

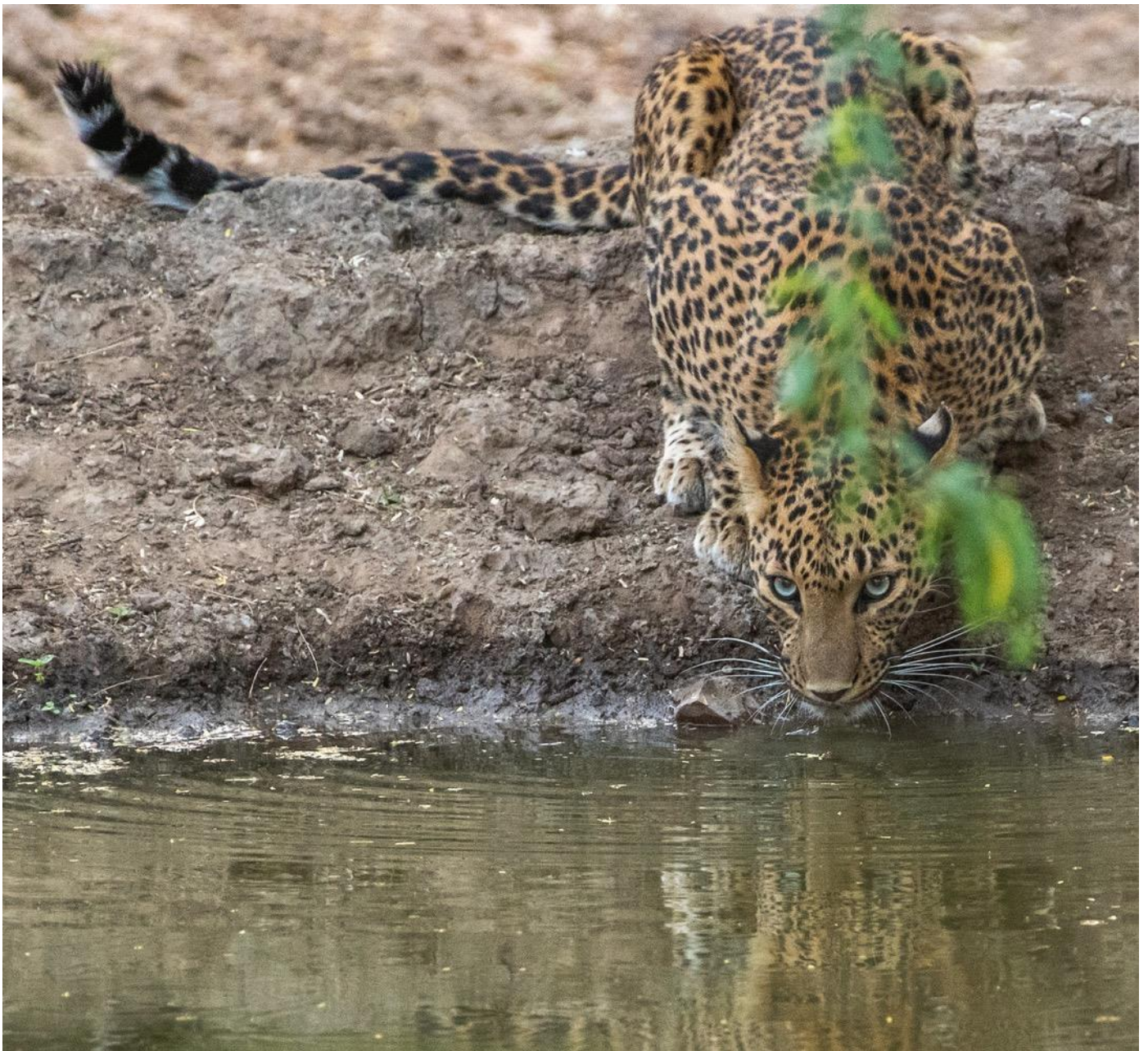
# TRACKS SAFARIS

WE GET YOU CLOSER



## 15 NIGHT RAJASTHAN WILDERNESS JOURNEY

Delhi – Agra – Jaipur – Ranthambhore – Shahpura Bagh – Jodhpur – Jawai - Udaipur





We have curated this itinerary to showcase one of the most popular tourist states of India – Rajasthan. Here is India's quintessential land of maharajas and medieval forts, palaces and tigers, and kaleidoscopic festivals. Rajasthan really is the jewel in India's crown.

