



# EXPERIENCE RAJASTHAN



**DESERTS, CASTLES AND PALACES**

**FEB 18-MAR 8, 2024 | 20 DAYS | 52 MEALS**

**JOURNEY LEADER: KIM COLIZZA**

*Let the Thar Desert's ancient spirit awaken you during a thrilling camel ride*



India has long fascinated world travellers for its immense diversity. All of the world's great religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity - coexist in relative harmony. Untold personal wealth shares the land with abject poverty. Modern industry and commerce contrast with traditional lifestyles that are unchanged from centuries past. Modern transportation contrasts with ox carts and camel trains. This very special journey has been designed to showcase this diversity, stretching from the capital, Delhi, across the plains of Rajasthan to one of the world's most forbidding deserts. A definite highlight will be to experiencing the Desert Festival in Jaisalmer.

This journey features a wonderful blend of modern and ancient, deluxe hotels and heritage properties that display the long traditions of Indian hospitality. Stay in a desert camp, sample home cooked meals and the cuisine served to Rajasthani royalty. Delve into a remarkable exploration of the lifestyles of rural and urban India and appreciate the diverse religious cultures that make up the nation.

Designed for adventurous travellers, this journey is for individuals open to accepting and appreciating the cultural differences they will encounter.



### Tour Highlights

- Old Delhi rich in history, forts, and markets plus New Delhi, the planned capital
- Stay in deluxe hotels and heritage properties
- Enjoy guided walks through Rajasthan's Bazaars
- Jaisalmer, the Golden City, fortified by its ancient ramparts
- Overnight in a camp in the enchanting Thar Desert
- Experience the vibrant Desert Festival in Jaisalmer
- Jeep Safari in the Thar Desert visiting tribal villages
- Camel ride among the dunes in the Thar Desert
- Royal Dinner at Khas Bagh in Jodhpur
- Temple of Ranakpur with 1,444 carved marble pillars
- Cruise to the Lake Palace on Lake Pichola, Udaipur
- Dinner with local family in Jaipur
- Elephant ride to the fortress of Amber Palace
- The ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri
- Agra, the city of love and the Taj Mahal
- The magnificent Taj Mahal plus Agra Fort

### Inclusive Features

- Return economy group airfare between Canada and New Delhi
- Accommodations in carefully selected deluxe and first class resorts plus heritage hotels as indicated or similar
- 52 meals included as shown in the itinerary (B - 17 breakfasts, L - 17 lunches, D - 18 dinners)
- Services of your Canadian journey leader plus a professional English speaking tour guide in India
- All gratuities, surcharges, taxes and fees for included services
- India visa fee for Canadian passport holders
- Airport transfer in Canada or equivalent value with purchase of group airfare

### Journey Leader

Kim, an experienced group escort and North American tour guide, has extensive travel experience. An energetic leader, she retired after 13 years as a parole officer and 33 years of managing committees, conferences, and charities to pursue her passion for travel. Kim has led groups across Canada, the USA, Vietnam, and India. Her personal explorations have taken her to Southeast Asia, numerous European countries, and parts of Central America. From planes and trains to elephants, ostriches, camels, and tuk-tuks, Kim has embraced various modes of transportation. She eagerly anticipates sharing her next adventure with you.



### FEB 18, Sunday

### Depart Canada

Adventurers gather in Toronto for the overnight flight to Delhi.

### FEB 19, Monday

### Arrive Delhi, India

Arriving in the evening in Delhi, we are met and transferred to our hotel. **Le Meridien Hotel** (3 nights) **D**

### FEB 20, Tuesday

### Delhi

Enjoy a leisurely start to the day, allowing yourself time to relax. Our tour of Old Delhi starts with a visit to the bustling laneways and shops of Chandni Chowk Bazaar, followed by the Jama Masjid, India's largest mosque designed by Shah Jahan. In complete contrast to Old Delhi, we will head to Raj Ghat, a serene memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. Lastly, we will marvel at the Red Fort, yet another 17th-century masterpiece by Shah Jahan. Unfortunately, the fort was plundered by the marauding armies of Nadir Shah and British soldiers after its construction. **BLD**

### FEB 21, Wednesday

### Delhi

We begin our exploration of the planned city of New Delhi with a visit to the Qutab Minar, a towering stone monument

built to symbolize the rich Islamic heritage and architectural brilliance of the time. Nearby is Humayun's Tomb, a wonderful example of Mughal architecture. Passing through the capital, we shall view India Gate, the Presidential Palace, and Parliament. After lunch, we will visit Akshardham Temple, a sprawling 100-acre complex featuring well-maintained lawns, water fountains, carved pavilions, and 234 ornate pillars. BLD

**FEB 22, Thursday** **Delhi / Jaisalmer**

Today we fly to Jaisalmer, the legendary fortress city that rises majestically from the desert. High walls and towers of yellow sandstone surround the Golden Fort, which has protected the city from invaders for centuries. Visit the Lodurva village, once the thriving capital of the Bhatti Rajputs during the 12th century. Today, it is renowned for its Jain temples, carved from bright yellow sandstone. The magnificence of these Jain temple ruins is truly inspiring.

