

GRAND TOUR OF NORTH INDIA



TRIP OVERVIEW

Delve into the spiritual fabric of this intoxicating country on our 17 day itinerary which showcases the complex heart of North India, from intriguing Hindu rituals upon the Ganges, to the Sikh's golden symbol of brotherhood in Amritsar and the colonial inspired Christ Church which crowns Shimla's snow-capped Himalayan peaks. Along the way, sample wild culinary delights, marvel at a chaotic tapestry of lost empires and discover one of the New Seven Wonders of the World – The Taj Mahal

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to North India. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as flight details, visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner,

DAY 1: UK to Delhi

Depart London on your scheduled, overnight flight to Delhi.

DAY 2: Delhi L/D

On arrival into India's capital, you will be met by a local guide and transferred to your hotel. In the evening, experience flavoursome local dishes at your welcome meal.

DAY 3: Delhi B/L/D

Following breakfast, a full day city tour will commence and includes a visit to the Red Fort, where an imposing sandstone exterior conceals dramatic marble monuments of the Mughal Empire's past splendour. Travel through narrow streets and along naan scented markets on a rickshaw before stumbling upon the UNESCO recognised Humayun's Tomb, a captivating mausoleum that seemingly floats above landscaped gardens. Admire the transition en route from Old Delhi's historic charms to the intricate colonial town planning of New Delhi; view the minimalistic Mahatma Gandhi Memorial adorned in floral tributes before wandering through the Qutab Minar complex, a city awash with ancient ruins sculpted by the country's finest craftsmen.

DAY 4: Delhi to Varanasi B/L/D

This morning fly from Delhi to the sacred 'City of Life' – Varanasi. Check in to your hotel for the next three nights, before an afternoon at leisure exploring one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities, regarded as one of Hinduism's seven holy cities. Your evening tour takes you to a ghat – steps that lead to the Ganges – to witness the humbling Ganga Aarti Ceremony, a spellbinding display of candles afloat along the river.

DAY 5: Varanasi B/L/D

Begin today with a sunrise boat trip along the Ganges for a unique perspective of this spiritual watercourse and its vivid embankment of pastel edifices pierced by temple stupas. Spend the rest of your morning on a walking tour through this ancient city to observe other ghats, each with distinct floral decoration and uses including the intriguing 'burning ghats' used for funeral processions. Continue your exploration of Varanasi at the Vishwanath Temple, a monument dedicated to Lord Shiva and famed for an illustrious gold-coated dome. Return to your hotel for lunch and spend your afternoon at leisure.

DAY 6: Varanasi B/L/D

Enjoy a half-day tour of Sarnath, a sacred site on which the Buddha gave his first sermon after finding enlightenment in 530BC. Your tour includes visits to ancient relics that document the area's spiritual significance including the Monastery Ruins, a tranquil park interrupted by a towering stupa engraved with delicate geometric carvings. Return for your final evening in Varanasi.

DAY 7: Varanasi to Agra B/L/D

After breakfast, fly back to Delhi and drive across rolling hillsides cloaked in

deciduous flora to the city of Agra, where a network of rickshaws, jalebis vendors filling the air with sweet aromas and ancient Mandir temples alluding to the Mughal Empire's past grandeur await.

DAY 8: Agra B/L/D

Begin today at a tour highlight and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, the Taj Mahal. This iconic ivory-white mausoleum was completed in 1640 for Emperor Shah Jahan's beloved third wife. Wander along ornamental gardens to witness the breath-taking spectacle of its minarets and distinctive bronze dome reflecting the illumination of daybreak. After lunch visit the UNESCO recognised Agra Fort, an enormous sandstone city of pavilions, palaces and splendid courtyards behind 20 metre-high walls.

