



Duration : 7 Days/ 6 Nights

Destinations : Delhi - Agra - Gwalior - Khajuraho - Bandhavgarh - Varanasi - Lucknow - Delhi

The quintessential Maharajas' Express experience and one of our most popular journeys exploring the mystique of India! The Maharajas' Express takes you on a sojourn exploring the hidden treasures of India ! Embark on an unforgettable escapade that starts off with the capital city of Delhi. Make your way through the sacred city of Varanasi and cruise on the River Ganges to observe ancient spiritual rites. Witness the immortal beauty of the Taj Mahal in Agra, the sensuous moods of the temples of Khajuraho, the elegance and imperial splendour of the Nawabs in Lucknow and the wilderness of the Bandhavgarh National Park.

Detail Itinerary

### **Day 01 / Sunday**

Board the Maharajas' Express in Delhi - Onto Agra

Welcome aboard the Maharajas' Express.

The epic journey begins at the Safdarjung Railway station. On arrival, proceed towards the Maharajas' Express and complete the pre-boarding formalities as you enjoy a welcome drink.

The Maharajas' Express departs Delhi this morning to Agra.

Enjoy a leisurely brunch on board as you journey through the picturesque countryside, arriving into the 'City of Mughal Splendour' Agra. On arrival disembark and explore the spectacular monuments of the city.

Agra, the jewel of India, is home to one of the world's great architectural wonders - the Taj Mahal. With its spectacular monumental masterpieces and picturesque natural setting, Agra is a legendary city glorified by time.

Visit the world famous Taj Mahal, built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan as the mausoleum for his favourite queen Mumtaz Mahal. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this incomparable marvel is constructed entirely out of white marble and is an architectural masterpiece with beautiful inlay work and marble screens. Approximately 20,000 of India's most revered craftsmen were recruited to give shape to this poetry in marble.

The highlight of the afternoon is a high tea atop the Taj Khema. Enjoy a glass of champagne as you admire the magnificent Taj Mahal at sunset.

Enjoy some free time shopping for pietra dura marble and fine Mughal Jewellery keeping the traditional Mughal arts alive.

Return to the comfort of the train and continue your journey to Gwalior.

Brunch on board; High tea at Taj Khema; Dinner on board Overnight on the Maharajas' Express.

### **Day 02 / Monday**

Gwalior

This morning, during breakfast, you journey through the fascinating and dramatic Chambal Ravines which served as the home to some of India's most notorious dacoits. Admire the dramatic landscape of deep and narrow gorges, undulating sandy hills interspersed with rich fields. Late morning the Maharajas' Express arrives into the royal city of Gwalior.

A city where many reigning dynasties have left indelible etchings of their rule on all its palaces, temples

and monuments. These mementos of a glorious past have been preserved, giving Gwalior a timeless appeal.

Following disembarkation, continue for lunch to the Usha Kiran Palace. On arrival experience a Royal traditional welcome. Enter this 120-year-old palace, which has played host to the King of England, set amidst 9 acres of beautifully landscaped lawns and outfitted with artistic stone carvings and delicate filigree work.

After lunch, proceed on a tour of the magnificent Gwalior Fort, admiring its enclosed exquisite temples and palaces, the most spectacular being the Man Mandir Palace. This palace is a masterpiece of Rajput architecture, embellished with exquisite stone carving and latticework. Some of the other fascinating sights within the 3km fort enclosure are the 21 colossal Jain sculptures depicting the 'tirthankaras' (one who has achieved freedom from the cycle of rebirth) carved into the rock face and the famous Saas-Bahu (Mother and Daughter-in-law) temples covered with beautiful sculptures of dancing girls and deities. Your visit continues to the opulent Jai Vilas Palace Museum, a section of which still remains the residence of the royal family of Gwalior. Enjoy exploring the unique exhibits in the museum, the most exquisite being the unique model train made of crystal to serve drinks and aperitifs during the Royal banquets in the Durbar Hall. Admire the stupendous Durbar Hall with its crystal staircase, arched ceiling with stunning gold leaf work supporting two of the world's largest chandeliers. The legend goes that in order to test the strength of the ceiling to support the chandeliers, several elephants were made to stand on the ceiling. A grand finale to the exciting day is the Royal spread of the finest delicacies of the Royal kitchens served in the grand compound of the Palace.

Late evening return to the comfort of the train.

Breakfast on board; Lunch at Usha Kiran Palace; Supper at Jai Vilas Palace Overnight on the Maharajas' Express.

### **Day 03 / Tuesday**

Orchha – Khajuraho

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast on board the train as she continues her journey through some of the most dramatic and picturesque environs towards Khajuraho. Enroute you will enjoy a stop at the bejewelled town of Orchha.

On arrival in Orchha, disembark and venture on tour of the quaint domain of the Bundela Kings. Visit the Jahangiri Mahal which is an excellent example of the Rajput Bundela architecture. Marvel the multi layered palace with its 132 chambers. A striking feature of the palace are the sandstone walls embellished with lapis lazuli tiles and ornate jail screens. Catch a glimpse of some rituals being performed as you pass the beautiful temple of Chaturbhuj which is a unique blend of fort and temple architecture. Not to be missed are the beautiful chhatris better known as cenotaphs of the Orchha rulers lying along the Betwa River.