**Rang Mahal (3 nights)** BLD

**FEB 23, Friday** **Jaisalmer**

Jaisalmer Fort and the Old Town are known for their traditional havelis (palaces), adorned with delicate jali (lattice wood screens), elegantly carved doors, and elaborate Jain temples dating from the 12th to 16th centuries. Walk through the narrow streets of the fort, visiting a few of the finest havelis. Explore the local bazaars and venture outside the walls to the oasis of Gadi Sagar. This afternoon, we will have free time, giving us the opportunity to explore the Old Town on our own or relax at our hotel. BLD

**FEB 24, Saturday** **Desert Festival**

Step into a realm of rustic charm as we head beyond the city to catch a glimpse of rural life in the villages of Kuldhara and Khaba in Rajasthan's desert. Prepare for an unforgettable evening at the Desert Festival, brimming with vibrant colors and mesmerizing splendour. Cheer on the swift camels as they race to victory and witness the incredible Dhora Dhor (Ox Cart) races. End the night with an electrifying showcase of folk music, dance, and fireworks. BLD

**FEB 25, Sunday** **Jaisalmer / Thar Desert**

Drive into the heart of the Great Indian Thar Desert, where we will stay in Samsara, a permanent camp nestled by the dunes. Here we will have the rare opportunity to experience desert life, nomadic culture, wildlife encounters, and beautiful landscapes. In the late afternoon, a jeep safari will take us to a tribal village, where we can watch local artisans at work and appreciate the captivating desert sunset. This evening savour dinner under the stars, accompanied by local folk music and kalbelia dances.

**Samsara Desert Camp (1 night)** BLD

**FEB 26, Monday** **Jodhpur**

Rising early, we can view the sunrise on a scenic camel ride before breakfast and departing for Jodhpur. During our walking tour, we will explore the lively bazaars of Jodhpur, filled with textiles, jewellery, leather works, lacquer, food and more. **The Ummed Hotel (2 nights)** BLD

**FEB 27, Tuesday** **Jodhpur**

Overlooking Jodhpur, Mehrangarh Fort boasts soaring archways, palaces decorated with carved stoned lattice balconies and mirrored walls. Other highlights include Jaswant Thada, the Clock Tower and the Sardar Market, known for its spices. Taste delectable Rajasthani cuisine at



*Lose yourself in the enchanting sounds of Rajasthan*



*Marvel at the intricately carved Hawa Mahal, known as the Palace of Winds*

Khas Bagh a boutique hotel exuding Victorian elegance, featuring Raj Period memorabilia and vintage cars. BLD

**FEB 28, Wednesday** **Jodhpur / Ranakpur / Udaipur**

Departing early, we head south to the Jain Temple of Ranakpur. Built in the 15th century, this is one of the five holiest places for Jains. It contains over 1,444 hand carved marble pillars, each unique and exquisite. One pillar, carved from a single stone, has 108 snakeheads and bodies. This afternoon we arrive in the City of Lakes, Udaipur, cradled in the hills of the Aravalli Range.

**Fateh Niwas Hotel (2 nights)** BLD

**FEB 29, Thursday** **Udaipur**

Visit the impressive City Palace, the focal point of the city, and Fateh Prakash Palace containing the world's largest collection of crystals. After lunch, we set out on a heritage walk through the dynamic markets, offering a glimpse of modern India with roots steeped in tradition. This evening we cruise on Lake Pichola, surrounded by the splendid hills of the Aravalli Range, magnificent palaces and temples. At the heart of the lake is Jag Mandir, the Lake Palace where we will stop for a visit. BLD

**MAR 1, Friday** **Udaipur / Deogarh**

Our journey takes us to Deogarh's rural hub, where we partake in the thrilling escapade of the Rural Ramble—an off-road vehicle expedition. Traverse the countryside, observing the locals tending to their fields and cattle. Encounter a cave temple with a shrine devoted to Lord Shiva. Enjoy panoramic vantage point views of the countryside, then pause by a lake for refreshments and bird watching. Tonight, we will stay in one of the magnificent castles of Rajasthan. **Deogarh Mahal (1 night)** BLD

**MAR 2, Saturday** **Deogarh / Jaipur**

After breakfast, we head north along the Amjer Highway to Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. Known as the Pink City for its rose-colored buildings, Jaipur is home to the famous Amber Palace and revered craftwork in jewelry, enamel, and printed textiles.

