

# Tigers of Central India

Departs 1st March 2021

**Blue Dot Travel**

Go somewhere different

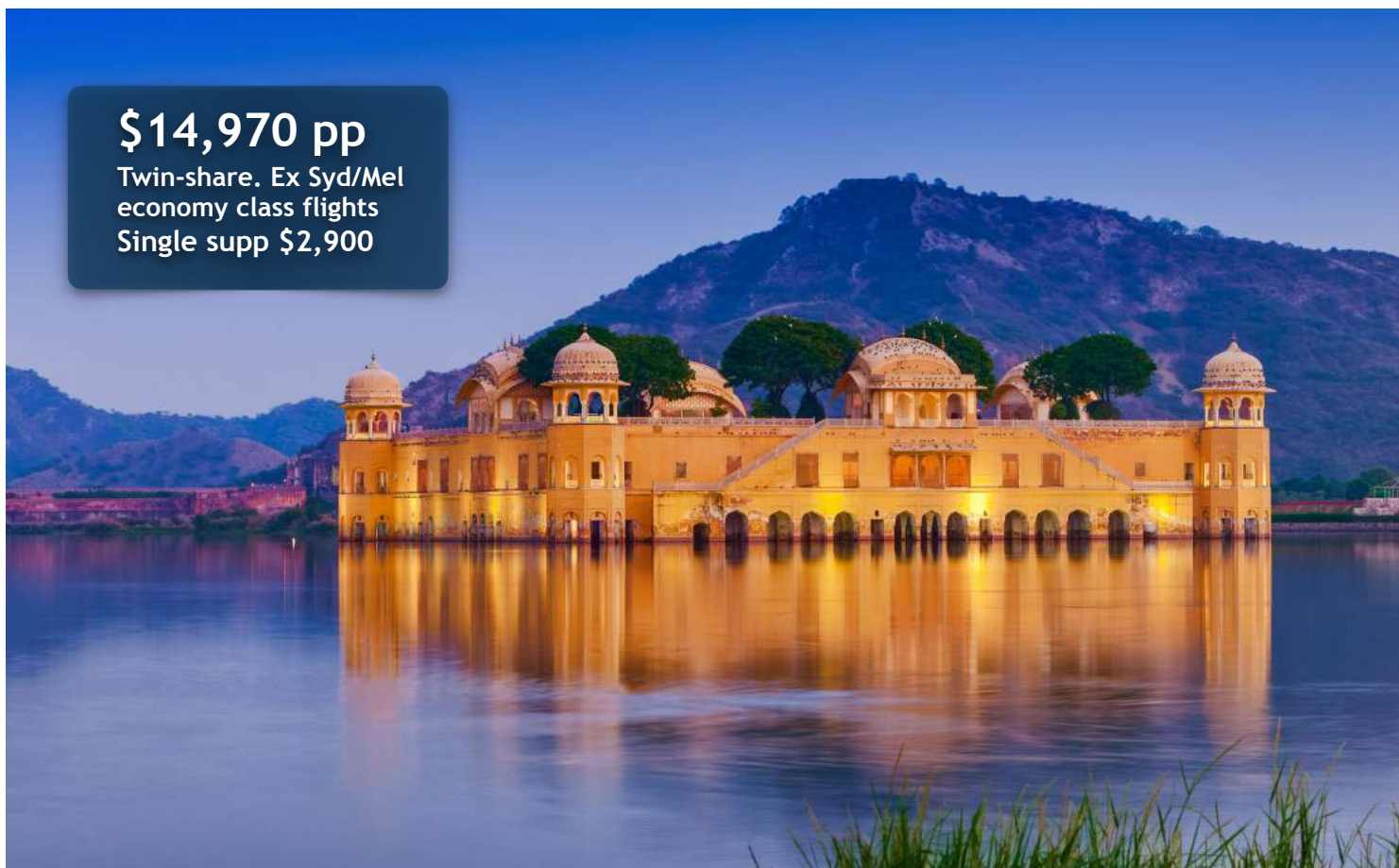


Itinerary correct as at Mar 15, 2020, but subject to change. ALL flights to be confirmed. [www.bluedottravel.com.au](http://www.bluedottravel.com.au)



**\$14,970 pp**

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## TIGERS OF CENTRAL INDIA

India is a study in contrasts; bustling cities that bear the legacies of once-glorious empires, a patchwork of farmlands and hamlets fringing lush forests, destinations steeped in history making their inexorable way towards modernity. A land that is more than history, diverse in geography, a land of peace and plenty that brought empires and colonies to its shores, a nation that throbs with the stories of the past paving the way to a bright future.

