

Taj Mahal



POST-LADAKH EXTENSION

BY TRAIN TO AGRA
THE TAJ MAHAL, FORT ROUGE AND FATEHPUR SIKRI

HIMALAYAN ODYSSEY TOURS

BY TRAIN TO AGRA: THE TAJ MAHAL, FORT ROUGE AND FATEHPUR SIKRI

Overnight excursion from Delhi to Agra, with visits to three UNESCO world heritage sites: the incomparable Taj Mahal, the Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri.

This optional post-trip extension begins from the same 5-star boutique hotel in Delhi (Hotel Siddarth) that is our home for the first and last nights of the main tour. The standard itinerary calls for a departure from Delhi back to the U.S. on July 26. Participants in this extension will depart India July 28.

We leave our very comfortable accommodations at Hotel Siddarth early morning for a 6:00 A.M. departure by deluxe, air conditioned express train to Agra – about a three hour ride. The views from the train will offer a fascinating perspective into a very different dimension of India than we've just experienced in the far north. The landscape, ethnicity and culture here is far more classically "Indian" than the arid, high altitude Himalayan world of Ladakh.

We will be met at the Agra train station by our driver and guide, and spend the day exploring the sights of Agra by air conditioned SUV or mini-van. We overnight in Agra at the 5-star Jaypees Palace hotel, with dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant. The following morning we continue our exploration of the Agra area, departing mid-afternoon by private car for the return trip to Delhi. We should arrive back in Delhi with time for relaxing at the hotel or last-minute shopping and packing for our departure back to the U.S. the following day.



The Taj Mahal

Perhaps no other single man-made structure in the world is so universally admired and so iconic a travel destination. Often cited as one of the "Seven Wonders of the World", the Taj Mahal is a masterwork of Mughal architecture and an emblematic symbol of love and devotion.

The Taj was commissioned in 1632 by the Emperor Shah Jahan as a tribute to his favored wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who had died giving birth to their fourteenth child. No expense or effort was spared in creating the most magnificent structure possible. Over twenty years in the making, a work force of 20,000 laborers and 1,000 elephants transported the finest materials from across the subcontinent and central Asia to Agra, where the most accomplished master craftsmen and artisans from many countries labored together in common purpose.

Although the white domed marble mausoleum is the most recognizable element of the Taj, it is actually just one component in an integrated complex of structures that includes several outlying buildings, gardens and reflecting pools.

The Red Fort of Agra

The Red Fort (Fort Rouge, Lal Qila) takes its name from the massive red sandstone walls that encircle it. Once the imperial city of successive Mughal dynasties, it served as the center of government, the state treasury and the state mint. Within this sprawling complex are numerous palaces and beautiful mosques and pavilions, dating from the 1600s. The Red Fort combines elements of both Hindu and Islamic architecture, and incorporates decorative imagery of living beings, such as elephants and birds – which is forbidden in purely Islamic structures.

Fatehpur Sikri

Located 26 miles from Agra, this city was the political capital of the Mughal Empire in the latter 1500s. In the Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages, Fateh means victory, and the city was built to commemorate Emperor Babur's defeat of Rana Sanga in the battle of Khanwa. An especially eclectic display of cultural influences and motifs, Fatehpur Sikri employed Bengali and Gujarati craftsmen, creating a synthesis of Hindu, Jain and Islamic styles. Fatehpur Sikri is regarded as the apex of Akbar's architectural legacy.



EXCURSION COSTS:

\$875*

Per person, all inclusive of one additional night's stay at the Hotel Siddarth in Delhi, one night's stay at the Jaypee Palace hotel in Agra, all meals in Agra, transportation (one-way by train, one-way by private vehicle), drivers, guide, and monument entrance fees. Not inclusive are alcoholic drinks, tips to drivers and guides, or dinner on the evening of the 27th.

**Based on double occupancy hotel rooms. For solo hotel accommodations, please add \$220.*