

Specialized - Customized - Personalized Journeys to India & Beyond

Our expertise is your advantage

CST 209-9942-40



Escorted by
Tara Gupta, CTIE
President

MEMBER
NSA
NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION

india  by design



Quintessential North India 2012

An Insider's Journey into India's Culture & Heritage (limited to 15 guests)

Day by Day Itinerary – 12 Nights

Tour begins in New Delhi on Tuesday 23rd Oct 2012

Tour Ends in New Delhi on Sunday 4th November 2012

Note: Combine this journey with Highlights of Kerala (Nov 6th -12th 2012)

On a Journey with Tara, the Possibilities are Endless & the Discoveries Magical!



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Pre-tour days in Delhi – When you arrive in New Delhi, we will gladly provide a private transfer from IGI airport to your hotel in the city center (nominal charge)

Day/s at leisure to recover from jet lag or to explore the several **“Insiders’ Experience”** with Tara – E.g. Have tea/meal with a local multi-generational family living together in their ancestral home. Explore the many museums of Delhi; attend a worship ceremony at a temple, gurudwara or monastery; shop for beautiful cottons and silks and get your clothes custom tailored by Tara’s Tailor Master for over 25 years. Or simply relax at an Ayurvedic Spa or dine at the several gourmet restaurants of Delhi. Whether you want to eat where the locals eat or want fine dining with gourmet cuisine, you have several choices – including delicious vegetarian street food (Chaat) of Northern India, authentic South Indian meal or perhaps you want to chat with students over dinner in their college dining room.

Meals: Breakfast **Hotel:** Guest House or Homestay experience

Day 1 New Delhi – Tuesday 23rd October 2012:

Our representative awaits your group arrival at IGI airport to escort you to your hotel in the city center.

After a leisurely breakfast we discover New Delhi with its war memorial, **India Gate**, the impressive palatial sized buildings of **Rajpath** and **President’s House**, designed and built by the British in the 1920’s. Explore the ruins of **Qutab Minar**, a world heritage site, an excellent example of Afghan architecture. Soak in the peace and tranquility of the **Lotus temple** (Bahai temple) which signifies purity and equality of all religions. At the **Akshardham Temple** we enjoy a leisurely walk through the grounds with its musical fountains and lights show.

Tonight, you are invited to a typical Punjabi meal at Tara’s home with her family and childhood friends.

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner **Hotel:** Guest House or Homestay experience



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Day 2 New Delhi – Wednesday 24th October 2012

This morning we head out to explore the historical monuments of Old Delhi. We visit, **Red Fort**, a beautiful red sandstone monument built in 1648. We take a rickshaw ride through the narrow alleys of **Chandni Chowk** a colorful and bustling market of Old Delhi. We visit **Jama Masjid**, the largest mosque in India and stop at **Raj Ghat**, the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, to pay our respects to the Father of the Nation.

This evening the city is alive with Dusshera festival celebrations. At the Fair grounds we watch the performance of Ram Lila, a dramatic folk re-enactment of the life of Lord Ram, as described in the Hindu religious epic, the *Ramayana*. In commemoration of the victory of Lord Ram over demon king Ravana giant effigies of Ravana, his brother Kumbhakaran and son Meghanath are set fire, and coronation of Rama at Ayodhya takes place, marking the culmination of festivities and restoration of the divine order.

Meals: Breakfast **Hotel:** Guest House or Homestay experience

Day 3 Delhi – Jaipur - Thursday 25th October 2012 (265 kms – 5 hours)

After a leisurely breakfast we leave for Jaipur, the fabled “pink city” of the desert named after Jai Singh, the former Maharaja of Jaipur. The palaces and forts of the yesteryears, which were witnesses to the royal processions and splendors are now living monuments. In Jaipur, experience traditional Rajasthani hospitality during your stay at your charming Haveli in a residential neighborhood owned by the family over a century.

Enjoy a relaxed evening at your hotel. Perhaps visit a gem and jewelry factory followed by shopping in the bazaars for colorful Jaipur fabrics, artwork, handicrafts, jewelry and gemstones. Or accompany Tara to enjoy dinner with her family & friends.

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner **Hotel:** Family owned and managed Haveli



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Day 4 Jaipur – Friday 26th October 2012

A not-to-be-missed opportunity is a visit to the massive **Amber Fort**, one of the most splendid examples of Rajasthani architecture. Relive the days of the Maharajas and ride a fantastically caparisoned elephant to reach the top of Amber palace. Inside the Fort we will see the Hall of Victory or Jag Mandir and the famed Sheesh Mahal, a room with walls and ceiling completely embedded with glittering mirrors specially imported from Belgium at the time.