Highlights of this fabulous tour include retracing India's Mughal and colonial eras on a historic trail through Delhi; reliving Mowgli's days in the Kanha and Pench forests with glimpses of the incredible wildlife that featured in the Jungle Book films, and viewing Central India's wildlife on jeep safaris and/or canoe on the Denwa River on the fringes of Satpura National Park. We shall step back in time on a trail of Lucknow's landmarks that attest to its regal past, and watch the blush of sunrise over the Taj Mahal – one of the world's seven wonders. We'll walk on the wild side at Ranthambore National Park – a wildlife refuge set against a backdrop of waterholes and ruined ramparts; witness the legacy of Jaipur's feudal rulers with a sightseeing trail through the 'pink city' in the state of Rajasthan and visit the unique 5th Century monolithic rock-cut temple at Ellora and Ajanta's painted frescoes dating back to the 2nd Century BC.

For an exclusive glimpse into India, this itinerary offers a perfect mix of history, culture and wildlife — a chance to explore the landmarks of well-known cities like Delhi, Jaipur, Agra and Lucknow to retrace their history, trail through lush forests of Kanha, Pench, Satpura and Ranthambore in search of the tiger and discover a rare legacy in stone at Aurangabad's ancient Buddhist rock-cut and frescoed caves.



**KEY**

Airports	Islamic Shrines
Agra	Mountains
Buddhist Sites	Gateway of India
Birding Sites	Mumtaz Taj mahal palace
Beaches	Palaces
Boat Rides	Rafting
Camel safari	Ruin Sites
Camps	Religion & Spirituality
Cycling	Spices
Cruise	Southern Indian Temples
Caves	Tea Gardens
Christianity	Temple Complex
Coffee	Temples
Colonial Heritage	Temple ruins
Cuisine	Textiles
Delhi - India Gate	Tribes
Diving	Volcano
Forts	Wildlife Parks
Horse Riding	Wine Growing Region
Houseboats	
Hiking & Trekking	
Hoarah Bridge	



**Day 1, Monday 1st March  
AUSTRALIA TO DELHI**

Depart Australia for India. Upon arrival at the Indira Gandhi International airport terminal a Blue Dot representative will receive the group with a sign bearing your name. Transfer to the hotel in a private vehicle. Overnight at The Claridges Hotel, a landmark of Delhi since the 1950s. Flights to be confirmed.

*Meals in-flight*

**Day 2, Tuesday 2nd March  
OLD DELHI CITY TOUR**

We will start the day in Delhi with a rickshaw ride through Old Delhi. If trees and streets could talk, the stories that would pour out of Delhi would keep listeners mesmerised for years. With a history as a capital, Delhi has seen the tides of several rulers from those that people the pages of the epic poem, Mahabharata to the Tughlaq and Mughal empires from Persia, from the imperial colonial armies to the present-day government. Looted, plundered, and resurrected over the years, Delhi emerges from the ashes of her past to take her place in the world as a global capital — politically, culturally and

commercially. There is a lot to be said about a country, as diverse in its faiths as India, and as tolerant in its attitudes towards each. Today's political factions and media warmongering may create tensions between India's many religions yet the architecture of our cities tells a very different narrative. Head down Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi, partly by rickshaw, partly on foot, to palpably experience the sacred yet secular way of life that is so typical of India. The Colonial Delhi trail will take you past the India Gate, a monument commemorating the deaths of over 70,000 Indian soldiers in the British Forces during the World War I and older British buildings that house today's Parliament and Secretariat. Lunch can be enjoyed at your own discretion today. Spend the rest of the day at leisure. This evening, a welcome dinner will be organised at the United Coffee House. Overnight at The Claridges. *B/D*





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**Day 3, Wednesday 3rd March**  
**DELHI – JABALPUR**

