



SECRETS OF INDIA'S SOUL

14th - 30th March 2024



With options of every variety available on this 'Secrets of India's Soul' journey through India, your heart and mind will open, and you will be able to experience JOY beyond your dreams. The towns and cities we are visiting are ancient and cultural. They are inviting and at times challenging. They are embracing and they can be conflicting. But this is India, we will embrace the differences and love the peoples that provide such a rich tapestry.

Program

Delhi

*3 nights
14,15,& 16 March*

On arrival in Delhi you will be met with a Garland welcome and transferred to your glamorous 5-star hotel. Have a good night's sleep, you deserve it, and awaken refreshed and 'ready to go'.



Click me

Delhi

Old Delhi and Jama Masjid - Relax and take it easy, as you might still be jet lagged. After a late breakfast, proceed to the old part of Delhi for a rickshaw ride through the back alleys of Old Delhi, the silver streets, vegetable and spice markets and visit the famous Jama Masjid, one of the oldest mosques in Delhi.

Lotus Temple - Design Iranian Architect Fariborz Sahba. Lotus Temple for all, regardless of religion. The building is composed of 27 free-standing marble-clad petals arranged in clusters. The Lotus Temple has won numerous architectural awards.

Humayun's Tomb - now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, built in the 16th-C by Haji Begum, wife of Humayun the second Mughal emperor, Humayun's Tomb is an example of Mughal Architecture in Delhi.

Qutub Minar - this 72.5 m high Victory Pillar is a victory stand of a Muslim King Kutub-ud-din- Aibak in India. In 1199 Kutub-ud-Din started its construction and it was completed in 1236 by Iltutmish, the son-in-law of Kutub.

India Gate - National monument of India. India gate is in the administrative locations of the country. Constructed in memory of 90,000 soldiers of British-Indian army who fought in the Second World War, the structure was built under the leadership of Sir Edwin Lutyens. The architectural complex is made of red stone and granite and is the finest example of Indo-British architectural monument.

And let's go along Rajpath, past the imposing India Gate, Parliament House, the President's Residence and would end with a drive through the Diplomatic Enclave.

Hotel

'Deluxe Room' at [Shangri-La Hotel New Delhi](#) or similar



Agra

2 nights
17 & 18 March

After a delicious breakfast, we will head to Agra, home to the World Heritage **Taj Mahal**. On arrival we will check into our hotel, unwind then visit the majestic **Agra Fort**. This fort was the main residence of the Emperors of the Mughal Dynasty until 1638 when the Capital was moved from Agra to Delhi. We will take you to the **Taj Mahal** for your unique sunset. A monument to love, it took approximately 22 years to build this special tribute. It shows clearly the love and devotion of one man to his adored wife.



Hotel

'Deluxe Room' at [Grand Imperial Hotel- Heritage Hotel](#) or similar

Gwalior

2 nights
19 & 20 March

After breakfast, we will take a relaxing drive in our A/C mini bus to Gwalior. On arrival in Gwalior let's check in, relax and freshen up at the Taj Usha Kiran Palace Hotel. Our afternoon tour will be visiting the famous **Gwalior Fort**, a grand hill fort which is the major landmark in Gwalior City and cannot be missed. This fort happens to be one of the most impregnable Fortress in North India. Options continue if your fitness does, **Tansen Tomb**, Kala Vithika, Temple Chaturbhuj, Sahastra Bahu Ka Mandir and more...as the afternoon concludes, let's head back to the Palace for relaxation, cocktails and/or the pool. ..



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After another sumptuous breakfast, let's begin our day visiting the **Jai Villas Palace**, a 19th century Palace, still the official residency of descendants of the original Royal Family. Later we will visit **Gujari Mahal**, this embracing build was achieved by Mansingh in the 15th century for his wife. The amazing building is now in an advanced state of deterioration, but is preserved as an archaeological Museum as it showcases various sculptures, statues and other remains dating back to 1st and 2nd Century BC. The balance of the day is for relaxation within the town precincts or at leisure within the hotel environs.



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Hotel

'Superior Room' at [Taj Usha Kiran Palace or similar](#)

Orchha

3 nights
21, 22 & 23 March

A beautiful scenic drive to Orchha ensues after vacating Gwalior. On arrival in Orchha we will check in to your hotel and WHAT A PALACE! **Chaturbhuj and Ram Raja Temples** await our arrival after lunch, then late afternoon back to our secluded paradise.



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Today will journey through the **City of Orchha**, our main attraction will be to study and be thrilled by the amazing Orchha Fort. The **Orchha Fort Complex** houses a large number of ancient monuments consisting of the Fort itself, Palaces, Temples and other edifices. The Fort and other structures within were built by the Bundela Rajputs starting from the early 16th Century by King Rudra Pratap Singh, and others simply followed. The Fort complex is accessed from an arched causeway leading to a large gateway. This is then followed by a big quadrangular space surrounded by Palaces. These are Raja Mahal or Raja Mandir, Sheesh Mahal.



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Jahangir Mahal, a Temple, gardens and pavilions, has notable Architectural features like projected balconies, open flat areas and decorative, latticed windows. A visit to the Fort is a day long experience, afterwards a gin and tonic and a plate of samosas or pakoras will definitely be in order! and exciting (beyond imagination) scenic drive to Shimla. Shimla was once the summer capital of British India and is located in the Himalayan foothills. This superb hotel is the perfect example of British Raj influences in India. And should time permit, we can take in other attractions such as Orchha Sanctuary, Sunder Mahal, Raj Mahal and/or Chattris.