DAY 9: Agra - Jaipur B/L/D

This morning drive to the capital of Rajasthan, Jaipur. En route stop at Fatehpur Sikri, an ancient city famed for its lavish structures including Rumi Sultana, an elegant palace decorated with intricate animal carvings throughout. Your evening is at leisure to explore a colourful web of chaotic roadways disturbed by meandering camels, bazaars dressed in vibrant textiles and the constant whirl of cycle rickshaws around Rajasthan's largest city.

DAY 10: Jaipur B/L/D

A full day tour of Jaipur begins at the Amber Fort, a former ancient capital centred on a distinctive pink-yellow marbled royal palace. You can travel to the fort by either jeep or elephant, allowing you to observe harems of the Maharajah, complex mosaic designs and snake charmers. Continue to the UNESCO recognised Jantar Mantar, a fascinating collection of archaic astronomical instruments including the world's largest stone sundial. Later this morning visit the distinct Hawa Mahal, a pink honeycomb landmark, constructed to provide ladies of the royal household an observatory for city life.

DAY 11: Jaipur to Shimla B/L/D

Depart Jaipur on your flight to Chandigarh, from here drive along a winding track around rugged mountains and through luscious pine forests to the hill station of Shimla - the former summer capital of British India whose snow-dusted mountain position offers incredible views of the Himalayan mountains.

DAY 12: Shimla B/L/D

Depart Shimla this morning for a day in the neighbouring hill station of Kufri. Nestled at the Himalayan foothills, this charming town is surrounded by a picturesque forest reserve under the imposing gaze of Mahsu Peak. Having admired the wild beauty of Kufri, tour the magnificent Rashtrapati Niwas, a former home to the British Viceroy. Its opulent exterior invites visitors to explore a maze of corridors, opening into grand wood-panelled rooms.

DAY 13: Shimla B/L/D

Today is free for you to unwind or immerse yourself in Shimla's spiritual landmarks including Christ Church, which displays exquisite stained glass windows and moving Raj-era memorials.

DAY 14: Shimla to Chandigarh B/L/D

This morning catch the UNESCO recognised Toy Train to Dharampur Station, built by colonial forces, it offers dramatic views along its winding course through untouched forests and across immense gorges. Arrive in the city of Chandigarh for an evening at leisure.

DAY 15: Chandigarh to Amritsar B/L/D

Following breakfast, take the train to the largest city in the Punjab state, Amritsar. Your afternoon will be at leisure to explore the Sikhs' holy city at your own pace.

DAY 16: Amritsar B/L/D

Enjoy a half-day city tour of Amritsar with a visit to the Golden Temple. Revered amongst Sikhs, this spectacular golden tank blends Islamic and Hindu architecture, surrounded by the Pool of Nectar. The ancient monument also contains a mesmerising display of floral motifs carved into marble alongside shimmering gold panels. After lunch enjoy an afternoon to explore at your own pace, alternatively undertake an optional excursion (at a fee) to the Indian-Pakistan border and witness the fascinating flag-lowering ceremony, a daily ritual of each side's soldiers competing to out-march, out-salute and out-shout one another.

DAY 17: Amritsar to UK or extension B

After breakfast transfer to the airport in Amritsar and fly via Delhi back to the UK, or continue on to your chosen extension.



ACCOMMODATION & ARRIVAL DETAILS

Hotel information

Delhi (2 nights): 5★ The Park Hotel
15 Parliament Street, Connaught Place,
New Delhi 110 001, India
Contact number: 0091 (0)11 2374 3000

Varanasi (3 nights): 5★ Radisson Hotel
The Mall Cantonment, Mall Rd, Varanasi,
Uttar Pradesh 221002, India
Contact number: 0091 542 250 1515

Agra (2 nights): 4★ Mansingh Palace
Fatehabad Rd, Tajganj, Agra,
Uttar Pradesh 282001, India
Contact number: 0091 562 233 1771

Jaipur (2 nights): 4★ Hotel Mansingh
Sansar Chandra Road, Jaipur,
Rajasthan 302001, India
Contact number: 0091 141 237 8771