Although this journey is largely focused on wilderness we have introduced various facets of India. The journey kicks off at the daunting mega-metropolis of Delhi with its majestic Mughal heritage. It then angles to Agra where one of the world's most famous tombs, the Taj Mahal, defines the city with its exquisite proportions. Your journey continues to Jaipur – a city painted pink with some of the most colourful bazaars in India and the capital and gateway to Rajasthan. Once you have slept in a palace, explored a medieval fort or swayed on a camel, you'll want to experience more!

We then explore the Aravali jungles of Ranthambhore in search of wildlife before venturing into remoter parts of Rajasthan to Shahpura, Jodpur and Jawai and completing the tour in the beautiful city of Udaipur – the city of lakes.

On this journey we will seek out the following wildlife in various pockets of natural heritage:

**Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary:** Painted storks, Asian openbill stork, black-headed white ibis, red naped ibis, black bittern, mallards, teal, bar-headed goose, greylag goose, purple swamp hen, scops owl and the eagle owl to name a few.

**Ranthambhore:** Tiger, leopard, sloth bear, jungle cat, jackal, striped hyena, nilgai antelope, Indian gazelle, ruddy mongoose, rock monitor lizard and the marsh crocodile.

**Jawai & Jaipur:** Leopard, jungle cat, rusty-spotted cat, oriental garden lizard, hyena and jackal.



## DAY ONE

**The capital of India – New Delhi** welcomes as you arrive at the IGI International Airport. Our representative will receive you at the airport in the arrival hall after you clear your immigration and customs and escort you to your hotel (Standard Check-in time is 1400 hrs). The rest of the day is at leisure.

Delhi is a curious mix – of the traditional and the modern. Prepare to be charmed by the seamless intermingling of the old and the new. Monuments that have stood witness to the rise and fall of empires stand harmoniously by new age restaurants and bars that offer a variety of world cuisines! Delhi's recorded history dates back, to over 1500 BC, and each kingdom that ruled over the city left an indelible mark on it.

**Overnight stay will be at The Claridges, New Delhi on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis**



## DAY TWO

After breakfast your tour expert will take you to the city tour. The experience begins with the visit of Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India. After this visit, hop on to your rickshaws and enter the colourful, narrow alleys and gullies of Old Delhi.

Discover the gems of the main street of Chandni Chowk. Then proceed into busy streets which are forever bustling with the clamour and routine of daily trade, offering a glimpse of life back in the day and age when the city started out as a commercial hub. Visit the famous firecracker market, see exquisite silver jewellery, antique items, perfumes and piping hot, scrumptious jalebis, an Indian deep-fried desert. Proceed to Kinari Bazaar or wedding market where one can buy all the paraphernalia required for an Indian wedding. Also visit Asia's largest spice market, where spices, which in times gone by were once so valuable that they caused invasions and fierce battles, are still traded! On the way, you have the option of sampling some of Delhi's delicious street food from Jalebis to samosas!



Later proceed for the tour of New Delhi which will include exploring the iconic government buildings – including President's House and Parliament. Your drive takes you along the ceremonial avenue, Rajpath, past the imposing India Gate.

**Overnight stay will be at The Claridges, New Delhi on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis**

### **DAY THREE**

After your breakfast at the hotel you will be driven to Agra (200 kms/4 hour drive). Upon arrival check-in at hotel (check-in time is 1400 hours) in time for lunch. This afternoon you will enjoy a guided tour of **Agra Fort & Taj Mahal**.

**Agra:** At the time of the Mughals, in the 16th & 17th centuries, Agra was the capital of the grand Mughal Empire. During this period, the city became a leading centre of art, science, commerce and culture. Akbar the Great made Agra great. The city's origins are relatively unknown, but Akbar's grandfather Babur is credited with Agra's founding. The short golden age of Agra came to an end with the seventeenth century reign of Shah Jehan, mastermind of the unforgettable Taj Mahal.



**Agra Fort** is one of the magnificent forts of Mughal era. When the Mughal Emperor Akbar established his supremacy in Northern India he began his first architectural venture, rebuilding the Agra Fort as a beautiful fort palace. The work was completed by his son and grandson highlighting the Mughal's ability to blend defensive and decorative architecture. Richly decorated with marble and mosaic it was in a part of this fort that Shah Jahan spent the last years of his life, imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb. His private quarters where he was confined has a magical view of the Taj Mahal across the river Yamuna. Today this is a World UNESCO Heritage Site.