This afternoon, we visit the **City Palace** and the **Palace Museum** to see its fabulous display of miniature paintings and traditional Rajasthani royal costumes. We stop at **Hawa Mahal** as a backdrop for a brief photo opportunity. A stunning monument of 5 stories with 365 windows, it is also known as the Palace of Winds. Its façade is encrusted with delicate screens and carved balconies from which the royal ladies, confined to their quarters, could sneak views of the outside world. We visit **Jantar Mantar**, Jai Singh's observatory, where time has been accurately measured since the 17th century.

The evening is at leisure to relax at your hotel or shop in the bazaars for colorful Jaipuri fabrics, artwork, handicrafts, jewelry and gemstones.. Alternatively, enjoy an ayurvedic spa treatments or dinner shows at the many hotels of Jaipur.

Meals: Breakfast **Hotel:** Family owned and managed Haveli

Day 5 Jaipur to Ranthambhore – Saturday 27th October 2012 (170 kms –4 hours)

This morning, we continue our journey to Ranthambhore National Park, a wildlife enthusiast and photographer's dream with its numerous species of animals, birds and reptiles. With an area of 400 sq. km encompassing rocky hillcrests which descend to open valleys, dotted with water pools and fruit trees, this park gets its name from the thousand year old fortress, which looms above the forest. Well known for the diurnal activity of tigers, Ranthambhore is an unusual area where a natural present meets a historical past. Gazelles, Sambar, Cheetal, Chinkara, Nilgai, Langoor, wild bull, the elusive leopard and a few tigers are regularly sighted.

This afternoon, perhaps spot a tiger or two on your jeep safari. The evening is at leisure to relax by the pool, enjoy the resort amenities and cultural evening over dinner. Perhaps take a short drive to browse the local village arts and craft factories and shops.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner **Hotel:** Pugmark Resort



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Day 6 Ranthambhore to Agra – Sunday 28th October (250 kms – 6 hours)

Enjoy a second game drive by jeep in the early morning before leaving for Agra in the late morning. Enroute we will visit Fatehpur Sikri – a perfectly preserved red sandstone “ghost town” which was the estranged capital of Mughal Emperor Akbar, built in 1569 and deserted when its water supply failed.

This evening after our dinner, you have an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to behold the beauty of the Taj Mahal under the light of the full moon, a truly emotional experience. (Additional charges apply and must be pre-booked).

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Hotel: Utkarsh Vilas

Day 7 Agra – Monday 29th October

Wake up early to fall under the spell of the spectacular **Taj Mahal**, at sunrise. Bathed in the glowing light of dawn we will bask in the glory of this world famous mausoleum with its perfect architecture, as its white marble reflects the rays of the rising sun.

After breakfast we continue exploring this great Mughal city in the late morning. We visit the **Agra Fort**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated on the banks of river Yamuna. Inside this massive red sandstone Fort, we witness the medieval lifestyles of 16th and 17th century Mughal emperors. We also visit **Itmad-ud-Daula's Tomb**, a Mughal mausoleum often called Baby Taj, regarded as a draft of the Taj Mahal. Built by Nūr Jahān, for her father Mirzā Ghiyās Beg, on the left bank of the Yamuna river, the walls are of white marble encrusted with semi-precious stone decorations - cornelian, jasper, lapis lazuli, onyx, and topaz. Time permitting we will enjoy a rickshaw ride through the city which reveals the hustle bustle of Agra's old markets.

The evening is at leisure to perhaps enjoy a relaxed dinner with cultural performance at a local restaurant of your choice. Or treat yourself to a Spa, with therapies designed to rejuvenate body and soul accompanied by the royal service offered at your small family run hotel that makes your stay simply exclusive and unforgettable.

Meals: Breakfast **Hotel:** Utkarsha Vilas



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Day 8 Agra – Khajuraho Tuesday 30th October 2012 (172 kms - 2 ½ hours by train and 4 hours drive)

We leave early this morning to board our train the Shatabdi Express bound for Jhansi where our coach meets us to take us on our onward journey to Khajuraho. Enroute we visit Orchha, the deserted royal citadel and one of India's most fabulous Mughal heritage sites. Founded in 1531, Orchha, was the capital of the Bundela kings until 1738. Today the weathered temples, palaces, and cenotaphs are the royal quarters of emerald parakeets and black-faced langurs and traditional whitewashed, flat-roofed structures house the laid-back villagers. See the palace complex, beautiful temples and graceful *chhatris* (cenotaphs) commemorating the Orchha rulers, built upstream along the riverbank.