Shimla (3 nights): 4★ Radisson Hotel
Goodwood Estate, Lower Bharari Road, Shimla,
Himachal Pradesh 171001, India
Contact number: 0091 177 265 9012

Chandigarh (1 night): 4★ Park Plaza
Zirakpur, Chandigarh-Delhi Highway,
Zirakpur, Chandigarh, 14060, India
Contact number: 0091 1762 665666

Amritsar (2 nights): 4★ Best Western Merrion
District Shopping Complex, B-Block, Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar,
Punjab 143001, India
Contact number: 0091 183 506 1111

Accommodation

All accommodation is 4★ or 5★ and features an en-suite bathroom, heating, air-conditioning, satellite TV, safety deposit box and tea and coffee making facilities. Mercury Holidays has visited and inspected all of the hotels to ensure that they meet the high standards of service which we require for our clients. The hotels listed are a guide only and if the hotels detailed are not available alternatives will be used of a similar standard.

Final confirmation of your hotels will be sent in a document approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will either be always taken at local restaurants or at your hotel. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.

On your arrival

On your arrival in Delhi you will be met by a representative from our local agent, Jayasree, holding a sign displaying: "Mercury Holidays". The Mercury Holidays/ Jayasree representative will show you to your transfer vehicle. Your guide will be able to answer any queries. However, if you need to contact Jayasree during your stay the details are:

Jayasree Travels and Tours

F 341-ground floor, Lado Sarai (opposite central bank of India)
New Delhi 110030

Telephone Number: 0091 11 40565928 or 0091 1129521224

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for Jayasree Travel and Tours:

Mobile telephone numbers:

Ms Jayasree Vikraman: 00919747005888
Ms Samitha: 0091 974 471 3380
Mr Jagdish Nair: 0091 956 208 9699
Mr Anil Kumar: 0091 984 706 6802
Mrs Prashansa Alkesh: 0091 997 148 8995 (Delhi)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Visas

A visa is required for entry into India. British Citizen Passport Holders will need to obtain an e-Tourist Visa (eTV) for travel to India. We work closely with The Travel Visa Company who will be able to arrange your visa on your behalf. Please call them on 01270 250 590 and quote "Mercury Holidays". The cost of the visa is approximately £72 per person. The Travel Visa Company can only apply for this 30 days before your proposed travel date and takes around 10 working days to issue. It is only valid for a 30 day single entry stay from the date of arrival. When calling the Travel Visa Company they will advise you of any changes to the fees or the procedure, they will also advise you of all information they will require in order to apply for the visa. Alternatively you can visit The Indian Visa Application Centre in London: 142-148 Goswell Road, London, EC1B 7DU. **Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months before you enter India.**

Tour Guides

This is a fully escorted tour, meaning that you will be met on arrival by your national guide who will remain with you for the duration of your trip. You will also be joined by a local guide in each of the cities which you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory and is at your discretion. Should you wish to tip, this will be collected by your guide at the end of your tour for your convenience. It is asked that if you do not tip in the local currency, please do not give coins as these are difficult to exchange.

Insurance

You must obtain suitable travel insurance prior to departure. Mercury Holidays is partnered with Holiday Extras which offer insurance at the following prices:

Age in years	Up to 10 days	Up to 17 days
18-30 years	£26	£27
31-50 years	£28	£31
51-60 years	£30	£33
61-64 years	£37	£42
65-69 years	£65	£69
70-74 years	£72	£79
75-85 years	£104	£135

(Worldwide excluding the USA)

For all persons 86 years and over, please contact us for insurance prices. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with an average level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves full days of sightseeing, often on foot, and includes some climbing of stairs and getting on and off coaches. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 8, and the maximum will be 35. If in the unlikely event there are less than 8 people booked on your tour date then you may be asked to change to a different date. A full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Health and Vaccinations

It is strongly recommended that you check the latest health recommendations

for travel to India with your GP at least 4-6 weeks before travel. Any medicines you may need during your journey should be packed in your hand luggage. We suggest it is worth taking a few first aid supplies such as travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, mosquito repellent, antiseptic cream, aspirin etc, because these products can be more expensive abroad and familiar brands are not always available. It is not advisable to drink the tap water.