**Later visit the magnificent monument to love – Taj Mahal** built by an emperor in memory of his beloved queen. Construction of the Taj Mahal began in 1631 and is believed to have taken 18 years to complete with over 20,000 craftsmen working around the clock. The design and construction is said to be that of the

legendary architect Ustad Ahamad Lahori. Legend has it that once construction was completed, Shah Jehan had Lahori's hands cut off, and blinded, so he would never be able to duplicate the structure.

What makes the Taj Mahal unique is its perfect proportions, distinct femininity, medium of construction and ornamentation. Its marble exterior reflects rose and golden tints at sunrise and sunset, while it is dazzling white during the day. It is impossible to visualize the Taj Mahal in any surrounding others than its paradoxical garden. Paradise, in Islam, is visualized as lush garden where running streams flow. When the Mughals brought this concept to India they elevated it to the heights of incomparable history.

**Note: Taj Mahal remains closed on Friday.**

**Overnight stay will be at ITC Mughal, Agra on a full board basis**



#### **DAY FOUR**

After breakfast at the hotel drive to Jaipur with a visit to Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary on the way. The journey will be approximately 265 kms/ 6 hours.

**Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary** – a UNESCO world heritage site for a few hours before continuing onwards to Delhi. The drive to the bird sanctuary should take just over an hour. The sanctuary was created 250 years ago and is named after a Keoladeo (Shiva) temple within its boundaries. Initially, it was a natural depression; and was flooded after the Ajan Bund was constructed by Maharaja Suraj Mal, then the ruler of the princely state of Bharatpur, between 1726–1763. The bund was created at the confluence of two rivers, the Gambhir and Banganga. The park was a hunting ground for the Maharajas of Bharatpur, a tradition dating back to 1850, and duck shoots were organised yearly in honour of the British viceroys.

This sanctuary is excellent place to see heronries of Painted Storks, Black-headed White Ibis, Asian Openbill Stork and Eurasian Spoonbills. It is also home to flocks of migratory ducks and geese such as Northern Shoveller, Northern Pintail, Common Pochard, Crested Pochard, Great White Pelican and the Black-necked Stork. It is also a good park to see different types of Bitterns.

Lunch will be at Laxmi Villas Palace.



Later you will be driven to Jaipur city known as the Pink City - Jaipur is the capital of the colourful state of Rajasthan. It has the distinction of being a well-planned and laid out city. As you drive through the old part of town, you will witness a life most unlike others. You will see how the city blooms during the day in a kaleidoscope of colour and sound.

Jaipur was once the capital of Rajasthan province - the abode of rajahs. Everywhere you will see the monuments of its Rajput rulers. Jaipur is one of the main centres for shopping in India - especially with regard to textiles, jewellery, stones and carpets. On arrival, check in at your hotel.

**Overnight stay will be at Marriott, Jaipur on a full board basis**



#### **DAY FIVE**

After breakfast depart the hotel for a full day city tour of Jaipur starting with an excursion to the inspiring Amber Fort.

**Amber Fort** is a marvellous example of Rajput architecture with its terraces and ramparts reflected in the Maota Lake below. The interior of the fort has various royal halls decorated with intricate ivory, mirror and glass work complemented by exquisite wall paintings. As you move between the rooms of this magnificent structure feel the history and visualise the pomp and grandeur of a kingdom never conquered.

**Please note that we do not encourage elephant back rides at the fort where the animal is used as taxi and made to walk on the concrete and stony paths).** We will provide jeeps to ascend and descend the fort.

Your next stop will be the impressive **City Palace**, now a public museum, which lies in the heart of the old Jaipur city. Marvel at the magnificence of Rajasthani architecture and artistry that blends seamlessly with distinct Mughal influences. The palace, which was once the private royal museum of art and artefacts from world over, is now open to public.

Later proceed to visit Observatory (**Jantar Mantar**) and drive past to **Hawa Mahal**. Spend some time in the city's crowded and colourful bazaars that sell a wide variety of artisan goods and semi-precious stones which are the local speciality.