Today we will transfer to Delhi airport for our flight to Jabalpur. Depart Delhi on Spice Jet SG 2871 departing at 10:10hrs arriving noon at Jabalpur. Then escorted to your vehicle for a 4.5 hour drive to Kanha. Upon arrival, check in at our wildlife lodge. Spend the day, planning your safaris and other activities at Kanha with your naturalist. Kanha National Park. A mixed forest bamboo and sal, of grassy meadows and winding ravines, Kanha National Park was one of the first areas in India to fall under the Project Tiger conservation program to save the Royal Bengal Tiger. Kanha boasts abundant mammal populations and diverse birdlife, and it offers sanctuary for the endangered barasingha (12-horned) deer, the black buck, lesser florican among others. The deep, dark jungles of Kanha inspired Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book, and gave us a slew of immortal characters from Mowgli to Sher Khan, Bagheera to Baloo. Overnight at the Kipling Camp. Kipling Camp lies at the edge of the Kanha National Park, and was established by a family of wildlife conservationists, Bob and Anne Wright and their daughter Belinda Wright. The owner of Kipling Camp, Belinda Wright, a keen crusader for tiger conservation, also supports the Gond and Baiga artists and has created a co-operative to sustain their arts, craft and traditions. The ideals of her family, today, have made Kipling Camp one of the finest wildlife camps in the country. *B/L/D*



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**Day 4, Thursday 4th March**  
**KANHA**

Early morning, head out for a jeep safari with your naturalist.

The forest is just beautiful as it wakes up, as the sun lifts the mist from the surface and dew glistens on the dense foliage. This is an excellent time to watch predators coming home from a night hunt and the symphony of birdsong echoes through the woods. Return to our lodge - The Kipling Camp - for a leisurely breakfast. After lunch, we will meet the resident Tara the Elephant, featured in the novel by Mark Shand. Escort Tara down to the River Banjar for her leisurely bath, a perfect way to beat the heat while learning about a warm, loving species! Overnight at The Kipling Camp. *B/L/D*

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**Day 5, Friday 5th March**  
**KANHA**

Early morning, head out for a jeep safari with your naturalist. Return to the lodge for a hearty breakfast, followed by a check-out. A one-hour drive from Kipling Camp will bring you to the Singinawa Jungle Lodge located at Mukki gate — at the other side of Kanha. Check-in on arrival. Post lunch, venture back into the

park for your afternoon jeep safari. The Singinawa Jungle Lodge offers a unique experience of the jungles of central India with all the comforts of a world-class lodge. The lodge offers the chance to not only learn about the tiger and its habitat but to also experience ecologically responsible tourism and see conservation at work benefitting local communities and the tiger reserve. Overnight at Singinawa Jungle Lodge. *B/L/D*

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**Day 6, Saturday 6th March**  
**KANHA**

Early morning, head out for a jeep safari with our naturalist. Back to the lodge for breakfast and a relaxed morning. Post lunch, venture back to the park for an afternoon jeep safari. Overnight at Singinawa Jungle Lodge. *B/L/D*

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**Day 7, Sunday 7th March**  
**KANHA – PENCH**

This morning, drive to Pench and upon arrival check into our lodge. Travel time is approximately 4.5 hours. Spend



the rest of the day at leisure exploring the premises of the property or on birdwatching trails with a naturalist. At the Pench National park's northern periphery lies the Jamtara Wilderness Camp, so named after a nearby village. The Jamtara Wilderness Camp is a luxury tented camp that strives to provide the perfect balance between a rustic, wilderness experience and a comfortable stay. Overnight at Jamtara Wilderness Camp. *B/L/D*

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**Day 8, Monday 8th March**  
**PENCH**

Pench National Park was named after a river that flows through Central India's forests. The Pench National Park is a corridor for wildlife across this diverse habitat of forest and grassland. The rich biodiversity of the area had been recorded in an ancient official document of the emperor Akbar, a Mughal ruler and the park continues to support large populations of herbivores, creating a favourable environment for carnivores — the most-sought after being the Royal Bengal Tiger. Forming a continuum with the Kanha forest, Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book is often attributed to this jungle as well. Early morning, head out for a jeep safari with your naturalist. Return to the lodge for a leisurely breakfast. Post lunch, venture back into the park for your afternoon jeep safari. Overnight at Jamtara Wilderness Camp. *B/L/D*

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**Day 9, Tuesday 9th March**  
**PENCH – SATPURA**

Today early morning, drive to Satpura – around 6.5 hours and upon arrival check into your lodge. For the

next three nights we stay in the Reni Pani Jungle Lodge, located in a pristine forest typical of the Satpura Tiger Reserve. The Lodge gets its interesting name from a neighbouring tribal village. *B/D*



