**Itinerary**

**Day 01                                           Arrive Delhi**

**Arrive at New Delhi’s Indira Gandhi International airport by flight**.

**Delhi -** the capital of India – The city consists of two parts - Old & New Delhi. Old Delhi was the capital of Muslim India between 17th and 19th century and has many mosques, monuments and forts. New Delhi, the imperial city was created by the British as the capital of India. In 1911, Edwin Lutyens, the most renowned English architect of the day, was chosen to design New Delhi which flaunts a surprising number of impressive monuments related to its conquests by the Mughals, Turks, Persians and ultimately the British.

**Meet & Assist:** you will be met by our representative in the arrival area of the airport after you clear all immigration and customs formalities. You will be transferred to your hotel.

Check-in at your hotel.

**Overnight at Hotel**

**Day 02                            In Delhi**

Today you will tour some of the other sights of the capital city. Today you will explore the area referred to as *Old Delhi*. This was the former Imperial capital of the Mughal Emperor, though very little remains of the grandeur of the Emperor Shah Jahan’s city. You will visit the **Red Fort** which was built in the mid-17th century when the Emperor moved his capital from Agra to Delhi. From here you drive to the 300 year old **Chandni Chowk market**, its narrow lanes best explored in a cycle rickshaw. As you wind your way through the narrow alleys you will see remnants of the grand houses that were once the homes of wealthy nobles. 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. Originally it was called *Masjid-I-Jahanum* which means “The mosque commanding a view of the world”. In complete contrast to the noise and crowds of Old Delhi, **Raj Ghat** is an oasis of manicured lawns and peace. This is the simple yet stunning memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, the main architect of India’s independence.

Afternoon you tour some of the sights of the capital city. You will start at the Qutb Minar complex which has many historic monuments. The first mosque in India – The **Quwwat-Ul- Islam** – built from the dressed and carved stones of demolished temples lies in this complex. It establishes the political victory of Islam in northern India. **The Qutb Minar** was begun in 1199 by Qutb ud din Aibak and was completed by his successors. This fluted elegant tower is decorated with elegant balconies and carvings. From here you visit one of the architectural triumphs of the Mughal Empire – **Humayun’s Tomb. Humayun’s tomb** is the earliest example of Mughal architecture in India. Recently renovated with the gardens restored to their former splendor and the fountains working, it is a very attractive site. Architecturally the mausoleum drew its inspiration from the styles prevalent in Samarkand, and the design of the Taj Mahal is based on this tomb.

You return to your hotel via the **Rashtrapati Bhavan.** Combining what Lord Hardinge, The Viceroy suggested “western architecture with an Oriental motif”, this former viceregal lodge, today is the home of the President of India. Though the incorporation of Indian motifs in the final design was superficial, the enormous dome was fashioned on the great Buddhist Stupa at Sanchi. You will drive up Rajpath, stopping at the **India Gate.** This was designed by Lutyen in memory of the 70,000 Indian soldiers who died in the First World War. Among the other buildings you will stop at will be the **Parliament House; The Cathedral Church of Redemption** and to its north the Italianate Roman Catholic **Church of the Sacred Heart.** Both these were conceived by Henry Medd whose design won architectural competitions.

**Overnight at Hotel**

**Day 03                            Delhi  - Agra**

Morning drive to Agra.

**Agra:** Two great Mughal monarchs, Akbar and Shah Jahan, transformed the little village of Agra into a befitting second capital of the Mughal Empire - giving it the name Dar-ul-Khilafat {seat of the Emperor}. Today, a visitor to Agra is caught up in a world of contrasting edifices of red sandstone and white marble, narrow gullies and quaint buggies, and that irresistible charm that this favorite city of the Mughal still retains. It is not surprising, that modern Agra still reflects its Mughal heritage most conspicuously.

Upon arrival, check in at Hotel.

**Overnight at Hotel**

**Day 04                            In Agra**

Morning visit Taj Mahal & Agra fort.

**Taj Mahal** is perhaps the world’s most perfectly proportioned monument. 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.

After leisurely breakfast you visit **Agra Fort.** The present structure stands on the site of 14th century fort that was occupied by the Lodi Sultans of Delhi. 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.

