



SACRED INDIA
- TRIP NOTES -

SACRED INDIA (7 DAYS)

Delhi - Varanasi - Khajuraho - Orchha



WELCOME

Thank you for booking your holiday with *Travel The Unknown*. We love travel and we are confident that you will go away with fantastic memories of our *Sacred India* tour.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Boat ride on the River Ganges
- Intriguing walking tour in Varanasi
- Khajuraho's erotic temples
- Sleepy temple town of Orchha
- Diwali in Varanasi (October trip only)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Airport transfers
- Two internal flights
- First class train ticket (Jhansi – Delhi)
- Ground transport (air-conditioned car with driver)
- 6 nights accommodation
- Entrance fees to sites
- Breakfasts (5), lunches (2)
- Drivers and local guides
- Climate Care contribution

Itinerary

Please download the detailed itinerary for your tour from our website. Go to our login page: www.traveltheunknown.com/login. Enter the login information assigned to you, and follow the on-screen instructions to download all the necessary trip documents.

Itinerary Disclaimer

Itineraries are correct at the time of printing. Our itineraries are sometimes updated during the year to incorporate suggestions from past travellers and sometimes our own research too. Please ensure that you print and review a final copy of these **Trip Notes** and itinerary a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that may affect you.

Joining & Finishing Points

All travellers will be greeted at Delhi airport by a *Travel The Unknown* representative and will be escorted to their accommodation.

All customers will be escorted to the flight departing from Delhi airport. You can bolt on additional trips or services. Please contact us for more information.

Flights from London

We normally use the scheduled services of Jet Airways (depending on availability). As flight timings and schedules change regularly we recommend you call one of our specialist sales staff or your agent to confirm up-to-date timings. Please note timings may change at a later date and cannot be confirmed until approximately two weeks before departure.

UK Regional Flights

Travel The Unknown is committed to making joining our trips as easy as possible, wherever you may live in the UK. The Flight Inclusive price is based on a London departure, but we are happy to tailor this to your local or regional airport.

Accommodation

Travel The Unknown will provide you with the best accommodation available, in keeping with the natural environments of our destinations. In Delhi, you will be staying in a very good hotel and in Varanasi, a beautiful view of the Ganges awaits you from your hotel. Either ourselves or our trusted ground handlers have personally vetted all accommodation.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Accommodation</u>
Delhi	Hans Plaza
Varanasi	Palace on Ganges
Khajuraho	Jass Radisson

If any of our preferred first choice accommodation is not available, we will organise something of a similar standard.

Style of Travel

Our trips combine culture, activity and relaxation. We try to give you the best of everything the region has to offer and you can opt in or out of any activities you please. These tours are for independent people and so we try to be flexible where we can, and give you time to explore on your own too.

Meals

Refer to the itinerary for details of the daily meal plan. You should budget about £10 (\$15) per day for additional meals.

Group Size

To minimise the footprint our tours leave - both on the environment and the local culture - we keep our group sizes limited to 12 people.

Tour Guides

We have gone to great length in trying to secure the best guides available. The group will be designated a fixed driver throughout the tour, and for the sightseeing aspects of the trip, we will use local guides. The use of local guides on this itinerary helps keep the overall tour costs down.

Transport

Travel in India can sometimes be quite a hair-raising experience. However, we ensure that we use well-maintained air-conditioned vehicles and reliable drivers for all ground travel to maximise comfort, safety and practicality. Most of the travel on this itinerary is local, as you will take internal flights between Delhi-Varanasi-Khajuraho and a train to Orchha.

Physical Demands

A basic level of fitness and decent health is assumed, as well as an ability to put up with sometimes more basic accommodation and transport than that which is common in the West. For those who can bear this, the rewards are great!

Optional Activities

From time to time other activities may be possible to arrange. Costs for such additional activities will not be covered in the standard tour package. Contact us in advance of your trip for more information.

Single Travellers

As experienced solo travellers, there were many times when we wanted to join tour groups, as it is a great way of meeting like-minded travellers, as well as getting to see some places that were otherwise not on our itineraries.

