

North India Women-only Cultural Tour 2017

Itinerary dates: **October 11 - 22, 2017**

Tour Leader: **Beth Whitman**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the iconic **Taj Mahal**, a truly breathtaking experience
- Take part in **cooking classes/demonstrations** to learn about the intricacies of Indian cuisine
- Be welcomed for meals in the **homes of several families**
- Visit Sambhali Trust and know that **part of your tour cost goes to helping Rajasthani women and girls**
- Returning Wanderlusters receive a **5% discount** on the land cost

The tour begins on Wednesday, October 11. Though there are no activities on this day, your hotel is covered for this first night in India as it's your arrival day in Delhi.

ITINERARY

Day 1

Wednesday, October 11, 2017 – Arrive in Delhi

Meals: None

Upon arrival at the airport (usually late evening), you will be met by a driver and transferred to the hotel.

Overnight in Delhi at [The Park Hotel](#) or similar.

Day 2

Thursday, October 12, 2017 – Delhi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

On this, our first full day in India, the group will tour **both Old and New Delhi**. We'll start by visiting **New Delhi** with its **wide tree-lined boulevards** and upscale homes. We'll see **beautiful parks**, the magnificent **Parliament Building**, **Rashtrapati Bhavan** (the official residence of the President of India) and **India Gate**. We'll also see some of New Delhi's more interesting sites, including **Qutab Minar**, the 72.5-meter tower that dates back to the 13th century, and **Humayun's Tomb** (built in the 16th century).

After lunch at a South Indian restaurant, we'll tour **Old Delhi**, which is filled with **street markets** and **bazaars** found among a **maze of narrow lanes**. We'll visit the famous **Red Fort**, the **Jama Masjid Mosque** and bustling **Chandni Chowk**—an area known for its variety of street stalls and shops—and take a rickshaw ride through this area!

We'll then take a **walking tour** and see Old Delhi from a completely different perspective. We'll explore the gullies (streets) of **Shahjahanabad** and take a walk through a **local bazaar** with a chance to experience a variety of snacks (chaat) and see some of the **oldest shops** producing these world-famous treats.

After the walking tour, we'll be welcomed into a **traditional Hindu home**, a haveli, for a demonstration and tasting of home-style Indian vegetarian cooking. This is not a cooking class, rather an **opportunity to visit a family's home** and to see traditional Mughal architecture and get a glimpse of daily life in the city.

Overnight in Delhi at [The Park Hotel](#) or similar.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Today will be a **fantastic introduction** to not only the city of Delhi, but also to India itself as you'll see a wide cross-section of life and culture.

Day 3

Friday, October 13, 2017 – Delhi – Jodhpur

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll depart for the airport for our **flight to Jodhpur**, where we'll then check into our hotel and have lunch.

In the afternoon, we'll visit **Sambhali Trust**.

NOTE – *A portion of your tour cost will cover a donation made to Sambhali Trust. This organization provides underprivileged Rajasthani women and girls with educational, vocational and social opportunities to help them become confident and financially independent. They work specifically with Dalit (untouchable) women and girls, who usually have little or no access to education or basic health services.*

Dinner and overnight in Jodhpur at [Ratan Vilas](#) or similar.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** You'll be deeply touched by the good work of the **Sambhali Trust** and you'll get to learn about the **confidence and skills** the organization instills upon its beneficiaries.

Day 4

Saturday, October 14, 2017 – Jodhpur

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

After breakfast, we'll tour Jodhpur, visiting **Mehrangarh Fort** and **Jaswant Thada**, a marble memorial to Maharaja Jaswant Singh. Some sections of the thin marble walls are translucent (often referred to as something of a miracle). We'll also visit **Umaid Bhawan Palace**—the only Indian palace built in the Jodhpur mid-20th century and a good representation of Indo-colonial style.

For lunch, we'll **visit the home of a family!** We'll see a **typical Rajasthani home**, learn about the life of this local family and enjoy **traditional dishes** that are prepared in every Jodhpur home.

In the afternoon, we'll have time to **visit the market**, which is quite a happening place. Here we'll find vendors selling clothes, sweets, fruits, bangles, handicrafts and groceries.

Tonight dinner is on your own so as to provide an opportunity for variety and flexibility.

Overnight in Jodhpur at [Ratan Vilas](#) or similar.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Jodhpur, the second largest city in Rajasthan, is also called **the blue city**, due to the many blue-painted homes. It's a city of **palaces, forts** and **temples**, and the residents have become known for their **handicrafts**.

Day 5

Sunday, October 15, 2017 – Jodhpur – Ranakpur – Udaipur

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll make the drive to **charming Udaipur**. This will be a long drive (six hours total), but will be broken up with a visit to **Ranakpur** to see the spectacular Jain temples located there.

We'll then continue the drive to Udaipur where we'll check into our hotel.