**Day 10,  
Wednesday  
10th March  
SATPURA**

Start the morning with a jeep safari accompanied by your

naturalist. The Satpura region is named after a west-to-east running hill range that divides India into two sections: the northern river plains and the mountains, and the southern peninsula. Part of the mosaic of central Indian forests, Satpura hosts a wide variety of biodiversity and provides a corridor between other stretches of forests for species like the Royal Bengal Tiger, the Asiatic Elephant, the Indian bison or gaur, the sloth bear, among others. The area is also a haven for bird life, with forest-dwelling and river-dependent species and rich diversity of raptors. Head back to the lodge for breakfast and a lazy morning. Post lunch, take in the biodiversity on a nature walk around the resort premises. Overnight – Reni Pani Jungle Lodge. *B/L/D*

**Day 11, Thursday 11th March  
SATPURA**

Early morning, head out for a canoe safari along the Denwa River. The Denwa flows right through the Satpura National Park, as much a lifeline of the forest as an ecosystem in and of itself. A canoe down the river allows you to paddle quietly along the shore, drifting into little inlets and bays to watch animals quench their thirst, birds hunt in the shallows or crocodiles bask in the sun. The canoe experience is for the unhurried observer, who would like to experience the forest pulse at its most languid. Return to the lodge for a hearty breakfast. Post lunch, head off for a walking safari in the buffer zone with a naturalist. Overnight Reni Pani Jungle Lodge. *B/L/D*

**Day 12, Friday 12th March  
SATPURA – BHOPAL - DELHI**

This morning, after breakfast we will drive 3.5 hours from Satpura to Bhopal. The beautiful city of Bhopal, capital of the state of Madhya Pradesh, fringes two urban lakes. Its history under the Bhoja dynasty, the Mughal empire, and as a princely state under the British rule still resonate in its architecture. Bhopal's old city monuments like the Taj-ul-Masjid, the Moti Masjid, and the Jehan Numa Palace stand out among newer constructions. We'll stop for lunch followed by a city tour before making our way to Bhopal airport to board our flight to Delhi on SG8638 at 20:40hrs. On arrival, we will be transferred to the hotel. Overnight at Pullman Aerocity. *B/L*

**Day 13, Saturday 13th March  
DELHI - LUCKNOW**

This morning we will catch Air Indigo flight 6E 3612 at 09:05 and head to Lucknow. Once a capital of the Nawabs - the Mughal empire rulers, Lucknow has long been a centre of culture and art, and is the birthplace of the traditional dance form Kathak and numerous musicians. The city shows an interplay of architecture styles: from Turkish and Mughal-styled monuments of numerous imambaras and the mosques, to Gothic, Baroque and French styles introduced by various historical personages — and evokes a past as colourful as its streets today, with flavours as delectable as the nawabi-style, Awadhi cuisine typical to the region. Lunch will be at your own discretion. Today we delve into Awadhi heritage at the Kaiserbagh complex with some of the most beautiful palaces of the region built for the Nawab Wajid Ali Khan. While much of the structure has been encroached upon by other city structures, there is some evidence of some restoration — a vivid imagination and a love for history can perhaps evoke echoes of the palace's bygone grandeur! Continue with a visit to a Zardozi and Chikankari textiles workshop. Chikan is a delicate, intricate, hand-worked embroidery, whereas Zardozi is a metal embroidery style that uses fine gold or silver threads to embellish textiles, sometimes combined with pearls or precious stones — once featured on royal wardrobes. The dexterity of the craftsmen is remarkable — these crafts, like so many others, which will be forgotten with this generation as the children move to bigger cities for employment. This evening has you on the Lucknow Culinary Trail where you will experience a variety of snacks as the group mingles with the locals of this vibrant city. Awadhi food largely features meat dishes, but there are options for the vegetarians too. Later, if you wish, dine at your own expense in the city before returning to the hotel. Overnight at Taj Mahal, Lucknow. *B*

**Day 14,  
Sunday 14th  
March  
LUCKNOW –  
AGRA**

This morning we finish our tour of Lucknow, covering off the



key sites that we did not complete yesterday. After breakfast, we start our city tour of Lucknow with our visit to the Lucknow Residency - a place where speechless walls are known to speak the gruesome tale of the 1857 mutiny. Continue with a European architecture trail across Lucknow. Visit La Martiniere built by a Frenchman, Major-General Claude-Martin as a palatial home is today a residential school. Continue on to the Dilkusha Palace and Gardens,



built by a European for the nawab, Saadat Ali Khan, was once a regal country house and hunting lodge. End the trail at the Hussainabad Imambara, built in 1840, with lavish silver, sandalwood, glass artefacts and beautiful calligraphy. We then take a 5 hour drive from Lucknow to Agra and upon arrival check-in at your hotel. The origins of the city of Agra can be traced back to the days of the Mahabharata, the epic poem of Great India when it was called Agrevana, meaning 'the edge of the forest'. Agra served as capital for the Mughal Empire during the 16th and 17th centuries and flourished as a centre of art, drawing inspiration from Persian, Islamic, Turkish, Byzantine and Indian styles. It has been immortalised ever since by the Taj Mahal – a magnificent marble mausoleum that epitomises love, yet Agra has so many more monuments that tell a rich narrative of the tides and times of Man. Overnight at Double Tree By Hilton located in the heart of Agra city centre. *B/D*



