

North India Women-only Cultural Tour

Itinerary dates: October 30 – November 10, 2018 + Varanasi add-on
Tour Escort: Debi Goldman

HIGHLIGHTS

- Tour the iconic **Taj Mahal**, a truly breathtaking experience
- Visit during **Diwali festivities**
- Take part in a **cooking class** with a dynamic woman to learn about the intricacies of Indian cuisine
- Be welcomed for meals in the **homes of local families**
- Visit the Sambhali Trust and know that **part of your tour cost goes to help Rajasthani women and girls**
- Returning Wanderlusters receive a **5% discount** on the land cost

The tour begins on Tuesday, October 30. 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

Tuesday, October 30, 2018 – Arrive in Delhi

Meal: 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

Wednesday, October 31, 2018 – Delhi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

On this, our first full day in India, we'll begin by touring **Old Delhi**. Here, the area is filled with **street markets** and **bazaars** found among a **maze of narrow lanes**. We'll first visit **Jama Masjid**, India's second largest mosque. From here we'll take a rickshaw ride and make our way through bustling **Chandni Chowk**—a 350-year-old market area known for its variety of street stalls and shops.

We'll have **lunch in the haveli** (home) of a local family where we'll sample a variety of home-cooked Indian foods. This will be a fantastic introduction to the cuisine of the country!

After lunch, we'll tour New Delhi with a visit to **Humayun's Tomb** and then take a drive along Rajpath where we'll see the imposing **India Gate, Parliament House** and the **President's Residence**.

Dinner and 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 and thoroughly enjoy the **rickshaw ride through narrow lanes and alleys**.

Day 3

Thursday, November 1, 2018 – 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 the **Sambhali Trust**, an organization that helps disadvantaged women and children through a variety of programs.

NOTE – *A portion of your tour cost will cover a donation made to the 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. To date, this 10-year-old organization has helped more than 10,000 women and children.*

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

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** You'll be deeply touched by the amazing work done for the women and children who are supported by the **Sambhali Trust**. Young girls are rescued from the street and given a place to stay while adult women are taught skills that help them provide for their family.

Day 4

Friday, November 2, 2018 – 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 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 a handicraft or textile factory** where we'll find some exquisite items that will make wonderful souvenirs.

Tonight's dinner is on your own so as to provide an opportunity for variety and flexibility. You might choose to have a **light meal** at the hotel restaurant or enjoy **drinks by the beautiful pool**.

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

Saturday, November 3, 2018 – 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 evening, 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

Sunday, November 4, 2018 – Udaipur

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

After breakfast, we'll enjoy a **boat ride on the placid waters of Lake Pichola** (subject to the water level in the lake). We'll then 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!

In the afternoon, we'll take a sightseeing tour of Udaipur. 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!** Shashi has an **amazing story** about her rise to become one of the most popular cooking instructors in India. Your **heart will be warmed** and your stomach full after a visit to her kitchen!

Day 7

Monday, November 5, 2018 – Udaipur – Deogarh

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll drive to **Deogarh** (about 3.5 hours away). Along the way, we'll stop at **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**.

We'll then drive onward to our accommodations for the night—a **fortified palace** from the 17th century. This heritage property is surrounded by a small town in the heart of Rajasthan's Aravalli Hills. We'll have lunch and some time to relax at this historic family-owned hotel.

In the afternoon, we'll take a **Jeep safari to nearby villages**. This will be a drive through the city (where you'll see people preparing for Diwali) as well as through the countryside where farmers can be seen tending their fields.

Around sunset, we'll visit a lake where we'll stop for **happy hour treats**. We'll then return to the hotel for dinner.

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

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** You'll love rambling through the countryside in an **open-air jeep** and enjoying **hors d'oeuvres** lakeside!

Day 8

Tuesday, November 6, 2018 – 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. After arriving in Jaipur, we may have an opportunity to visit a handicraft factory or two or, if you prefer, you'll have **leisure time** to explore on your own.

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

Day 9

Wednesday, November 7, 2018 – 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 a delightful **happy hour** at the hotel (complete with **henna and saris!**) and attend a **puja** (prayer) with the hotel's owners. The evening is capped off with a **rooftop dinner** and **fireworks**.

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

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** Today will be filled with many highlights, but **celebrating Diwali** will surely be at the 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 end the day with much luck for the coming year!**

Day 10

Thursday November 8, 2018 – Jaipur – Fatehpur Sikri – Agra

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll drive to **Agra** (approximately 4.5 hours), stopping for lunch along the way. 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 the legendary **Taj Mahal for sunset**. We'll have time to walk around and through this white marble memorial that took 22 years to complete. Its stunning design and perfect symmetry is also noted for some of the **best inlay work ever seen**.

Dinner and overnight in Agra at [ITC Mughal Luxury 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 11

Friday, November 9, 2018 – Agra – Delhi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

After breakfast, 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.

Afterward, we'll 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.



Day 12

Saturday, November 10, 2018 – 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 take 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.

In the afternoon, we'll visit Haus Klaz, a quiet neighborhood filled with cafes and shops. We'll have a traditional lunch here as well as some time to wander the streets for **last-minute souvenir shopping**. We'll return to the hotel in the afternoon where you may have time to relax by the pool or get a massage. 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, two nights in Varanasi.

Day 13

Sunday, November 11, 2018 – Delhi – Varanasi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks

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, we'll take a boat ride along the Ganges for the evening **aarti (prayer)**. This is a nightly ceremony alongside the river that includes chanting, the ringing of bells and movement of huge lamps. We'll also see many pilgrims who come to watch this event, which is **mesmerizing and truly spiritual**.

In lieu of dinner, we'll have snacks served on the boat this evening.

Overnight in Varanasi at [Guleria Kothi Hotel](#) 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

Monday, November 12, 2018 – Varanasi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

In the early morning, we'll enjoy another boat ride on the Ganges, this time at **sunrise**. We'll float by the **cremation ghats** to witness the long-held traditions of Hinduism, one of the world's oldest and most important religions.

Afterward, we'll make our way back to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast, you'll have time on your own to **walk along the ghats** or through the many **narrow alleys** that lie behind the hotel. There's much to see here in this fascinating city!

After lunch, 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.

Tonight we'll be hosted by another local family and enjoy dinner at their **beautiful home** perched along the Ganges.

Overnight in Varanasi at [Guleria Kothi Hotel](#) 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

Tuesday, November 13, 2018 – Varanasi – Delhi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast, we'll take a walking tour of **Old Varanasi**. While the hosts of this tour are Westerners, they have long lived in the area and are very educated on the city's history and culture. This just may be one of the **very best walking tours** you've ever taken!

We'll have lunch back at the hotel 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 nearby hotel to wash up, change and get ready for our evening flights home. We'll also make time for a final dinner this evening before leaving India.

** If you are interested in booking additional nights in Delhi, we can help with this.

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