

## From the mountains to the sacred river and the city of rebirth The Himalaya, Bengal, Varanasi & Delhi

### Trip Highlights

- See sunrise over the Himalaya Range
- Spend four nights in a historic tea plantation at Darjeeling
- Take a ride on the famous toy train through mountain villages
- Tour Kolkata and its treasury of memories left over from the days of the British Raj
- Experience life in a tranquil rural village south of Kolkata
- Spend three nights in Murshidabad, richly endowed with the mansions of the wealthy Sheherwali families
- Experience the bathing ghats, temples and back streets of the sacred city of Varanasi, revered as the home of Lord Shiva and the city where Hindus can obtain moksha, final liberation
- Experience a multi-course dinner at one of the world's most celebrated Indian restaurants
- Trace the history of the British East India Company, from the days of Clive to the end of Company rule following the rebellion of 1857
- Take an early morning cruise on the holy River Ganges
- See the aarti, the amazing prayer ceremony that takes place nightly on the banks of the Ganges
- Explore the colourful, labyrinthine laneways of Old Delhi, including the Spice Bazaar

### DAY 1: ARRIVE DELHI

You'll be met at the Delhi Airport and driven to [The Lodhi](#), a sculptural, luxury hotel and one of Delhi's finest. For guests who arrive in time we'll meet that evening for an informal get-together in the bar.

### DAY 2: DELHI

We'll start the day with a guided walk around Mehrauli village, a historical area built around a Sufi shrine with tombs, shrines and stepwells that pre-date the coming of the Islamic dynasties that ruled Delhi for more than 600 years. It's a fascinating area with many stories to tell.

We'll head to the Khan Market, everyone's favourite shopping area, in an upmarket quarter of the city, where we'll have lunch with time to browse around afterwards. That evening we'll have a welcome dinner at Indian Accent, currently number 22 on the list of Asia's Best Restaurants, where we'll enjoy a multi-course tasting menu.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

### **DAY 3: GLENBURN TEA ESTATE**

Today we will fly from Delhi to Bagdogra in West Bengal, from where we will make a dramatic ascent through the foothills of the Himalaya. We'll have a picnic en route at a scenic spot to [Glenburn Tea Estate](#), just to the northeast of Darjeeling.

Set on a hillock overlooking tea plantations above the river Rungeet, this historic planter's estate has views of the Himalaya Range including Kanchenjunga, the world's third largest mountain. Owned by tea planters for generations, visitors can tour the working tea estate, enjoy mountain activities, and feast on delightful Indian, Oriental and Western cuisine.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

### **DAY 4: GLENBURN TEA ESTATE**

Today we'll explore the 1,600-acre estate with an introduction to the growing and manufacture of Glenburn Tea, from the picking to a tour of the tea factory, ending with a tea tasting session. Lunch at the Bungalow followed by a gentle afternoon hike or some down time admiring the view from one of Glenburn's verandahs. The bird life here is incredible, keen birders will certainly have some new sightings to add to their list.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

### **DAY 5: GLENBURN TEA ESTATE**

Today we'll visit Darjeeling – "Land of the Thunderbolt" – and the town is famous for its lighting storms. Cool and misty, this was a prized summer retreat for the British during the days of the Raj and the character of Darjeeling owed much to those historic times. In recent times Darjeeling has attracted a large Tibetan population and the town has a number of significant Buddhist temples. We'll take a stroll down the historic Mall and Chowrasta, followed by a short ride on the famous toy train, which makes the journey from the plains up to Darjeeling, a miracle of 19<sup>th</sup> century engineering. We'll also visit Ghoom Tibetan Monastery and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. The first director of field training was Tenzing Norgay, one of the first two men to summit Everest, and a local Darjeeling resident.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

### **DAY 6: GLENBURN TEA ESTATE**

Our visit to the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute might inspire you to tackle a two-hour hike down to Glenburn Campsite with a barbecue lunch and relaxation by the

Rangeet River. There are also options for shorter hikes, or just relax and enjoy Glenburn.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### **DAY 7: KOLKATA**

Today we'll drive down to Bagdogra from where we fly to Kolkata. Our accommodation for the next three nights is the [Glenburn Penthouse](#), a charming and characterful nine-room property in the heart of the city overlooking the Victoria Memorial, the Calcutta maidan, once the ceremonial parade ground, and the city's famous bridges.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### **DAY 8: KOLKATA**

We'll start early with a walk through the city and down to the banks of the Hoogly where bathers will be performing their early morning purification rituals. The riverside flower market adds a splash of colour to the scene. Also a visit to the Park Street Cemetery, lined with mausoleums of the British soldiers and merchants and their families, bearing witness to the hardships of colonial life. We'll also visit the Victoria Memorial to see collections related to the history and culture of this vibrant city.

We'll lunch with a local art collector and socialite, in his salon in an atmospheric quarter of the city for a glimpse of the old Calcutta way of life. This is followed by a cruise along the Hoogly, where the view evokes the scenes that would have greeted many 19th century travellers when they first arrived at the capital of British India.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### **DAY 9: KOLKATA**

This morning we travel to North Calcutta where a parallel culture heavily influenced by the Europeans, flourished among the pioneering families of Bengal. The Jain Temple Complex is unique, with its shimmering mirrors, ceramic tiles and chandeliers imported from as far away as Persia, Japan and Europe. The Marble Palace is a highlight of this morning, a mansion built by a wealthy Bengali merchant with a passion for artworks, notably kitsch paintings, marble sculptures and Belgian glass. We'll also visit the calm, intellectual heart of the Bengali Quarter, the bastion of Bengali culture, and home of India's first Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore. Following lunch at a Bengali restaurant situated, we'll visit the Kumartuli or the Potters' Market, where giant life-like religious idols are created from river clay for the city's numerous festivals, followed by the Motherhouse, Mother Theresa's home and

the centre of her Missionaries of Charity and finally Tea at Flury's Tea Room, a Kolkata institution.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### **DAY 10: MURSHIDABAD**

We'll drive to Murshabad. Located on one of the threads of the Ganges, this was once the capital of Bengal before the British East India Company triumphed at the Battle of Plassay and relocated the capital to Calcutta. This was once the centre for the spectacularly wealthy Sheherwali families, financiers and traders. It's a region packed with astonishing history, architecture art, culture and a distinct cuisine, much of which survives.