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Hotel

'Deluxe Room' at [Amar Mahal or similar](#)

Khajuraho

2 nights
24 & 25 March

After breakfast take the scenic route to Khajuraho. Legend has it that **Khajuraho** was founded by Chandravarman, son of the Moon God Chandra, who descended and saw a beautiful maiden, Hemavati. Most of the **85 original temples (of which 25 remain)** were built between AD930 and AD1050. Khajuraho's isolation (and smaller population of 24,500) may well have helped preserve it from the desecration Muslim invaders inflicted on 'idolatrous' temples elsewhere. Perhaps for the same reason the area was slowly abandoned and overtaken by jungle. The wider world remained largely ignorant until British Officer TS Burt was guided to the ruins by his palanquin bearers in 1838.



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The erotic and other carvings that swathe Khajuraho's three groups of World Heritage listed temples are among the finest examples of temple art in the world. The **Western Group of Temples**, in particular, contain some stunning sculptures. A definite 'must see'. This afternoon we begin our exploration of some of these Architectural wonders.



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Today we will embrace as many of the temples as possible. These will include the **Lakshmana Temple, Vishvanath Temple, Parsvanath Temple, Devi Jagadamba Temple, Chitragupta Temple, Mahadeva Temple, Kandariya-Mahadev Temple** and you only need to stop when you've had absolutely had enough of Temples! A nice relaxing lunch in between and after the Temple experience, back to your relaxing hotel for a massage, Ayurvedic treatment or even a dip in the expansive pool. **These two days in Khajuraho we can celebrate "Holi", a Hindu Festival celebrating Lord Krishna.**



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Hotel

'Deluxe Room' at [Radisson Jass Hotel or similar](#)

Varanasi

3 nights

26, 27 & 28 March

Lets take our A/C mini bus to Satna where will board our train bound for Varanasi. We will be leaving Satna at about 12.30PM and be arriving at Varanasi early evening. A wonderful experience!

Be an early riser and walk down to the Ghat steps to the Ganges for sunrise. Come back to the hotel for a late breakfast after taking in the rituals spiritual Indians take for granted. Take a walk around the town of Varanasi and our guide can take you to the various temples around this fascinating town, and areas of interest.

Today after breakfast we will visit Sarnath, a famous deer park where Buddha received his enlightenment. At sunset we will again visit the Ganges and this time, for the Aarti Ceremony with lamps lit and chanting. Enjoy a blissful evening at dinner by the Ganges should you wish, and head to bed, tired, happy and spiritually awakened.

***Varanasi** is the India of your imagination. One of the most colourful and fascinating places on earth, surprises abound around every corner. This is one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities, and one of the holiest in Hinduism. Pilgrims come to the ghats lining the Ganges to wash away sins in the sacred waters or to cremate their loved ones. It's a particularly auspicious place to die, since 'expiring' (Indian terminology for dying) here offers moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth).*

*Most visitors agree Varanasi is magical but not for the faint-hearted. Intimate rituals of life and death take place in public, and the sights, sounds and smells on the ghats can be challenging. Still, the so-called '**City of Light**' may turn out to be your favourite stop of all.*

Hotel

'Superior Room' at [Taj Ganges](#) or similar



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Delhi
1 night
29 March

In the morning at your leisure, bathe in the spiritual nature of this very holy city of **Varanasi**. We will take a flight from Varanasi to Delhi after lunch. On arrival in Delhi we will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. Relax by the pool, stroll the streets, take in the culture, have a massage and just basically spoil yourself.

Hotel

'Deluxe Room' at [Shangri-La Hotel New Delhi](#) or similar

Delhi

A group yummy breakfast and a good old 'chin wag'... you will be taken to the airport for your return flight home, back to loved ones and the telling of some great stories! I know I will be able to say to all of you 'I'm so happy you have enjoyed your Pillow Menu Tour'. Thanks for contributing.

Flights to India and back home again

As your itinerary may vary from this tour, your flights and carrier is at your selection. We are happy to assist in your decision making if this is helpful.

Hosted Tour Experience

AUD \$4676.00 full experience including accommodation (excluding airfares)

AUD \$ 188.00 Flight Unarasai to Delhi on 29th March 2024

AUD \$ 4864.00 total

- Price based on per person twin-share, flexibility with dates may be able to be accommodated.
- Luxury 8 to 10 guests private tour, highest quality accommodation, fine cuisine.

Land Only Costs Include

- Accommodation on bed and breakfast basis as per mentioned above hotels or similar
- Early hotel check-in and late check-out, where possible, subject to availability
- All sightseeing, excursions; transfers using A/C Minibus (8-10 pax) as per program
- Parking, permits, gasoline, border taxes for the vehicle
- Services of accompanied English speaking escort for the entire duration of the program
- All Monument/Temple entrance fees as noted
- English speaking guides

Land Only Costs Exclude

- Any additional activities/unique experience in the program on direct payment basis
- Any item of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, telephone calls, etc.
- Camera fees (still/video) at any monuments
- Visa fees
- Any additional meals (unless specified)

Terms and Conditions

Land only prices exclude flights from Melbourne. \$1500 per person non-refundable deposit required at time of booking. Deposit is only refundable should [DFAT](#) issue a 'Do Not Travel' alert on their website within 30 days of departure. Otherwise, booking is non-refundable & dates are non-changeable once booking is confirmed. Please note above pricing is correct at time of printing. Pricing can change due to fluctuations. You are responsible for all visas, entry, health and other requirements and any documents required by laws, regulations, orders and/or requirements of countries visited. Pillow Menu Tours is not responsible for passport and visa requirements or for any loss you sustain for failing to comply with laws, regulations, orders and/or requirements of countries visited.

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