultural inhabited society with a complicated religious and political structure however the value system of society is constant with most developing countries worldwide – that is that poverty is undeniable and that family and community are at the centre of importance. Oh, and cricket is THE SPORT!

### What to Expect?

India is a voyage of inner and outer travel that is best managed by those with a healthy and hearty **attitude**. This country will test your mental, physical and emotional capacities yet, with the right perspective, enhance your spiritual connection to what is really important.

### Here are a few 'top of list' expectations:

*Pollution in city areas; cows everywhere! Men in business suits and women in saris; poverty and extreme wealth; bicycles; motorbikes and people walking everywhere; spicy food and bland food; friendly welcomes; good beer but poor quality wine; staring and personal questions about your wealth, family, your interests; smells of sewage and waste; beautiful landscapes; deserts and woodlands; mountains and lakes; crippled people and animals; children everywhere; temples; holy men with long white beards; beggars; arts and crafts; busy markets; haggling! Normal sit down toilets... cozy hotels; India has it all...*

### The Weather?

India's Southern Peninsular region varies however it is the warm, tropical zone of the country and our journey is in the dry season, not the monsoon. Average temperatures in the high 70's with winter highs reaching 90's can be expected. Generally a dry time of the year with low risk of tropical storms.

### What's the food like?

Generally Indian food, eaten by billions of people is spicy and varied. Southern India, boasting the strongest Hindu faith is characteristically vegetarian. Curry is only one of hundreds of spices utilized but in the west we naively call everything curry! Traditionally many Indians are vegetarians and staple food tends to be tasty bread (roti), lentils (dhal) and vegetables. However, chicken, goat, lamb and fish are common, even in our travels in the south. Beef however is forbidden (cows are sacred), so forget about steak! Despite the huge difference between the western diet and India, our tour groups do tend to enjoy the culinary delights India has to offer and NO, the food is not always spicy

### What to Bring and What to Wear?

As always travel light, bringing easy to wash travel wear and comfy walking shoes (not trekking boots). Light layers, a sun hat and some relaxing evening wear for our cosy hotels. A medium size rolling suitcase is fine and a light day pack to carry your water bottle, camera and guidebook or journal. Bring prescription medicines, toiletries, extra glasses, hand wash and camera batteries.

### Weather – What to Expect?

This trip starts in the north-central capital New Delhi and ends in Kochi – the very south of India. Therefore expect a wide gap in temperature. New Delhi in late January will be 65-75f in the day and 50f at night. It's often foggy and cooler feeling at times but never really wet – India is an arid nation. In Rajasthan (central part of trip), expect highs of 70-80f and lows of 50-60f and also dry conditions. In the southern state of Kerala it is tropical and hot with humidity. Day highs are 90f plus and lows 75f. Light, sporadic showers can be the norm. Do try to pack light however – despite these varying temperatures. It's never really that cold or wet in India!



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## Money and Expenses in India?

The Rupee is the currency and the exchange is approximately 1\$US = 70 INR (subject to variation) Costs for general goods is very cheap still – bottle of water is about 35 cents US in the market and up to a dollar in restaurants. Beer and soft drinks about 20% more. Shoppers tend to buy crafts, gifts and clothing in India at a very good rate.

## Communications?

All hotels have internet and wifi connection. Some rooms will have better connections than others and there's always a public area (ie. Lobby or bar), that has the strongest signal. Cell phones will work in India with no problem depending on your contract with you server from home.

## Electric Plugs?

India uses **230 Volts**, 50 Hz alternating current as the power source. Plugs and sockets have either grounded / earthed 3 Pin connections (Type D) or ungrounded 2 pin connections (Type C). The two pin plug is also called the Europlug. It has two round 4 mm (0.157 in) pins.



## HEALTH Concerns?

The region of India we visit and the time of year (winter) is one of the healthiest times to travel. Outside of rare cases of 'Delhi Belly' - from adjusting to the food, most travellers to India find few irritations or health problems. Common sense should be practiced however such as regular hand washing before meals; utilizing mineral water; avoiding foods too spicy at first and generally taking care of yourself (mediate alcohol consumption and get plenty of rest).

For full and updated traveller's health information on India, please visit the (WHO) World Health Organization website (<http://www.who.int/countries/ind/en/>)

Malaria is considered a risk in the south so it's advisable to consult professional advice. Updated vaccinations for travel to the developing world is strongly recommended.

## SECURITY Issues?

India is deeply impoverished and despite its very spiritual nature, we as western visitors carry more materialism and wealth on one vacation than they have in a lifetime. Opportunists such as pick pockets and petty thieves exist. Outright muggings and violent attacks are rare. All our hotels and destinations are secure and like anywhere, care should always be practiced in the evening and in certain districts.

The risk of terrorism is, like anywhere in the world, unpredictable. Mumbai suffered a terrible attack 5 years ago and there is continual conflict in the far north (Kashmir) and some boarder regions with Pakistan. Our itinerary avoids these conflict zones and is very much in the tourist quarters of the country, particularly Rajasthan State and the south - statistically peaceful regions.

## PASSPORT and INDIAN VISA

A Visa is required for all USA, European and Canadian / Commonwealth Passport holders. Be absolutely certain that your passport is valid for travel to / from India and that you have the appropriate VISA. Fortunately, the Government of India now has a convenient and time/cost effective ON LINE Visa Application for tourists. Please refer to this State of India site only (and not the many commercial visa sites)! <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>



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## **ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE FROM INDIA – IMPORTANT!**

Please note. This trip begins in New Deli (DEL), and finishes in Kochi (COK). Be sure to book your flights appropriately as there is no return transfer to New Delhi at end of tour.

## **Responsible Travel**

Adventurebug's *Responsible Travel Ethos* is at the heart of everything we do, from getting the basics right like respecting local cultures, customs and the natural environment, to initiating projects that make positive contributions to communities - to our staff's volunteer efforts on a wide range of events and projects.