**Overnight at Hotel**

**Day 05                            Agra – Jaipur**

Post breakfast drive to Jaipur enroute visit fatehpur sikri a UNESCO World Heritage site. A deserted red sandstone city that was built during the second half of the 16th century by the Emperor Akbar, Fatehpur Sikri (the City of Victory) was the capital of the Mughal Empire for only some 10 years. The complex of monuments and temples, all in a uniform architectural style, includes one of the largest mosques in India, the Jama Masjid

After visit continue drive to Jaipur.

**Jaipur:** The origins of the beautiful city of Jaipur can be traced back to the eighteenth century, during the reign of Jai Singh II who ascended the Amber throne in 1699. Jaipur today epitomizes the spirit of Rajputana. Inspite of growing into bustling metropolis, it still retains it’s character and history.... a beautiful fusion of yesteryears and modernity. For long called the Pink city because of the extensive use of the locally abundant pink plastered stone, painted so in honour of the visit of the royal consort of Queen Victoria. Jaipur thrills the soul with its massive forts, magnificent palaces, exquisite temples and lush gardens.

Upon arrival check in at Hotel.

**Overnight at Hotel**

**Day 06                            In Jaipur**

After breakfast you will visit Amber Fort. 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, the Purana that “a fort is the strength of a king”. They built a number of such forts all over the state of Rajasthan; some made 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.

This afternoon you will proceed on a city tour of Jaipur. You will tour part of the **City Palace** which is open to the public. The most striking building on entering through the *Atish Pol* or stable gate is the beautiful marble and sandstone *Mubarak Palace*, initially used to welcome foreign dignitaries and later used as the Cabinet Office. Today the palace houses the textile gallery exhibiting an excellent collection of costumes and rich textiles from the private collection of the Jaipur royal family. The armory is entered through the magnificent marble inlaid *Singh Pol* or Lion Gate. The most impressive part of the place is the Diwan-I-Khas or the hall of Private audience. Entered through a gateway richly decorated in *pietra dura* and flanked by a pair of elephants carved out of a single block of marble, the star exhibits of this area are a pair of enormous sterling silver vessels used to store holy water from the Ganges. The water was used by the Maharaja for his daily bath when traveling overseas, to protect him from ritual pollution. Also of interest is the Art Gallery which has a collection or royal memorabilia. **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 17th century extraordinary structures are accurate even today.

**Overnight at Hotel**

**Day 7                            Jaipur – Varanasi**

Moring in time transfer to airport to connect flight for Varanasi via Delhi.

Arrive in Varanasi. Meet & greet by a dnata representative at the airport who will later escort you to your hotel, where you stay for 02 nights.

**Varanasi** is probably the place in India that has the most profound impact on visitors. Formerly known as Benares, it sits on a bend of the Ganges, and its spiritual significance comes from its status as a "crossing place", where Gods and Goddesses can descend to earth. It has been a pilgrimage site since the sixth century BC; Hindus try to visit at least once in their lifetime to pray and bathe in the holy river. The Old City, a maze of tiny alleys, has several temples, including the Golden Temple - which is only accessible to Hindus - and many cows, which have traffic priority.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 8                            In Varanasi**

Early morning, enjoy a boat cruise on River Ganges. The ghats - hundreds of stone steps flanking the riverbank - are an incredible sight, particularly at sunrise when thousands of pilgrims bathe in the spiritually cleansing waters. Funeral pyres smoke on the riverbank, which is lined with colorful temples. The boat ride is one of the best ways witness the ceremonies.

Also referred to as "city of temples and learning", the culture of Varanasi is deeply associated with the river Ganges and the river's religious importance. The city has been a cultural and religious center in northern India for thousands of years. Walk through the narrow streets and alleys of Varanasi. Wandering through this maze will be fascinating; a great opportunity for photos.

After the boat ride, return to hotel for breakfast.

In the morning visit the famous Banaras Hindu University. One of the oldest educational centres of India, this university was was founded by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya in 1917 for the study of Sanskrit, Indian art, culture and music. The university campus extends over five square kms and contains the Bharat Kala Bhavan.