**Overnight stay will be at Marriott, Jaipur on a full board basis**



#### **DAY SIX**

Today you will drive to Sawai Madhopur which will take approximately 3 hours. On arrival check-in at The Khem Villas, a friendly family owned property in the outskirts of the park with plenty of wildlife within its own limits. After lunch you will be driven out for afternoon safari to Ranthambhore – a rugged beautiful tiger park in the folds of the Aravalis.

Ranthambhore is one of the most popular tiger reserve in the country and is visited by thousands of tourists each month. At the same time it is one of the best places in the country to see the Bengal tiger. Most tigers in the park are used to tourist vehicles so do not shy away from them. The park is dry deciduous forest and the arid nature of the park allows you to have better visibility through the foliage which is not as thick in comparison to the other parks you will be visiting on this trip.

Typical day of safari in India consists of two jeep drives into the park – one in the morning (0600-0930) and the other in the afternoon (1430 – 1730). The safari vehicle used is an open top Suzuki jeep.

**Overnight stay will be at The Khem Villas on a full board basis**

#### **DAY SEVEN**

The day is again spent taking two safari drives into the park with a naturalist. Along with the Bengal Tiger other wildlife seen in the park are leopard, jungle cat, striped hyena, sloth bear, golden jackal, sambar deer, spotted deer, Indian gazelle and the blue bull along with rhesus macaque, langur monkey, fresh water



crocodiles to name a few. The park is also home to 200 species of birds. The ones to seek out are the painted spurfowl, peacock, painted sandgrouse, crested serpent eagle and the oriental honey buzzard.

**Overnight stay will be at The Khem Villas on a full board basis**

#### DAY EIGHT

Today we have planned two regular safaris in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, this will give you some time to rest and unwind in between as well. The safari timings are 0600-0930 and 1500-1800.

**Overnight stay will be at The Khem Villas.**



#### DAY NINE

This morning you will explore Ranthambhore park on your last safari before lunch at the lodge. In the afternoon you will be driven to Shahpura Bagh which is approximately 4 hours' drive.

With only 11 Luxury Suites set in 45 acres of garden and pasture, surrounded by two lakes, the working farm estate resplendent with trees of Neem, Ashoka, Peepal and Mango, is a very special and ultimately serene oasis. Holstein cows graze languidly in peaceful co-existence with peacocks, an entire menagerie of birds fill the Bagh with birdsong and the occasional blue bull and jackal flit silently amongst the woods.

**Overnight stay will be at Shahpura Bagh on a full board basis**

#### DAY TEN

Shahpura Bagh offers a variety of experiences for you to participate in. Some of these experiences are as follows:

**Bird Watching:** With over 250 small lakes, Shahpura Bagh is a bird watcher's paradise with over 180 species of birds. Activities include starting your morning with a walk around the property with a trained naturalist, private excursions to other nearby lakes in one of their vintage jeeps for a more evolved bird watcher, great photographic opportunities.

**Exploring the lake:** The estate is surrounded by private lakes on 2 side. Spend the evening in a boat on the lakes filled with wild fowl, which swoop and circle in formation or simply float away.





**Visit the bazaars & local artisans:** Walk to the village with Omji (the lodge's village expert) and explore its rich, multicultural vibrancy and fascinating arts and crafts tradition. Also wander the local marketplace and view the unique goods on sale and how they're made.

Learn about Phad paintings. This religious/folk scroll painting is done on a long piece of cloth and the story depicted is sung out loud by the Bhopas (priest singers). The paintings vary in size from a postcard to 30 feet long canvases! Pravin, our local artist is from one of the last families that are keeping alive the dying art of phad paintings.

**Cycling & Tribal Experience:** Cycle around the countryside, through tribal villages and adjacent to many lakes along with their naturalist. Cycling tours are customised according to your liking. Shahpura lies in the heart of Bhilwara, the district that is the origin of the Bhils, one of the largest tribes in India along with 7 other tribes. Travel to different tribal villages, the differences in their way of living (what they eat/wear, how they work, etc) within such a small area are incredible.

**Interactive Cooking Lessons:** The family host at Shahpura Bagh are part of a royal family of Rajasthan. In this experience learn their royal recipes that have been passed down from one generation to the next. Enjoy a hands-on cooking workshop with handpicked recipes.

**Fort Dhikhola:** A short 30 minute drive from the Bagh brings you to village Dhikhola, a quaint and rustic village where time has stood still. Visitors can explore the village and the fort owned by the family. We would strongly recommend a sundowner or your evening meal at the fort on one of the two nights that you are spending with the family at Fort Dhikhola.