Currency Exchange

The currency in India is the Rupee or Rs. The Rupee is a closed currency and officially you are not allowed to take any cash out of India. US Dollars and GBP are also widely accepted in India should you wish to keep an alternative currency on you.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money with you to cover any personal purchases, such as souvenirs, laundry and extra drinks and snacks. Approximately £400 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour.

Credit Card Information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels.

Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction and/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

Travel Plug Adaptor

The voltage in India is 230 Volts with plugs and sockets having either grounded 3 pin connections or ungrounded 2 pin connections. Should you plan to use your own hairdryer, travel iron, video camera, battery charger, electric shaver etc, it is advisable to bring a multi-adaptor.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Your initial flight is to [Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport](#) with [Jet Airways](#), departing from [London Heathrow Terminal 4](#).

Route	Depart	Arrive	Flight Duration	Flight Number
May - September				
Heathrow - Delhi	20:50	10:40	8 hours 20 minutes	9W121
Delhi - Varanasi	10:50	12:10	1 hour 20 minutes	9W2423
Varanasi - Delhi	12:40	14:15	1 hour 35 minutes	9W2424
Jaipur - Delhi	07:20	08:25	1 hour 5 minutes	9W2250
Delhi - Chandigarh	09:15	10:35	1 hour 20 minutes	9W2651
Amritsar - Delhi	10:45	12:00	1 hour 15 minutes	9W2662
Delhi - Heathrow	13:35	18:20	9 hours 15 minutes	9W122
October - April				
Heathrow - Delhi	20:50	10:40	8 hours 20 minutes	9W121
Delhi - Varanasi	10:50	12:10	1 hour 20 minutes	9W2423
Varanasi - Delhi	15:25	16:55	1 hour 30 minutes	9W2424
Jaipur - Delhi	07:20	08:25	1 hour 5 minutes	9W2250
Delhi - Chandigarh	09:15	10:35	1 hour 20 minutes	9W2651
Amritsar - Delhi	10:45	12:00	1 hour 15 minutes	9W2662
Delhi - Heathrow	13:35	18:20	9 hours 15 minutes	9W122

IMPORTANT: Please note that all flight times and numbers listed above are provided for guidance only and are subject to change. Final flight details will be confirmed on your e-ticket and final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure.

Baggage Allowance

Each passenger is entitled to 23kg of hold luggage, however the restriction on your domestic flights is only 15kg, so you may want to pack less or make heavy items such as cameras easily transferable to your hand luggage to avoid any issues. Should you wish to take additional luggage you will need to pay extra at check-in. Check-in should be at least 3 hours before departure. Checked baggage allowance may vary. Please refer to the bottom right of your E-ticket receipt for the correct baggage allowance. For example, if it shows "20k" this means your allowance is 20kg; or "1PC" means One Piece not exceeding 23Kg.

For handling purposes the maximum weight of any single piece of baggage must not exceed 32 Kgs. Hand Luggage: One piece of hand luggage with maximum total dimensions not exceeding a total of 115cm in size and 7kg in weight. Please refer to the Airline's website for further details and the most up-to-date information.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking, lounges or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extra Tel. 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

WHAT TO PACK

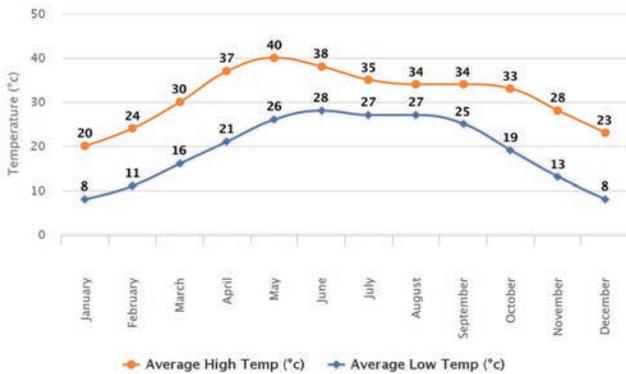
- Sunglasses, sunscreen and hat in summer
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Warm clothing and thermals in winter
- Camera and charger/spare batteries
- An electric plug converter
- Loo paper for public WCs

