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Holidays taken together as a family are perhaps among the most memorable. The shared memories, photographs and experiences last a lifetime. The trip we have designed is mix of education, culture and above all fun. Together you explore India's ancient history; learn some of her ancient sports; travel in rickshaws, horse tongas, and trains; explore the countryside on elephant and camel back; go camping, hiking, and immerse yourself in her culture and crafts and meet the people through community service and the curious practice of laughter yoga.

*Some of the highlights of the trip are:*

- Pigeon racing in Delhi.
- Ride elephants
- Private camping and camel safari in the desert
- Learn Indian dance, puppetry, magic, kite flying and a handicraft of your choice
- Learn how to track animals while visiting the forest
- Spend time at a Sikh temple helping in the soup kitchen making bread
- Laughter yoga

*The trip can be tailored to your schedule and your budget.*

### **Day 1**

Arrive Delhi. After clearing customs and immigration formalities you are met and transferred to your hotel.

### **Day 2**

#### **Delhi**

The walled city of Old Delhi the former Imperial capital is a maze of lanes crowded with shops, crumbling havelies (mansions), in the midst of which lies one of the country's largest mosques. You will ride rickshaws through the narrow lanes of the 300 year old **Chandni Chowk market**, Today it is a busy market selling an extraordinary variety of items – silver, jewelry, aromatic spices, leather, fruit and vegetables. Apothecaries sell home grown medicinal items, and roadside dentists display their bizarre array of equipment and false teeth. This is an excellent introduction to the organized chaos which is quintessentially Indian. You will disembark at the **Jama Masjid**, believed to be the largest mosque in India and which was Shah Jahan's last architectural legacy.

A traditional sport of the Mughal Empire was **pigeon racing**, a sport which is practiced even today in the narrow alleys of Old Delhi. We will arrange to take you to watch and learn this ancient art, practiced by the Emperors and nobility of past years. Be prepared to climb many steps to the very top of one of the old homes of the Old City. From the terrace you clamber up a ladder to the roof. It is from this high point that the pigeons are launched.



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### **Day 3**

#### **Delhi**

This morning learn the turbulent history of the city visiting some of its most enduring monuments.

Later you will visit a *Gurudwara* the temple of the followers of the Sikh religion. The Sikhs, which means “disciples”, are one of the country’s most recognizable groups. Beards and turbans give them a distinctive look. They believe in one god, and that everyone, regardless of their station in life, should do “sevak” or rendering social services. This resulted in the “Langar” or community Kitchen, where every member of the religion considers it an honor to come and put in a couple of hours cooking thousands of Indian breads, making huge vat loads of curry, to feed the poor and underprivileged. You will spend sometime working along side the sevaks.

### **Day 4**

#### **Delhi/Agra**

You turn to the Indian railways for your transport today taking a train to Agra.

In the morning you will walk to the **Taj Mahal**, which is five minutes from the hotel. This stunning mausoleum immortalized the name of Shah Jahan’s last wife Mumtaz Mahal, “light of the palace”. Built by Indian artisans and artisans from neighboring Islamic countries, it is aptly described by the poet laureate Tagore as “A tear on the face of eternity”. Decorated with a mosaic of semi precious stones and Persian calligraphy recreating verses from the Koran, the mausoleum is an “*Urs*”, an important place of pilgrimage since the empress died in childbirth making her a martyr. Prayers are said and passages from Koran are constantly recited in the mosque and cenotaph chamber.

Later you will meet your transport for the afternoon- horse Tongas, and on these you will ride to the Agra Fort. When the Mughal Emperor Akbar established his supremacy in Northern India, he began his first architectural venture, rebuilding the fort as a beautiful fort palace. The work was completed by his son and grandson, highlighting the Mughal’s ability to blend defensive and decorative architecture. Richly decorated with marble and mosaic, it was in a part of this fort that Shah Jahan spent the last years of his life, imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb. His private quarters where he was confined, has a magical view of the Taj Mahal across the river Yamuna.

In the afternoon you will be entertained by a magician and a puppeteer both of whom will share some of their skills with you.

In the evening you return to the Taj Mahal in time for sunset.

### **Day 5**

#### **Agra/Ranthambore National Park**

You have the option of visiting the Taj Mahal at sunrise.



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After breakfast you will drive to Ranthambore National Park arriving in time for lunch and an afternoon visit to the park.

### **Day 6**

#### **Ranthambore National Park**

Covering 410 sq. km, Ranthambore runs along the easternmost spur of the Aravalli to the Vindhya ranges. At one time, Ranthambore was the private hunting ground for the Royal family of Jaipur before being declared a Sanctuary and in 1972 was brought under the Project Tiger scheme. The dry deciduous forest covers open valleys with lush vegetation around the lakes, and open grasslands in the higher slopes. This varied flora supports a large number of animals including a variety of deer, the sloth bear, the shy caracal, leopards and of course, the tiger. You have a full day to visit the park in the morning and evening.

In between game drives you will be taught the skills of tracking a tiger and learn about the flora and fauna of the park.

### **Day 7**

#### **Ranthambore National Park/Jaipur**

You depart by road for Jaipur today. The drive will take three and a half hours and you will stay at the Rambagh Palace.