Continue to New Vishwanath Temple which is Located within the premises of the Banaras Hindu University.

Also visit Bharat Mata Mandir. Opened by Mahatma Gandhi, this temple is dedicated to 'Mother India. This simple temple has a perfect relief map of India carved out of a Marble.

The tour culminates at Durga Temple. This 18th century Durga Temple is also called the Monkey Temple. It has been built in a common north Indian style with an ornate shikhara, with five segments symbolizing the elements, supported by finely carved columns.

Afternoon visit Sarnath. It is one of the important Buddhist centres where Lord Buddha had preached his first sermon and set in motion the Wheel of Law (Maha-Dharmachakra-Pravartan). Several Buddhist structures were raised at Sarnath between 3rd century BC and 11th century AD. Most of the ancient buildings and structures at Sarnath were damaged or destroyed by the Turks. However, amongst the ruins The Dhamek Stupa is the most distinguished one. It was built in 500 AD to replace an earlier structure commissioned by the great Mauryan king Ashoka in 249 B.C.E., along with several other monuments, to commemorate his pilgrimage there. Also visit the museum which houses a collection of valuable ancient scriptures & artifacts related to Buddhism(Sarnath museum is closed on Friday).

Evening witness a Hindu prayer ceremony `aarthi' on the Ganges River! You will be escorted to Dhaswashmedh Ghat on bi-cycle rickshaw from where you will embark on a boat to witness the aarti for approximately 20- 30 minutes. En-route, drive past through the local bazaars. The river banks `ghats' and temples are lit with oil-lamp and candles which create a magical effect. Devotees float the oil lamps in the water as an offering to the holy river.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 09                            Varanasi – Chandigarh via Delhi & drive to Shimla**

Morning transfer to airport to connect flight for Chandigarh via Delhi. Upon arrival leave for Shimla

**Shimla**

Shimla is in the enriched state of Himachal Pradesh which boasts of nature’s generous bounty, reflected in its beautiful landscape, comprising of exotic valleys, snow-capped mountains and crystal blue lakes set amidst lush rolling hills, rich with the fragrance of pine and cedar. Discover intriguing private gardens in the richly forested foothills of the Himalayas, set around fine old houses, redolent with the echoes of a colonial past

Upon arrival check in at Hotel.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 10                            In Shimla**

**Buffet breakfast at hotel**

**Morning:** **Transfer to Shimla railway station for a toy train ride**

Enjoy a short ride on the renowned Kalka-Shimla toy train. Built in 1903, this track is an engineering marvel, with 103 tunnels and 700 non-girder bridges in a distance of only 96 kilometers and more than two-thirds of the entire track on curves, some as sharp as 48 degrees. It is also distinguished as one of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The toy train chugs along the line, whistling through the deodar, pine, ficus, oak and maple woods at a speed of 22 kilometers an hour. As the journey begins, one is taken in with the change in vegetation, and the majestic glory of the railway stations and Gothic-style bridges en route. After an exciting short toy train ride, you shall disembark at Solan and drive back to Shimla



Toy-train Journey

Depart: Shimla At: 10:30 hrs By: 52456 Himalayan Queen

Arrive: Taradevi At: 11:20 hrs (operates daily)

On disembarking the train at Taradevi drive back to Shimla (Approx 53 kms/ approx 1 hrs)

Afternoon sightseeing tour of Shimla, visiting The Mall, the main promenade that runs along the top of the ridge, a busy shopping area with old colonial buildings, souvenir shops and restaurants. At the top end of the Mall is Scandal Point, a large open square with a view of the town. Overlooking it is the elegant Christ Church with its fine stained glass windows; Visit vice regal lodge (formerly the residence of the British Viceroy); the Himachal State Museum (closed on Mondays), which has a modest collection of stone statues and local handicrafts from different parts of Himachal Pradesh.

Following sightseeing tour, return back to hotel

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 11                            In Shimla**

Day free at leisure for independent activities.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 12                            Shimla - Dharamshala**

Morning our car will pick you up & leave for Dharamshala.