We try to keep our single supplements as low as possible. You will only have to pay a supplement if you want your own room. If you are open to sharing a room with another single same-sex traveller, then you pay no supplement.

Fellow Travellers

Travelling in a group is very rewarding and is a great way to meet new people. There may be large variations in age and nationality. This is most often a good thing, but can occasionally cause some teething problems, so we ask you to be patient with your fellow passengers and realise that everyone likes to travel a little differently. Please consider your fellow passengers too, and try to respect meeting times, especially for game drives.

Time

India is 5½ hours ahead of GMT.

Note, the time difference will reduce to 4 ½ hours when clocks go forward for summer time.

Laundry

Laundry facilities are available at our hotels for a charge. However, we advise you not to leave laundry to the last minute as sometimes drying times may be required and laundry will not be available at all stops.

PRACTICALITIES

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. As a minimum we require that your insurance covers you for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We also strongly recommend you are covered for personal liability and loss of luggage and personal effects. You will be required to give details of your insurance prior to departure. Please go to www.traveltheunknown.com/partners for links to excellent deals on travel insurance.

Visas and Permits

All foreign nationals, including children, require a visa to enter India. They are not available at port of entry AND must be obtained in advance.

TravCour UK, our affiliate partner, can arrange your visa for you at very competitive rates. This would save you the time and hassle of going in person to the VFS office and/or avoiding long turnaround times if applying yourself by post (can take up to 4 weeks). Turnaround time through TravCour is typically 5 working days.

Download the form from our website and follow the instructions.
www.traveltheunknown.com/downloads/indiavisiform.pdf

Note: as per the latest visa regulations, if you are applying for a multi-entry tourist visa, you cannot re-enter India until 2 months after your exit from the country. There are some exceptions to this, with further details mentioned in the visa application form.

Health

All *Travel The Unknown* travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our ground handler, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, *Travel The Unknown* reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund. Please read the itinerary for this tour thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts or give us a call with any queries you may have.

An excellent resource for up-to-date travel medicine requirements is: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk. We recommend that you also consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information before departure. You should also carry a first aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements. Please be aware that in some remoter areas you could be some distance from medical facilities. For legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drugs including headache tablets, antibiotics, etc.

NOTE: Do not leave it to the last minute to see your doctor as you may have to get immunised or start taking tablets some time prior to departure. You should see your doctor or visit a travel clinic at least 45 days before your departure.

When organising your own meals, be selective where you eat. Choose places that seem quite clean and where many locals eat. A high turnover usually means food is not left lying around and has been made fresh. We recommend that you stick to drinking bottled water, even when brushing your teeth.

At the time of writing the following vaccinations were recommended for travel to India: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Rabies, Tetanus, Typhoid. In addition, malaria tablets are recommended.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure. For the UK, please visit: www.fco.gov.uk.

We strongly recommend that you use a neck wallet or money belt while travelling to ensure the safety of your documents and other valuables. It is not advisable to bring valuable jewellery when travelling. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

All *Travel The Unknown* group trips in India are accompanied by one of our local Indian group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. Your leader will be knowledgeable about the places you are visiting, will be able to offer suggestions for things to do and see, and recommend great local eating venues, etc. Our group leaders are experienced, qualified guides and have a broad general knowledge of the areas visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. There will be a separate group leader for Delhi to ensure a consistent quality of local knowledge of the leader. Local guides will be used in addition to the group leader in certain places.

During your trip we have built in some free time. Any optional activities you undertake are not part of your *Travel The Unknown* itinerary, and *Travel The Unknown* makes no guarantees about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment. *Travel The Unknown* cannot be held responsible for any injuries or losses that may occur for any such optional activity. Please also note that *Travel The Unknown* retains the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Dangers

India is generally a very safe place to travel. However, you are still subject to the same problems that you find the world over – e.g. pickpockets can operate in busy places. It is important to be more vigilant in busy areas. You are responsible for your own belongings.

Delhi and other Indian cities have experienced blasts in the recent past though the chances of being directly affected by such activities are still very small. We closely monitor the safety situation on a continuous basis, using both government sources and our own network of contacts on the ground. Please check www.fco.gov.uk for the latest government advice on travel to the region. Please contact us at info@traveltheunknown.com if you have any further questions or concerns about safety issues.