Our hotel is [Bari Kothi Heitage Hotel](#), a remnant from the past which has been brought back to life by our energetic host, Darshan Dudhoria. We'll dine this evening on Sheherwali cuisine, a mélange of India's east and west.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### **DAY 11: MURSHIDABAD**

Over the next two days explore the palaces, mosques, terracotta temples and meet artisans who still maintain the crafts that constitute the opulent heritage of the lifestyle of the Nawab of Bengal and the Sheherwali community. We'll visit the estate of the family, take a heritage walk, a river cruise, explore gardens and mango grove and sample versions of the local vegetarian cuisine.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### **DAY 12: MURSHIDABAD**

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### **DAY 13: RAJBARI BAWALI**

Today we drive to [Rajbari Bawali](#), a 300-year-old heritage hotel built in Greco-Roman style and superbly restored. Located just to the south of Kolkata, the property is reminiscent of both the British Raj and the feudal lifestyles of Bengal's Zamindari landlords. It is the ideal place to experience centuries old architecture, opulence and history of this small hamlet.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### **DAY 14: RAJBARI BAWALI**

We'll take a tuk tuk ride through rural countryside to experience village life, return to Rajbari Bawali for lunch and in the afternoon take a cruise on the holy waters of the Hooghly, as this branch of the Ganges is known. In the evening we'll see our first aarti, the traditional prayer ceremony at the end of the day.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

#### **DAY 15: VARANASI**

We'll fly from Kolkata to Varanasi, where we'll be picked up and taken to the Ganges to board a boat that will take us to [BrijRama Palace](#), the only luxury hotel on the riverbank. Opulent and ornate, BrijRama is the perfect base from which to sample the sights and sounds of this astonishing city, sacred to Hindus as the home of Lord Shiva and for some, the end of life's long journey. Varanasi is unique, resonant with spiritual force, slightly chaotic, noisy, colourful and a paradise for photographers. Even if you've been to India several times before, Varanasi will show you something you've never seen before.

In the evening we'll take a short walk to see the aarti ceremony, the evening prayer that take place at Dashashwamedh Ghat. For keen photographers, Varanasi is beyond next level.

At BrijRama Palace we have a choice of very comfortable Vasandara rooms, which are 25 square metres, and Maharaja Suites, which are 40 square metres, and which have a river view. If you would like to stay in one of these opulent suites there will be an additional cost of \$500 per person (ie \$250 per person per night) for the two nights on a twin-share basis.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### **DAY 16: VARANASI**

We'll rise before the sun to take a boat ride to see the early morning Subah-E-Banaras aarti. We'll then reboard our boat for a journey along the riverbank, past the early risers who come down for a dip in the river and as far as Manikarnika Ghat, an important cremation site.

In the afternoon we'll have an opportunity to take a guided walking tour through the narrow laneways behind our hotel and for those who are interested, another chance to see the evening aarti followed by dinner in the elegant dining room at the hotel.

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### **DAY 17: DELHI**

We'll fly to Delhi and spend the next two nights at [The Imperial](#), a stately hotel powerfully reminiscent of India's colonial days.

Meals included: breakfast

#### **DAY 18: DELHI**

This morning we'll take a walk through some of the sites that feature prominently in the uprising of 1857, India's first war of independence. It also covers life and times of British living in the city before the revolt broke out. Starting from the Kashmiri Gate, once the northern entrance to the walled city of Delhi, we'll visit Nicholson Cemetery, Kashmiri Gate, St James Church, old campuses of Hindu College and St.

Stephens', Dara Shukoh's library, Telegraph Memorial and remains of the British magazine.

Afterwards we'll visit the Spice Market in Old Delhi followed by a stroll through the labyrinth of Old Delhi, a visit to the enormous Friday Mosque and finally to Khan Market for a lunch and any last minute shopping.

That evening we'll celebrate with a final dinner together at The Imperial and relive a few memories of our tour

Meals included: breakfast, dinner

#### **DAY 19: TRIP ENDS**

You'll be transferred to Delhi Airport for your onward flight.

Meals included: breakfast

#### **COST TBA**

#### **PRICE INCLUDES**

- Airport transfers
- All internal flights listed in the itinerary
- Safe and comfortable air-conditioned vehicle
- English speaking professional driver/guide
- 18 nights accommodation in a double/twin room with breakfast
- Admission to all monuments, palaces, museums
- Lunches on nine days
- Dinners on 16 nights

- Breakfast daily
- Local city guides for city tours in Darjeeling, Kolkata, Murishabad, Varanasi and Delhi
- Gratuities (driver/guide, city guides, servers etc)
- Still water with meals
- Still water on board the bus and on day tours

**IT DOES NOT INCLUDE**

- International air travel
- Travel Insurance
- Alcoholic beverages
- Soft drinks including those with meals
- Laundry, mini-bar charges, phone charges, spa treatments and other optional

services at the hotel

- Lunches or dinners not included in the itinerary