**Overnight stay will be at Shahpura Bagh on a full board basis**

## **DAY ELEVEN**

After breakfast transfer to Jodhpur which is approximately 5 hours by road arriving in time for a late lunch.

**Jodhpur** - known as the gateway to the Thar Desert Jodhpur is the second largest city in the state of Rajasthan. It is a popular tourist destination featuring a variety of ornate palaces, age-old forts and sacred temples. Dubbed The Blue City - most houses in the old city are painted a beautiful shade of indigo. While Jodhpur is largely a sprawling modern metropolis enclosed within its old city walls is a labyrinth of winding, narrow medieval streets and bazaars.



This afternoon you will enjoy a guided tour of Jodhpur. Jodhpur is home to one of the largest forts in India - the massive 15th-century Mehrangarh Fort - which towers over the city from its sandstone plinth. Other must-see attractions include: the Umaid Bhawan Palace, one of the world's largest private residences; and the Jaswant Thada, an intricately carved white marble mausoleum.

Also enjoy a walk to the Rao Jodha National Park located just below the Mehrangarh Fort. The park is the conception of Pradeep Kishen who is India's prime trees and plants expert and offers visitors a rare chance to see and learn about desert flora.

Finish the trip with a visit to the Mehrangarh Fort. Located strategically on the overland trade route the magnificent Mehrangarh fort towers over the city with its forbidding ramparts that are in sharp contrast to the flamboyantly decorated palaces within. Later you will be driven to Manvar - around 2 hours' drive).

**Overnight stay will be at Raas on a full board basis**

## **DAY TWELVE**

Morning explore the heartland of Rajasthan to witness colourful communities, wildlife, cuisine, ceremonies and nature in their authentic setting. You will get the opportunity to interact first hand with local villagers and your hosts, who are also a part of this rich cultural heritage. This unique and authentic rural experience is complete with the opportunity to interact with different people from different communities, visit their



dwelling, understand their lives, sample rural cuisine and witness other aspects of their day. Later you will transfer to Bera Safari Lodge.

Rajasthan is home to many birds and mammals and many efforts have been put in to conserve the flora and fauna of this desert state of India. One of them - Jawai Conservation Reserve - was established in 2013 and the project was proposed to promote ecotourism and safeguard the wellbeing of flora and fauna in this area.



Ancient Rocks of the pre-Cambrian period represent Bera in the Aravalli Range, which runs diagonally across the state. The southern part of the range is formed by granite and rises to their highest summit Mt Abu. Bera Region lies between Kumbalgarh National Park and Mt Abu Sanctuary and this area is typified by granite hills. These large granite formations are scattered with Anogeissus scrub and rocky dry river beds and the kopjes are scattered with religious shrines and temples.

The leopards of Bera have accepted these as a part of their habitat and it is the most incredible sight to see villagers at prayer with leopards sitting quite calmly and watching the ceremonies. Traditionally the area was maintained for grazing livestock and farming with the creation of watering holes and feeding stations for wildlife.

**Overnight stay will be at Bera Safari Lodge on a full board basis**

### **DAY THIRTEEN**

A healthy population of 50+ leopards can be found in the Bera/Jawai Region and it is one of the few places on earth where among human settlements leopards thrive. The area is inhabited by Rabari Tribe (The Shepherds/Herdsmen) and where their prey predators follow.

Some of the other animals found in the area are - Caracal (rare sight), Chinkara, Desert Cat, Indian Wolf, Sloth Bear, Pythons, Jackal, Jungle Cat, Striped Hyena, and the Blue Bulls. Morning and afternoon take your safari in search of the leopard.