Indian markets are a mix of enterprise and social interaction. Shopping in India is a lifestyle, and nothing is done in a hurry with bargaining, social exchanges and cups of tea being an essential part of the process. You will spend the morning in the markets of Jaipur. Walking with Jai your escort you will learn the Indian skill of bargaining, learn essential words in the local language, and can chat with people. What will strike you is our immense threshold of patience as we wind our way through the inevitable chaos of a local market and the sense of organization that somehow prevails within the chaos!!

You will also visit the nearby Govinda Deva Temple. The presiding deity of this unusual temple is the flute playing Krishna. Still the preserve of the royal family who can look directly at the temple from the palace, every evening devotees gather here to sing hymns to accompaniment of cymbals. It is a great introduction to the deep strain of religion which for the majority of people in India is the guiding light through each day.

### **Day 8**

#### **Jaipur**

Hill Forts were always important to the Rajput rulers. Belonging to the Hindu "Kshatriya" or warrior class, they believed in the line from the sacred holy book that a "fort is the strength of a king". They built a number of forts all over the state of Rajasthan; some built for purely defensive purposes, but most built as fort palaces. **Amber** is one of the finest examples of a fort palace, built similar in style to the surrounding richly decorated Mughal courts.



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Taking a break from forts and palaces, this afternoon you have fun going on an elephant safari at Dera Farm. The match will be followed by high tea and cocktails.

## Day 9

### Jaipur

This morning you will start the day joining **Laughter Yoga** (Hasya Yoga) which is a technique that uses a blend of playful, empowering and otherwise "tension-releasing" simple laughter exercises. It is a common sound in communities to wake up to the sound of rhythmic clapping and chanting of "Ho Ho, Ha, Ha," in unison, a simulated laughter that invariably dissolves into real laughter. This form of yoga has a huge following in India since it was introduced by Dr Madan Kataria in 2007.

A typical Laughter Yoga session lasts about 20 to 30 minutes.

Later you will tour the city of Jaipur. There are two "cities" – the old walled Pink City and the Jaipur that extended beyond the city walls. You start at the **City Palace** which at the behest of Sawai Jai Singh was built near the temple of his personal deity Govinda Deva. The seven storey Chandra Mahal (Moon Palace) is a sprawling complex with multiple courtyards, public buildings, astronomical observatory and *zenana mahals* (harems). Within the palace complex are several museums including a interesting textile gallery exhibiting a fine selection of textiles and costumes from the royal collection. **The Jantar Mantar** which you visit next is a collection of futuristic structures and astronomical instruments designed by Sawai Jai Singh the founder of Jaipur. This was a result of this intense study of Astrology and Astronomy, and these 17<sup>th</sup> century extraordinary structures are accurate even today.

In the afternoon you will have lessons in one of the city's most successful craft – block printing on textiles. You will have an opportunity to create your own work of art after you have mastered the process.

## Day 10

### Jaipur/Udaipur

You will transfer to the airport this morning and will depart by 9W 709 (07:00 AM/07:40 AM).

In the morning sightseeing will start at the **City Palace**. Home of the Maharanas of Udaipur who claim descendance from the Sun, the whole complex appropriately faces east. This sprawling palace was built over three centuries and is a series of four interconnecting palaces, illustrative of various architectural styles. In the main it is a blend of Rajput military architecture and lavish Mughal inspired decorative art on the inside. In terms of an exemplary eye to detail and craftsmanship, few palaces match the artwork in this palace. Also of particular note here is the exquisite collection of priceless Rajput Miniature paintings done in the Mewari tradition.

The afternoon you will learn the Indian sport of kite making and flying. Kite flying is a very popular sport in India, and there are certain times of the year when it is traditional



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to fly kites. Sometimes if it flown for pleasure, but often purpose is to “capture” an opponents kite. It is a sport that is shared and enjoyed by people of all ages. Or if Cricket has caught your fantasy we will try and see if there are any local matches you can join in.

### **Day 11**

#### **Udaipur**

This morning you will explore the narrow and winding lanes of the Old City. Later in the afternoon you will explore the narrow winding lanes of the Old City. Sharing space with cows, elephants, people, and the walk through the winding lanes is an interesting insight into lifestyles in what is referred to as “small town India”. Shops selling a variety of items, unexpected folk art decorating the walls of houses and small architectural gems like a latticed work Haveli window.

For the girls there will be a lesson in local folk dance. Before arriving through we will buy the required “anklets” which all dancers wear to help them establish a rhythm. The boys in the meantime will be introduced to the intricacies of the Cricket, a game that is an abiding passion in India.

### **Day 12**

#### **Udaipur/Jodhpur/Manwar**

You will take a flight to Jodhpur and from the airport you will drive two hours to Manwar. The miles of thorn forest, dunes, and scrub have a compelling beauty. This arid land is home to several tribes including the Rebari, or camel herders. You will stop at a *dhani* or small desert settlement. These are superb examples of desert architecture, the huts built with thick mud walls as protection against the extremes of climates and desert winds. The exteriors are decorated with striking folk art which also decorates the walls and the floors of the houses. You continue to our private camp nestled in the dunes of the desert.

You can explore the desert either on camel back or by jeeps.

Tonight we will stay in a tented camp. Each tent will be furnished with en-suite bathrooms with showers, flush toilets and running hot and cold water.

### **Day 13**

#### **Manwar/Jodhpur/Delhi**

You return to Jodhpur in time to take your flight to Delhi. You will be transferred to The Imperial until your later transfer to the international airport for your onward flight.