In the late afternoon, we'll enjoy a **boat ride on the placid waters of Lake Pichola** (subject to the water level in the lake). Afterward, we'll have dinner at a **fantastic lakeside restaurant** with beautiful views of this small city and the palace.

Overnight in Udaipur at [Lalit Laxmi Vilas Palace](#) or similar.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Ranakpur is home to **spectacular Jain temples** acclaimed for intricate carvings and considered the **most important temples** for Jain followers.

Day 6

Monday, October 16, 2017 – Udaipur

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

After breakfast, we'll go to **Eklingji and Nagda temples**. Located on Lake Bageela (about 15 miles from Udaipur), these are built from sandstone and marble and are a **Hindu pilgrimage site**.

After visiting the temples, we'll be treated to a four-hour **cooking class with Shashi**. We'll learn many new skills from this amazing woman, including how to make chai, chutneys, curries and Indian breads. Yum!

After enjoying a sumptuous lunch, we'll take a sightseeing tour of Udaipur in the afternoon. This will include the **Udaipur City Palace Complex**, considered the largest palace complex in Rajasthan, **Durbar Hall**, the **Crystal Gallery**, **Palace Museum** and **Jagdish Temple**.

Dinner is on your own (if you're still hungry after today's cooking class!).

Overnight in Udaipur at [Lalit Laxmi Vilas Palace](#) or similar.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Udaipur is called **The Venice of the East** and you'll soon see why. This enchanting city is surrounded by the Aravalli mountain range and is situated on the **edge of three lakes**.

Day 7

Tuesday, October 17, 2017 – Udaipur – Deogarh

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll drive to **Deogarh** (about 3.5 hours away). We'll stay at an incredible **fortified palace** from the 17th century. This luxury heritage hotel is surrounded by a small town on a hilltop in the heart of Rajasthan's Aravalli Hills. We'll have lunch and some time to relax at this beautiful hotel.

In the afternoon, we'll take a **Jeep safari to nearby villages**. This will be a drive through natural surroundings where people can be seen tending their fields.

We'll visit a cave temple—a **cavernous rock** in which a shrine of Lord Shiva is ensconced. The top of this rock offers a **panoramic view of black volcanic rocks**. The drive then leads to a lake that attracts migratory birds.

In the evening, we'll be treated to a **cooking demonstration** that will include Rajasthani cuisine. This will consist of traditionally cooked food garnished with chilies and mustard oil. Delicacies include **laal maas, safed maas, daal baati choorma, besan batta, ker sangri** (vegetarian dishes) and more.

Overnight in Deogarh at [Deogarh Mahal](#) or similar.



HIGHLIGHT! We'll have another opportunity this evening to learn about **preparing and cooking Indian cuisine**. You'll soon be an expert!

Day 8

Wednesday, October 18, 2017 – Deogarh – Jaipur

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll depart for **Jaipur** (about 5.5 hours away). Along the way, we'll stop for lunch.

Jaipur is a wonderful city known for its **shopping opportunities** including fabrics, gems, jewelry and handicrafts.

Dinner and overnight in Jaipur at [Shahpura House](#) or similar.

Day 9

Thursday, October 19, 2017 – Jaipur (Diwali festivities)


Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today, we'll take a full-day tour of **Jaipur**, starting with the **Amber Fort**. This is an extremely well-preserved building and is a delight to explore. We'll have a chance to visit the **Hall of Victory** that glitters with mirrors, **Jai Mahal** and the **Temple of Kali**.

After lunch at a nearby restaurant, the city tour will continue with stops at the **Jantar Mantar** (the Astronomical Observatory) and the **Maharaja's City Palace**.

In the evening, we'll celebrate one of India's biggest festivals, **Diwali!** We'll have **dinner with a local family** and we'll see homes decorated and illuminated with **thousands of candles and lamps in honor of the goddess Lakshmi.**

Overnight in Jaipur at [Shahpura House](#) or similar.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** Today will be filled with many highlights, but **celebrating Diwali** will sure to be top of the list for this tour. This festival signifies goodwill and the victory of good over evil, light over darkness. Earthenware oil lamps are lit to guide Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, into people's homes and answer their prayers for a successful year ahead. **We'll all end the day with much luck for the coming year!**

Day 10

Friday, October 20, 2017 – Jaipur – Fatehpur Sikri – Agra

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll drive to **Agra** (approximately 4.5 hours), stopping at **Fatehpur Sikri** along the way. Also known as the Red Sandstone City, Emperor Akbar built his capital and palace here in the late 16th century.

We'll stop for lunch along the way and then, upon arrival in Agra, we'll check into the hotel and have a chance to rest before we head out again.

In the late afternoon, we'll visit **Agra Fort**, a massive structure with **70-foot-high, 1.5-mile-long walls.** The fort encompasses a collection of well-preserved buildings. Shah Jahan (who built the Taj Mahal) was deposed by his son and imprisoned in Agra Fort where he remained until his death. Sadly, he spent the rest of his life looking out along the river at the Taj, the final resting place for his wife.