In addition we recommended that you read the Health section for how to mitigate dangers to your health.

Electricity

Electricity can often be a problem in India. You should not encounter any issues in the main cities, but from time to time electricity supply can be sporadic.

Electricity in India is 240 volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. You will require a voltage converter if you are carrying a device that does not accept 240 volts at 50 hertz. To adjust your device according to the power and voltage in India, the following three types of voltage converters may be used:

Resistor-network converters

This type of converter usually supports approximately 50 -1600 Watts. They are lightweight. You can easily use this converter for high-wattage electrical appliances like hair dryers and irons. But, you can use them for short periods only and they are not ideal for digital devices.

Transformers

Transformers support low watt rating, around 50–100 watts. Generally, you can use them continuously. Also, they provide better electricity for low

wattage appliances like battery chargers, radios, laptop computers, cameras, mp3 players and camcorders. Their drawback is the low wattage and heavy weight.

Combination converters

Combination converters are a combination of a resistor network and a transformer in the same package. You can easily switch between the two modes. If you need both types of converters, then it is better to buy this combination converter.

Outlets in India generally accept the following types of plug:

- Two round pins (continental European plugs & adapters will suffice)
- Three round pins arranged in a triangle

If your appliance(s) plug has any other shape, you will need a plug adapter.

Check out www.traveltheunknown.com/estore for some adapters that will be suitable for India.

Communication

Internet access is now available in most Indian cities and you should have access at the places you will be staying, but connection speeds can be unreliable. There are also plenty of internet cafes in most towns. It is possible to make international calls from most call shops, and your mobile phone should pick up signal in most places on this itinerary.

TIP: If you think you will need to make or receive a lot of calls, then it would be worth investing in a prepaid SIM card on arrival at the airport. You have to make sure your handset is unlocked prior to leaving the UK.

MONEY

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some people spend a lot of money on drinks, whereas others may spend more on souvenir or present shopping. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping, participating in optional activities and tipping.

Tipping

Tipping is a very difficult and often emotive subject. Although wholly at your discretion (and only if you are provided with good service) it is generally expected that tips are paid to your local guides, hotel staff, drivers and porters. We would suggest you set aside approximately £5 to £6 per person per day for all your tipping needs. Some suggestions on tipping are below.

Staff	Tip
Bellboy/porters at hotels	INR 20 per bag
Local guides	INR 100 half day / INR 150 full day
Hotel staff	INR 50-75 per day
Driver (transfers)	INR 50 for arrival/departure INR 100 per day for long journeys

Departure Tax

Unless otherwise specified departure tax will be included in the cost of your package when you booked your international flight with *Travel The Unknown*. Where you are arranging your own international flights please check with your travel agent or airline.

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional £200 (\$350), to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (eg. a natural disaster, or political strife) necessitate a change to our intended itinerary. This is not a common occurrence but it's better to be prepared.

Money Exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: www.xe.com.

There are many ATM machines throughout India, though they are usually limited to major cities. Nevertheless, we do recommend that you carry some money in the form of cash. Major credit cards are accepted in the larger shops and restaurants usually only in the bigger cities.

TIP 1: Slightly torn, faded or badly marked banknotes may be difficult to exchange. Coins are typically not exchangeable.

TIP 2: We recommend you take out the majority of the spending money you require when you arrive in Delhi and distribute it and keep it in secure places throughout the rest of the trip.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Responsible Travel

As regular travellers, one thing that never ceases to amaze and inspire us while travelling is the kindness and generosity of people, who often have very little to their name. We firmly believe that the people who make these places special should also benefit from them. Therefore as first preference we use local guides and locally-owned lodges, shops and eateries. We do our best to ensure that the benefits of our tours reach as widely as possible into the communities where they operate and also invest a significant amount of our profits in development projects within those communities.

Environment

The biggest environmental impact of your holiday with *Travel The Unknown* is the CO₂ generated by your flights and land travel. As a responsible tour operator, we have included in our tour prices the costs of offsetting CO₂ emissions from all international and domestic flights as well as land travel forming part of the tour.