Set against the backdrop of the dramatic Dhauladhar mountains, Dharamsala is perched on the high slopes in the upper reaches of Kangra Valley. The town is divided into two distinct and widely separated sections, Upper and Lower Dharamsala, which differ almost a thousand metres in height. We will be staying in Upper Dharamsala or Mcleodganj. Arrive Mcleodganj and transfer to Hotel. Evening free to explore the town.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 13                            In Dharamshala**

After breakfast full day sightseeing of Dharamsala.

**Norbulinka Institute :** Just four kms from Dharamsala, Norbulinka was established to preserve and teach the ancient Tibetan arts. The shady paths, wooden bridges, small streams tiny water falls make this place look like heaven. Here one can watch the wooden carvings and the tangka paintings, golsithing and embroidery being done. The nunnery close to the institute is a place where women are taught the advanced levels of Buddhist philosophy.

**McLeodganj :** Originally home of the semi-nomadic Gaddi tribe, McLeodganj is today the residence of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. This mid 19th century place was developed as a British Garrison. The place was developed as an important administrative point for the whole Kangra valley. Today the place has developed as headquarters of the exiled Tibetan Government. The impressive monastery has larger than life size images of Buddha, Padmasambhava and Avaloketeshwara.

**Dall Lake :** Surrounded by high and green Deodar trees is the lake, which fills a mountain bowl. Situated 11-kms away from the town, this lake is easily approachable by road and makes an enchanting and serene picnic spot.

**Kangra Art Museum :** This treasure trove of the Kangra valley's arts, crafts, and rich past, displays artifacts that date back to the 5th century. The museum also includes a gallery of Kangra's famous miniature paintings and a representative collection of sculptures, pottery, and anthropological items.

**War Memorial :** Set amidst the pine groves is a war memorial, built on the entry point of the to Dharamsala to commemorate the post independence war heroes of Himachal Pradesh. A web of narrow paths and landscaped lawns lead towards this monument.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 14                            Dharamshala - Amritsar**

Morning drive to Amritsar.

Situated on the northwestern border of the country, Amritsar means the “Pool of Nectar”, the name derived from a pool constructed at a sacred site gifted by Akbar to Guru Ramdas in the 6th century.  This 400-year-old city has been the center of Sikh religion and culture since the time of its inception and is famous for the Golden Temple.

Life in Amritsar is deeply influenced by the holy shrines of the Golden Temple and the Durgiana Temple, plus the sources of the city’s wealth-agriculture, commerce and industry.  Even though most people are very religious, they are also extremely fun loving and full of life.  They have earned their money by sheer hard work, and they spend it lavishly on the good things of life.

Meet & assist in arrival at railway station & transfer to Hotel.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 15                            In Amritsar**

Morning after breakfast proceed for city tour of Amritsar.

**Golden Temple** Located in the heart of the city is the Golden Temple, the most visited tourist attraction of Amritsar. Characterised by its four entrance doors (called deoris) in all four directions and the tastefully decorated shrines, in terms of art and architecture, the Golden Temple welcomes everyone regardless of the religion or faith one follows. The stunning sanctum, shimmering in the water of the holy tank, flanked by spotlessly clean marble walkways and pavements makes it breathtakingly beautiful.

**Jalianwala Bagh :** A historical monument that tells the sad story of mass killing during the independence movement in India, Jalianwallah Bagh is another must visit in Amritsar. Here lies the memorial of the martyrs of the 1919 massacre by British General Dyer. Presently the place also has a park. The Martyr's Gallery is open from 9 am to 5 pm in summers and from 10 am to 4 pm during winters.

Afternoon visit Wagah border.

**Wagah Border :** One of the many nearby places to visit from Amritsar is the Wagah Border. Located on the Indo-Pakistan border, Wagah is 28 kilometres from the Amritsar main town. A good number of visitors come to this place to see the change of guards ceremony and the flag hoisting and lowering activities which are done with great skill and precision by the border security forces of both the countries. A site you cannot afford to miss.

On return visit the War memorial.

**Overnight at Hotel.**

**Day 16                            Leave Amritsar**

Morning free.

Afternoon transfer to railway station to board train for Delhi.

Meet & assist on arrival & transfer to international airport to connect flight for onward destination.

**===============================END OF TOUR ===================================**