**Radisson Jaipur City Center (3 nights)** BLD



**MAR 3, Sunday****Jaipur**

Take an elephant (if available) to the Amber Palace fortress, featuring elegant rooms like the Jag Mandir and the stunning Sheesh Mahal. Marvel at the intricately carved Hawa Mahal, known as the Palace of Winds. Later take a guided walk through the Pink City's offbeat streets and markets where the authentic way of life remains undisturbed. Tonight, we will be treated to a home-hosted vegetarian dinner with a local family where we will share stories about life in modern India.

BLD

**MAR 4, Monday****Jaipur**

Following a leisurely start to our morning, we depart on a short drive into the country. We arrive in the village of Sanganer, noted for its local textile block printing and handmade paper. The results are unique for their bright colours printed on white backgrounds. Back in Jaipur, we will have free time to explore the local bazaars, followed by a visit to Raj Mandir, a well-known Indian theatre to watch a Bollywood movie.

BLD

**MAR 5, Tuesday****Jaipur / Agra**

Enjoy lunch at the Bagh in Bharatpur and admire the lovely parklike setting. Nearby is the legendary Fatehpur Sikri, built by Emperor Akbar in 1569 and deserted merely 14 years later due to water scarcity. This ghost city displays the magnificence and opulence of the Mughal Empire. We arrive in Agra this afternoon, one of the most important centres in Moghul India.

**Grand Mercure** (2 nights)

BLD

**MAR 6, Wednesday****Agra**

Built by Emperor Akbar between 1565-1573, Agra Fort displays the Mughal talent of blending exquisite design with defensive architecture. Visit the intricately crafted Taj Mahal, built by Shah Jahan in 1630 to house the remains of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. This architectural masterpiece, sculpted from pristine white marble, stands as a testament to the 17 years of dedication by 20,000 artisans from Persia, Turkey, France, and Italy who contributed to its completion - a true "Love Poem in Marble". Enjoy another view of the Taj from the Itimad-ud daulah, across the River Yamuna.

BLD

**MAR 7, Thursday****Agra / Delhi**

The final resting place of Akbar the Great, located 13 km from the Agra Fort, Sikandra Fort is one of the best preserved monuments in India. Surrounded by a lush garden, the fort houses a tomb that reflects the legacy of the great emperor. With beautiful and intricate carvings marking a phenomenal beginning to his end. We then head back to Delhi to an airport hotel where we will have rooms to freshen up (four people per room). This evening we transfer to the airport to begin our journey back to Canada.

**Pride Plaza Aerocity** (rooms to refresh)

BLD

**MAR 8, Friday****Delhi / Canada**

We arrive Toronto in the morning and continue to our homes across Canada.

**CT Rating 3.5/5 - Challenging:** India offers diverse cultural experiences but requires travellers to have an open mind to enjoy this unique environment. Travel conditions will be more challenging and sometimes facilities will be limited. Standards will also differ from those in Canada. Road traffic and conditions can be relatively chaotic and we will have a number of long travel (coach) days. Air pollution, especially in the area around Delhi, Agra and Jaipur can be poor. Accommodations range from deluxe to rustic heritage properties. Food should satisfy Canadian travellers (mostly buffets), but some dishes will be spicy. Due to the physical and cultural demands, members should be in good physical health and capable of handling themselves and their luggage, if needed.

**Tour Cost in Canadian Dollars per person**

Land Only (Join / Leave Delhi hotel).....	\$4,975
Toronto.....	\$7,195
Ottawa / Montreal.....	\$7,425
Halifax / Winnipeg .....	\$7,525
St. John's .....	\$7,575
Calgary / Edmonton / Vancouver .....	\$7,625
Regina / Saskatoon / Victoria .....	\$7,675
Single Supplement.....	\$2,095

Airfares from other gateways are available on request. Refer to inclusive features for details. Land only clients join and leave the group at the hotel in Delhi. Tour price is based on sharing a twin-bedded room. Prices are based on a minimum of 15 members and rates, taxes and fees effective May 2023. Airfare, air carrier, and prices are subject to change due to factors beyond our control.

**Note:** Visas are required to visit India. The estimated cost of an e-visa is **included** for Canadian passport holders. In some instances, individuals will be required to obtain their own Visa (with our assistance).

Insurance is NOT INCLUDED but is highly recommended. Premiums are calculated based on the individual's age, destination (country), trip length, and trip booking window – please contact our staff to receive a quote. Your coverage starts on the effective date of your confirmation of coverage. Please discuss your insurance coverage prior to booking. Check our website for the most current information. Refer to the enrollment form for terms and conditions.

**Final payment is due November 23, 2023.****Deposit is \$800 per person**

To reserve your spot on this tour, complete the enclosed enrollment form, indicating the tour you wish to join and your home city, and forward it with your deposit to:

**Book With Confidence**

For peace of mind, your deposit for this journey is fully refundable until:

**November 22, 2023**

Experiencing Our World

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