**Day 15, Monday  
15th March  
AGRA –  
RANTHAMBORE**

Start the day watching the sunrise over the Taj Mahal. Agra has been immortalised by Taj Mahal – the

magnificent mausoleum, which the emperor Shahjahan had built for his queen, Mumtaz and India's own jewel in the list of 7 Wonders of the Modern World. Our storyteller guide will tell tales of Agra's and the mausoleum, as also the romance between Shahjahan and Mumtaz. After breakfast at the hotel, we set off on a sightseeing trail of Agra. The Agra Fort is one of the most important and robustly built stronghold of the Mughals, embellished with a number of richly decorated buildings – the Agra Fort. Continue with a visit to the Mehtab Bagh, on the other side of the river. In the afternoon we drive to Ranthambore. Along the six-and-a-half hour drive, watch the landscape change from stark highways that connect bustling cities to the mixed forests of Ranthambore. Upon arrival, check-in at Kipling Lodge, Ranthambore, named after Rudyard Kipling, the 19th century Nobel Prize winning writer who has been immortalised by his literary works. The most popular of his books, the Jungle Book is a unique tribute to Indian wildlife and forests, as well as the innate connection between man and nature. Dinner and overnight at Kipling Lodge. *B/D*

**Day 16, Tuesday 16th March  
RANTHAMBORE**

This former hunting ground of Maharajas, Ranthambore with crumbling fort ramparts interspersed by villages, with numerous watering holes, is today the regal empire of a clan of tigers, made famous by National Geographic's coverage.

Conserving the tiger has also helped provide a refuge for a variety of other mammals like fox, jackals, nilgai (blue bulls), spotted deer as also other avifauna, and offers an unmissable safari experience. Today you can enjoy two jeep safaris into the national park, one early morning and other afternoon post lunch. Ranthambore's sweeping hunting grounds of watering holes and ruins is best explored by jeep, a perfect vantage point to see wildlife in its natural environs. Apart from the famed royal Bengal tiger, Ranthambore is also home to the common leopard, nilgai or blue bull antelope, wild boar, sambar, hyena, sloth bear, grey langur, rhesus macaque and chital, among others. The numerous watering holes also support a rich birdlife, and reptiles. Keep an eye out for one of the largest banyan trees in the country! Dine at your hotel. Overnight at Kipling Lodge. *B/L/D*

**Day 17, Wednesday 17th March  
RANTHAMBORE**

Start early with a jeep safari accompanied by your naturalist, followed by a breakfast at the lodge. After a relaxed morning and a leisurely lunch, set off for the nearby Dhonk craft centre. Dhonk Craft is an initiative by an organisation making handicrafts in and around Ranthambore with the ex-poachers families and local villagers. By providing craft training to the villagers living around the Ranthambore National park Dhonk craft is creating useful employment opportunities to the locals and the ex-poachers families. Dhonk also encourages artisans across the globe to come and interact with these groups and exchange ideas and craft skills. Overnight at The Kipling Lodge. *B/L/D*

**Day 18, Thursday 18th March  
RANTHAMBORE – JAIPUR**

After breakfast, drive from Ranthambore to Jaipur. If there is an aspect of India that neither the Mughal empires nor the British Era could wipe out, it was the regal lifestyles of the chieftains and princes from the feudal times, and nowhere is it more in evidence than in Rajasthan. Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan state, is known fondly as the 'pink city' as most buildings are made of rosy sandstone. Established by Sawai Jai Singh II, the ruler of Amber, thus named to signify a 'city of victory', Jaipur's bustling bazaars and labyrinthine by-lanes whisper the history of 4 eras. Upon arrival check-in at your hotel and spend the afternoon at leisure. In the evening, enjoy a cooking demonstration followed by dinner at the hotel. Khas Bagh is an authentic luxurious home stay experience on the outskirts of Jaipur. The heritage style haveli with its magnificent sandstone pool, sprawling lawns and verandahs overlooks the hills. A haveli is a traditional townhouse or mansion in the Indian subcontinent, usually one with historical and architectural significance. The word haveli is derived from Arabic hawali, meaning "partition" or "private space", popularised under the Mughal Empire. Overnight at Khas Bagh. *B/D*