**Overnight stay will be at Bera Safari Lodge on a full board basis**

#### DAY FOURTEEN

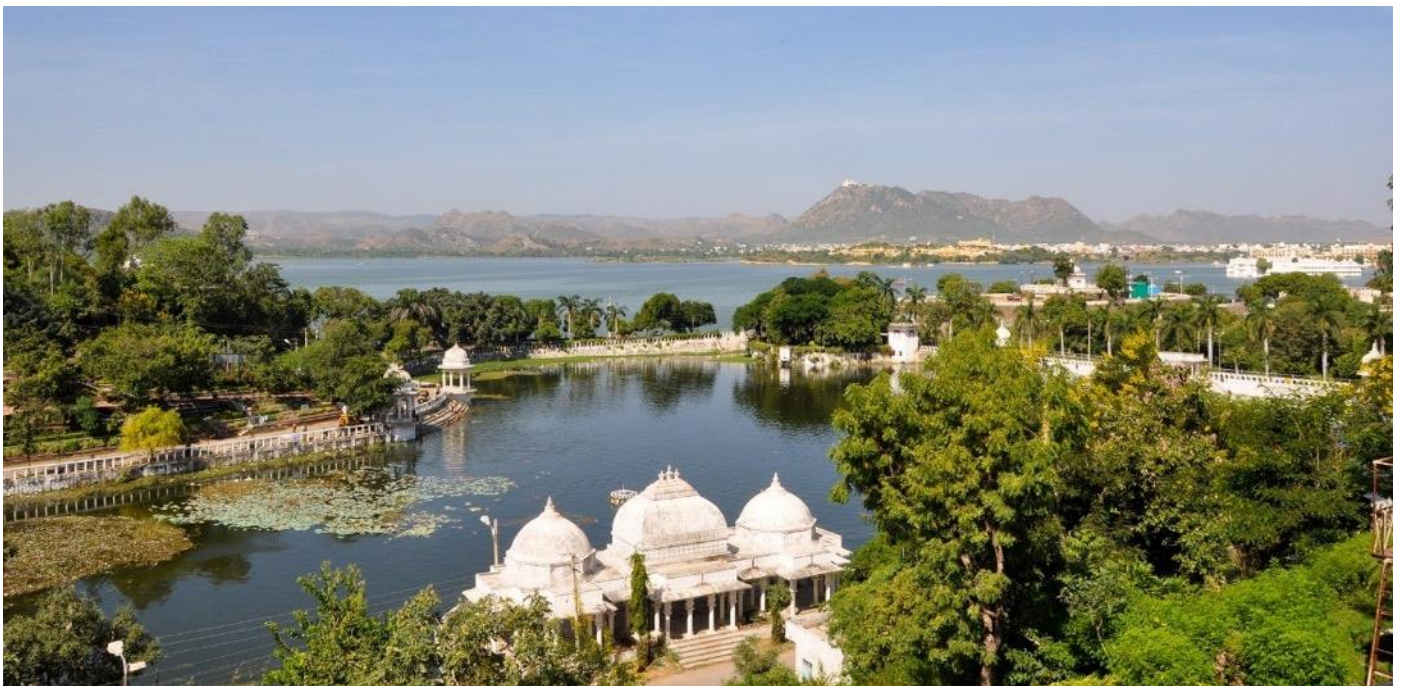
You continue exploring Bera and Jawai Dam region in search of the wildlife of the area.

**Overnight stay will be at Bera Safari Lodge on a full board basis**

#### DAY FIFTEEN

After this morning's safari you will drive to Udaipur( which is approximated 2.5 hours' drive).

Udaipur, nestled in the folds of the Aravalli range, looks lush and green and vastly different from the arid and mountainous landscapes seen across Rajasthan. The rulers of the Mewar region of Rajasthan chose Udaipur as their capital city and the imposing City Palace still stands as a grand testament to their power and riches. The royal palaces built within the complex were added over time by successive rulers, the harmony of the overall architecture was kept keeping intact the overall architectural style. Within the complex is the **Jagdish temple**, an ornately designed temple over four hundred years old. The beautiful carved pillars and ceilings and the temple spire that towers over all the other buildings in the vicinity make it an unmissable sight.



In the evening just before sunset enjoy a boat ride on Lake Pichola to view Udaipur at its best and visit inside the palace on island Jagmandir which was made famous in the James Bond film Octopussy).

**Overnight stay will be at Leela Palace on a full board basis**

#### DAY SIXTEEN

After breakfast visit inside Maharaja's **City Palace** with **Museum** and then visit inside Udaipur's largest Hindu temple **Jagdish Temple**.

Later afternoon transfer to the airport to board your flight to Delhi. On arrival into Delhi you will be met and transferred to the international airport check in for your international flight home.

**You can extend this itinerary by enjoying more time on safari, visit Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary to see the Gharials or journey out into the Thar Desert and stay at the wonderful Jaisalmer. Alternatively fly down to Goa for some time relaxing on the beach there – please ask!**





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