- Binoculars
- Mosquito Repellent
- Personal toiletries and first aid kit
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- Long sleeve shirt and long trousers
- Swimwear

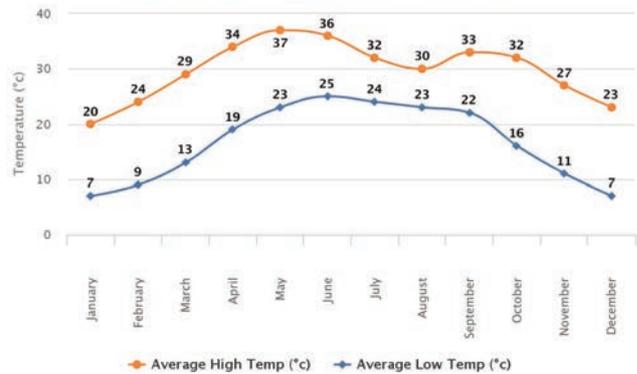
WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.

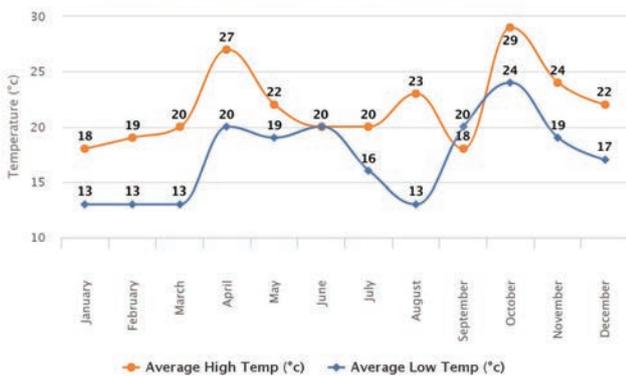
Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Delhi



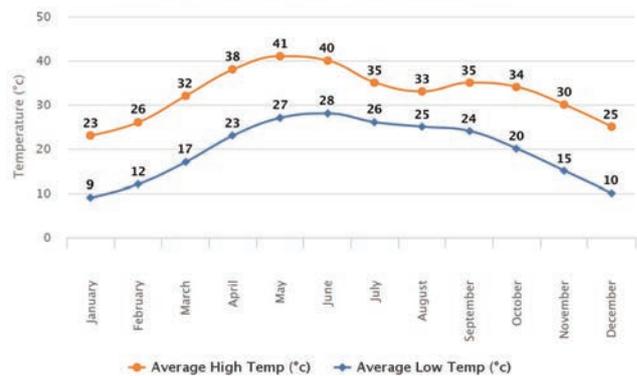
Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Agra



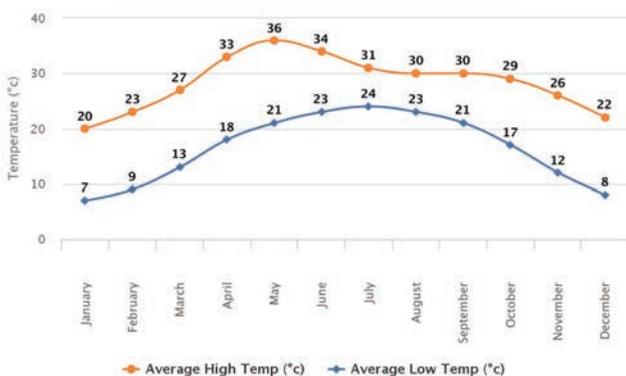
Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Varanasi



Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Jaipur



Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Shimla



Average Temperature (°C) Graph for Amritsar