We have partnered with *Climate Care* for this purpose. If you are making independent flight arrangements, we urge you to take responsibility for your CO₂ emissions by offsetting through *Climate Care*, or another reputable offsetting scheme.

We also ask you to be vigilant about disposing of your waste. Dispose of all rubbish correctly and do not leave litter or cigarette butts in natural environments.

Our brochures and stationery are printed on FSC-accredited or recycled paper. To minimise waste, all of our brochures and trip notes are available for download online.

Visit www.traveltheunknown.com/responsible for further information.

Culture Shock

India is a country which may be very different to anything you may have experienced before. It is not always the easiest place to travel, but this is also what makes it so special. Pollution, poverty and the swirling crowds can result in initial culture shock, but take a deep breath and go for it, and you will understand what makes this land so enchanting.

Varanasi is an intoxicating melting pot of spirituality, culture and religion, which form a part of daily life. The Ganges is worshipped by Hindus and the aarti ceremony at night is a sight to behold. However, it is important to respect certain ceremonies and keep an adequate distance at some events, such as cremations that also take place on the ghats of the Ganges. Nevertheless, life on the Ganges is unlike any other and will make for a truly spiritual experience irrespective of faith.

When packing, be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout India. Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool in the predominantly hot Indian climate. Clothing should cover shoulders and be on or below the knee. Women especially should always dress conservatively to avoid unwanted attention and not to cause offence. Vests, tight-fitting trousers, short skirts and shorts are not recommended.

Climate

The places visited on this itinerary experience similar weather throughout the year, i.e. scorching summers and pleasant winters and spring. June to August is the monsoon season, where rain can cause havoc with localised flooding causing traffic chaos. Rajasthan typically experiences less rainfall compared to other North Indian states.

Typical daytime temperatures between November and January are 20-25 degrees celsius, with night temperatures dropping to 15 degrees celsius. Temperatures start to reach the low 30s by the end of March/beginning of April. In the Thar Desert, temperatures will be quite cool at night, dropping below 10 degrees.

Irrespective of the time of the year travelling, you should take precaution against the sun.

WHAT TO BRING

The list below is not exhaustive:

- Day pack – useful for carrying basic items
- Binoculars
- Torch (check batteries)
- Sunglasses and sun cream (min factor 15)
- Insect repellent
- Small towel
- Basic toiletries (inc. hand sanitiser)
- Tissues
- Drinking bottle
- Watch (strict time-keeping is required at times)
- Money for meals, souvenirs, contingencies (credit/debit cards will only work in Delhi and other big cities)
- Notebook, pen
- Book
- Small items from home can make nice personal gifts
- Travel pillow (can come in handy for longer journeys)

Electronic Items

- Digital camera – bring accessories: memory cards, battery, charger
- If film camera – bring film, lenses, batteries, etc.
- Mobile phone and charger (although does not always work in Ladakh)
- Plug adaptors (2-round pin – same as European style)
- Music player (MP3, CD player, Ipad and relevant charger)
- Laptop and charger (useful if you want to keep a blog and upload photos)

Tour Photos

We prefer to use photos taken on our tours on our website so we actively encourage you to send us your photos. Happy snapping!

Our Newsletter

If you would like to find out about new tours and all that is happening with *Travel The Unknown* then sign up to our newsletter on our website.

Feedback

We have spent much time and effort to make your trip a memorable experience for all the right reasons. However, we are constantly looking to improve our tours and any feedback you can give us or suggestions you may have would be very much appreciated.

Hindi Cheat Sheet

shukria	thank you
namastay	hello
bina mirch	without chilli
tora mirch	little chilli
cheeni	sugar
tel	oil
makan	butter
gosht	meat
kitnay baje hey?	what time is it?
dhyan say	carefully
dhiray dhiray	slowly
haa	yes
nahi	no
mujhey... chyeey	I would like...
mujhey gosht chy eeay	I would like some meat
cheeni aleg say (dayna)	(please give) sugar on the side
mirch aleg say (dayna)	(please give) chilli on the side
mera naam David hey	my name is David