Dinner and overnight in Agra at [ITC Mughal Luxury Hotel](#) or similar.

Day 11


Saturday, October 21, 2017 – Agra – Delhi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today we'll rise early for coffee and then a visit to the legendary **Taj Mahal for sunrise**, the best time to photograph this mausoleum.

After returning to the hotel for a full breakfast, we'll check out and then drive the four or so hours to Delhi.

Dinner is on your own and we'll overnight, once again, at [The Park Hotel](#) or similar.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** No visit to India is complete without seeing the **Taj Mahal.** Built in the mid-1600s, this ivory-marble marvel might literally take your breath away.

Day 12

Sunday, October 22, 2017 – Delhi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

This will be the last full day in India for some of you.

This morning, we'll take a tour with the Salaam Baalak Trust, an organization that helps knock down barriers for street children and other children marginalized by society. We'll go on an **hour-long guided walk** led by a young person who knows the streets of Old Delhi first hand, and who has become a trained guide.

While this is a look at India's sadder side, it will be an **enlightening way** to leave the country as you'll have a better understanding of how people survive day by day. All proceeds go directly to helping the Trust that puts together this tour. (Note that this is not a slum tour, but a walk through the Paharganj neighborhood.)

We'll have the rest of the day free for **last-minute souvenir shopping**, relaxing or a massage at the hotel. For those of you departing tonight, you'll have access to your room until 6 p.m. while those going to Varanasi will spend one more night at this hotel.

If you are adding Varanasi on to your itinerary, the add-on includes this additional night in Delhi at [The Park Hotel](#) or similar, but does not include dinner.



Add-on Option: Varanasi

Cost includes one night in Delhi, 2 nights in Varanasi.

Day 13

Monday, October 23, 2017 – Delhi – Varanasi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today we'll check out of our hotel in Delhi and head to the airport for our **flight to Varanasi** that departs in the late morning. Once in Varanasi, we'll be met by our local guide, have lunch and check in to the hotel.

We'll have some time in the afternoon to **explore on our own** or to rest. Varanasi, situated on the banks of the sacred Ganges River, has been a center of learning and civilization for over 2,000 years. The hotel is close to the Ganges River so if you want to venture out, **this should be fascinating!**

In the evening, the group will be led by a guide on a walk to Dashaswamedh Ghat. Along the way, we'll meander through a crowded **local market** where we'll find **spices, cloths, fruits, pickles, vegetables** and more sold in the shops and on hand-pulled carts.

At the ghat, we'll find the nightly **aarti (prayer)**, a ceremony that includes huge lamps set ablaze alongside the river. We'll also see many pilgrims as well as a priest chanting hymns. This will be a **mesmerizing and truly spiritual event**.

Because this will be a late night at the aarti, you can either have an early or late dinner on your own.

Overnight in Varanasi at [Hotel Ganges View](#) or similar.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** The **aarti** is a Hindu devotional hymn normally sung at the conclusion of any religious ceremony or puja, or simply by itself at sunrise or sunset. This is an **incredibly spiritual event** and one you won't forget.

Day 14

Tuesday, October 24, 2017 – Varanasi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

In the early morning, we'll drive to **Daswamedh Ghat** and take a boat ride on the Ganges, this time to see the **cremation ghats** and to witness the long-held traditions of one of the world's oldest and most important religions. We'll enjoy **sunrise while boating** on the river.

Afterward, we'll visit the **Kashi Vishwanath Temple** and then make our way back to the hotel for breakfast.

We'll then be treated to a **city tour** that includes a visit to **Bharat Mata Mandir** (Mother India Temple), **Durga Temple** and **Benares Hindu University**.

After lunch at the hotel, we'll drive to **Sarnath**, one of the most **sacred places for Buddhists**. This is where Buddha gave his **first sermon** after attaining enlightenment. We'll visit the famous **Dhamaekha Stupa, Moolgandha Kuti Vihar** and the **Sarnath Museum**, which has a rich **collection of antiques** from ancient India.

In the early evening, we'll be invited as guests into another **local home for dinner** to learn about traditions and beliefs held by those living in this area.

Overnight in Varanasi at [Hotel Ganges View](#) or similar.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Though it's been called many names over the years, Sarnath is known by all as the place where **Buddha gave his first dharma teachings**. We'll visit Deer Park and other holy sights here.

Day 15

Wednesday, October 25, 2017 – Varanasi – Delhi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast we'll go to **Old Varanasi**, where we'll take a walking tour. This is where we'll see Varanasi's famous **extremely narrow lanes**, where there will be people, oxen, cows and buffaloes all trying to get to their destinations.

We'll have lunch at a local restaurant before transferring to the airport for our **flight to Delhi** that departs in the mid-afternoon.

Upon arrival in Delhi, a guide will meet us and escort us to a hotel to wash up, change and get ready for our evening flights home. We'll also make time for dinner this evening before leaving India.

****Itinerary is subject to change without notice.**