This evening we arrive in Khajuraho, a fascinating village with a quaint rural ambience and a rich cultural heritage. The fascinating temples of Khajuraho, their taboo-breaking erotic sculptures are India's unique gift of love to the world. They represent the expression of a highly matured civilization and an outstanding synthesis of advanced architecture and refined sculpture. This evening we attend the **sound-and-light show** which provides a fascinating history of Khajuraho.

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner **Hotel:** Hotel Clarks Khajuraho

Day 9 Khajuraho – Wednesday 31st October 2012

Our visit to the temples begins with the Western Group when they open at sunrise, not only for the light's quality, but to avoid the busloads of tourists who will arrive later. We take our time admiring the beautifully rendered friezes of gods and nymphs that decorate the temples. Later we visit the Eastern group of temples which include Parasvanath Temple, which is the only Jain Temple surviving at Khajuraho and has excellent sculptures on the outer walls of the Sanctum and The Javeri Temple dedicated to Vishnu.

The evening is at your leisure to perhaps enjoy a classical dance show with dinner at the hotel.

Meals: Breakfast **Hotel:** Hotel Clarks Khajuraho



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Day 10 Khajuraho – Varanasi Thursday 1st November 2012 (flight)

After an early breakfast we leave for the airport to board our flight to Varanasi, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. A holy city for Buddhists and Jains, and the holiest place in the world in Hinduism the mornings begin with prayers at the ghats, a holy dip and the tinkling of temple bells. It bustles with people whose lives are concentrated on being good Hindus. Social events mean religious festivals. This is a city soaked in devotion.

This afternoon our city tour includes Bharat Mata Temple with a big relief map of India in marble, the Durga Temple, the Tulsi Manas Mandir, Banaras Hindu University known for its Art Gallery and the Mosque of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. We end the evening at the Dasashwamedh Ghat of the river Ganges to watch the Ganga Fire Arti. For 45 minutes, young Brahmin priests perform age-old prayer rituals with conch shells and burning braziers, accompanied by drummers, while pilgrims light candles to set adrift on the river accompanied with flowers.

Meals: Breakfast **Hotel:** Gateway Taj Ganges

Day 11 Varanasi – Friday 2nd November 2012

We greet this day with an early morning boat ride on the holy river Ganges to see the Bathing ghats and Cremation site, one of the most extraordinary experiences of your visit to India. For the devout Hindu, Varanasi, is the holiest pilgrimage center and must be visited at least once in a lifetime to wash away ones sins. We return to our hotel for a leisurely breakfast.

In the late morning, we visit the fascinating city of nearby Sarnath, as holy to Buddhists as Varanasi is to Hindus. Sarnath, filled with Buddhist monuments is where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon. It was a renowned school of learning from 6th century B.C. to 12th century A.D. Here we visit the ruins, the stupa, the Buddhist temple and the Museum which houses an excellent collection of Buddhist art and sculpture. (Museum closed on Fridays).

Our evening is at leisure to enjoy the markets of Varanasi known for its designer Banarasi silks, its bangles and carpets. Perhaps accompany Tara for shopping or for dinner with childhood friends who have lived in Varanasi for decades.

Meals: Breakfast **Hotel:** Gateway Taj Ganges



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Day 12 Varanasi – New Delhi – Saturday 3rd November 2012 (flight)

After a leisurely breakfast we drive to the airport for our late morning flight back to Delhi.

Perhaps explore “**Dilli Haat**” a beautiful food and crafts bazaar in South Delhi which is like a treasure house of Indian culture, handicrafts and ethnic cuisine. Alternatively, browse the shops of **Janpath**, **Palika Bazaar**, the State Cottage Emporiums in Connaught Place or the local neighborhood bazaars for your last minute souvenirs and shopping.

This evening, watch the Karva Chauth ceremony held by the neighborhood women. Having fasted all day in the evening they pray for long lives for their husbands. Women dressed in fine clothing, jewelery and henna, sit in a circle with their puja thalis narrating the story of Karva Chauth and singing songs as they pass their thalis around in the circle. After the ceremony, they await the rising of the moon. With their husbands nearby, they view its reflection in a vessel filled with water, through a sieve or dupatta. The husband then takes the water from the thali and gives his wife her first sip and feeds her with the first morsel of the day accompanied by gifts of jewelry or clothes.

We end the evening with a typical Karva Chauth dinner as we toast this fascinating journey with our fellow travelers and new found friends.

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner **Hotel:** Guest House or Homestay experience

Day 13 New Delhi – End of Journey Sunday 4th November 2012

Your day is at leisure until its time for hotel check-out.

For those departing today, a transfer to IGI airport for your onward journey is included. If you are spending a few more days in Delhi, Please arrange your “insider experiences” with Tara at the time of reservations.

Meals: Breakfast