Return to the train and continue onwards to the temple city of Khajuraho. Admire the rich landscape as you have lunch on board.

Khajuraho is renowned for its architecture and exquisite sculptures. Built between 950 and 1050 AD in a truly inspired burst of creativity, the temples are superb examples of Indo-Aryan architecture. The highly sensual engravings depict the whole range of human emotions and relationships.

On arrival proceed on a tour of the magnificent temples of Khajuraho, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Explore the Western group which constitutes some of the finest examples of Chandela art at its peak.

Visit the Kandariya Mahadev Temple and the Chaunsath Yogini Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and the 64 Yoginis respectively.

Continue to the Eastern group of temples. Visit the exquisite Jain Temples and admire some of the finest sculpture and carvings.

Experience the fascinating Son-et-Lumière spectacle, which evokes the life and times of the great Chandela Kings and traces the story of the unique temples from the 10th Century to the present day.

Return to the comfort of the train and continue your journey to the Bandhavgarh National Park. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner on Board Overnight on the Maharajas' Express.

#### **Day 04 / Wednesday**

Umaria (Bandhavgarh National Park)

This morning, as you enjoy breakfast the train rolls into Umaria. Disembark and prepare yourself for an exciting drive to the Bandhavgarh National Park. With the highest known density of tigers, it was the former hunting grounds of the Maharaja of Rewa. Animals such as deers, langurs, sloth bears and exotic birds can also be found here.

You will have the opportunity to participate in the 'Forests for Tigers' program – this involves reforestation of Tiger habitat, an insight into the various projects, visit to villages surrounding the park, interaction with a wildlife artist followed by lunch.

Later continue on a jeep safari into the park exploring the flora and fauna. The grasslands and sal forests are home to a rich variety of wildlife including the tiger. Wildlife in India cannot be compared to Africa and you are indeed fortunate if you spot the elusive tiger.

Later you will return to Umaria and board the train.

Breakfast on board; Lunch at wildlife resort; Dinner on Board Overnight on the Maharajas' Express.

#### **Day 05 / Thursday**

Varanasi

Today as you enjoy breakfast, your journey continues from the royal jungles through rich agricultural fields, arriving into the holy city of Varanasi.

One of the oldest living cities in the world, Varanasi (also known as Kashi or Benares) has a spiritual legacy of over 3000 years. A place of pilgrimage, this holy city is set on the banks of the sacred river Ganges. Varanasi epitomizes the chaos and colour of India. Lively bazaars, exquisite and bright silks, festivals, temples, mosques and palaces – all can be found here.

Following disembarkation, your tour begins with the visit to ancient ruins of Sarnath, where Buddha delivered his first sermon expounding the principles of Buddhism. Visit the ruins, stupa and the Ashoka Pillar, whose four back-to-back lions have been adopted as India's national emblem.

After a sumptuous lunch, visit the world famous Varanasi Silk Weaving Centre. You can even shop for some world famous Banarasi silk saris and brocades.

Proceed for a scenic cruise on the river Ganges and witness a magical evening aarti at the ghats of the holy Ganges. The chants of Sanskrit mantras, the clash of cymbals and drums, the scent of flowers, incense and sandalwood and the blazing camphor lamp and many flamed aarti raised high in the air, makes for an absolute magical evening to remember!!

Rejoin the train and head to your next destination.

Breakfast on board; Lunch at a hotel; Dinner on board Overnight on the Maharajas' Express.

#### **Day 06 / Friday**

Lucknow

Enjoy traversing through the lush green agricultural belt of Uttar Pradesh as you relish your breakfast on board. Late morning, the Maharajas' Express slowly pulls into the fabled 'City of Nawabs', Lucknow.

This morning you will explore the dramatic ruins of Imperialistic Lucknow as you visit The Residency, started by Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulla and completed by Nawab Sadat Ali for the British resident in 1800.

Unravel the history of the Mutiny of 1857 at the Residency as you explore her ruins and visit the main Residency building which houses an interesting Museum displaying the original model of the Residency, old lithographs, photographs, paintings, documents and period-objects.

Experience the imperialistic splendour and mystical elegance of the Nawabs of Awadh as you visit their architectural wonders like the famous 'Rumi Darwaza', a beautifully ornamented gateway; the

spectacular Bada Imambara considered to be the largest vaulted apartment in the world comprising of ornamental gateways, corridors and galleries.

Following lunch, you will return to the train and may join the Nawabi evening later. For those who wish to explore further, the bustling markets of this royal city will not disappoint.

This evening you will be transported into the glorious era of the Nawabs of Avadh as you experience the traditional hospitality typical to the Royal Houses, celebrating an 'Indian Evening'. The mesmerising music, exquisite courtesan dance and the Royal Culinary Delights from the Nawabi kitchens – all combine to bring alive the elegance and charm of the Nawabi era.

Then return to the train and continue on your onward journey.

Breakfast on board; Lunch at a hotel; Nawabi Evening Dinner at a Private residence Overnight on the Maharajas' Express.

### **Day 07 / Saturday**

Disembark in Delhi

Early this morning the train pulls into New Delhi. Following breakfast on board you will disembark.

Bid farewell to the Maharajas' Express as your 'Classical India' journey comes to an end. The royal journey is over, but the memory of which, will live on forever!

Breakfast on the Maharajas' Express.