**Day 19,  
Friday 19th  
March  
JAIPUR**

Today explore Jaipur's landmarks with a local guide. Start with a visit to

the Amer Fort, one of the most intricate and beautiful Rajput fortresses in all of India. Later experience a rickshaw ride (the duration of the ride is 1 to 1.5 hours) The Pink Rickshaw Company' initiative seeks to accomplish a triple bottom line impact, through which new economic opportunities are created for women youth from low income households, social capital will be built through enrolling these women and making them equity holders in a social enterprise which they will own and manage, and also impacting the environment through the e-rickshaws that are proposed to be deployed under the program. Follow this with a visit to the Jantar Mantar observatory built in the early 1700s by Sawai Jai Singh II, Jaipur's ruler and a keen astronomer. For a sense of history and art, step into the City Palace complex which exhibits royal collections of miniature paintings, armour, royal garments, textiles, and artefacts. Thereafter we'll continue to the ornate Hawa Mahal or the Palace of the Winds, Jaipur's most distinctive landmark. Towering over the city, the Hawa Mahal was built to resemble Krishna's crown and its purpose was to allow ladies of the court to remain unseen as they watched the goings-on in the streets below. Enjoy lunch in the city at a restaurant of your choice. Late afternoon, visit Dera Amer for a 'Rhythm with the Elephants' experience followed by a bush dinner. Return to hotel. Overnight at Khas Bagh. **B/D**

**Day 20, Saturday 20th March  
JAIPUR – AURANGABAD**

Today is a day of transfers. We will fly from Jaipur to Delhi on Indigo Air 6E203 at 10:45hrs arriving 11:50hrs. Our connecting flight Indigo Air 6E2033 to Aurangabad, departs 14:05hrs, arriving 16:00hrs. Upon arrival at the Aurangabad airport, you will be met by your guide and transferred to the hotel. Dinner is at the hotel. Overnight at Vivanta By Taj, Aurangabad. **B/D**

**Day 21, Sunday 21st March  
AURANGABAD – AJANTA CAVES –  
AURANGABAD**

Named after the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb, the city of Aurangabad's basalt topography is etched with some of the best examples of religious art in the country; the Ellora rock-cut temples and the Ajanta cave paintings dating to the Buddhist era in India. A theatre of great historical events during the Mughal, Maratha and colonial regimes, Aurangabad is today,

an industrial hub driven by its textile and automobile industries. Start the day in Aurangabad taking in the famous Ajanta Caves: The rock cut caves with the finest examples of Indian paintings dating between the 2nd BCE to 480 or 650 CE. Discovered amidst overgrown forest by a British officer, the caves are covered with murals depicting the Jataka tales - didactic narratives tinged with the Buddhist philosophy. For the artists and the curious tourists alike, a rich world of iconography awaits at Ajanta, and the influences of this school of painting is evident in other places across the world, especially in Sri Lanka and Tibet. The 30 world famous rock-hewn caves of Ajanta, arranged in the shape of a mammoth horseshoe date back to the 2nd century B.C. Tonight is our farewell dinner as we have a late arrival tomorrow night. Overnight at Vivanta By Taj Aurangabad. **B/D**

**Day 22, Monday  
22nd March  
AURANGABAD  
– DELHI**

Start the day with an excursion to the Ellora Caves. The Ellora rock-cut cave sculptures exert a



rare magnetism for the tourist. Built between the 5th and the 10 Century, the Ellora caves are a series of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temples carved into the basalt Deccan traps. The numerous caves bear friezes, carved pillars and inscriptions — and traces of paintings illustrating mythological characters and events, and are testimony to the rare skill and the religious harmony of the time. Return to the city for a sightseeing trail of the other historic landmarks of Aurangabad, followed by lunch. In the afternoon, you will be chauffeured to the Aurangabad airport for your flight to Delhi on Air India AI442 at 17:20hrs arriving 19:10hrs. Overnight at Novotel Aerocity. **B/L**

**Day 23, Tuesday 23rd March  
TRANSIT HOME**

Depart Delhi airport in the morning for your flights home, arriving on 24th March. **Meals in flight**