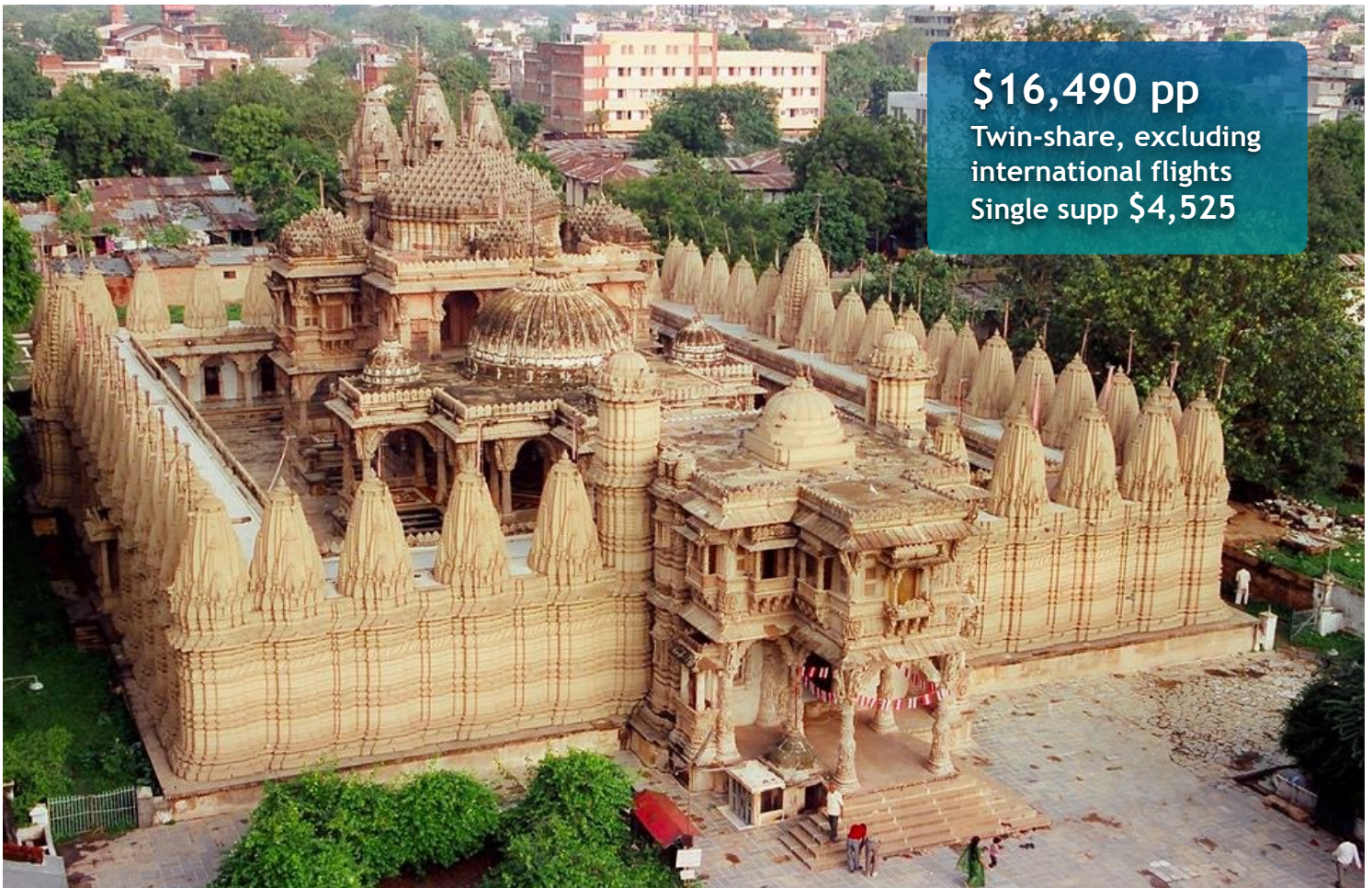


Big Cats of Western India

Departs 23rd February 2026

Blue Dot Travel





\$16,490 pp

Twin-share, excluding
international flights
Single supp \$4,525

BIG CATS OF WESTERN INDIA

For wildlife-lovers, nothing is as alluring as the big cats of India. This journey takes us deep inside India's western wilderness. The region is highly diverse, with unique landscapes that are primarily dry and arid, dominated by the Thar Desert. Along with the desert are enchanting dry deciduous forests, shrubland, vast savanna grasslands and endless salt pans.

A huge variety of wildlife live here, including three of the four Big Cats in the country – the Asiatic Lion, Bengal Tiger and Indian Leopard. Interestingly we also have the opportunity to see four kinds of canids on this trip – Indian Wolf, Striped Hyena, Bengal Fox and Jackal. Along with these predators are other mammals such as the Asiatic Wildass, blackbuck, spotted deer, sambhar deer and many more.

Western India is also an essential destination on the Central Asian flyway and thousands of migratory birds congregate in the waterbodies, making it an absolute goldmine for birders. The arid salt pans are dotted with lakes that are breeding grounds for flamingos, cranes and pelicans. A number of raptors are found here, including harriers, vultures, falcons and eagles. On a lucky day, we may chance upon the highly endangered Great Indian Bustard, a bird endemic to our country.

Come with us, as we peel back the different layers of India for you. Wherever you are from, you will find something that touches your heart in India.



Day 1, Monday 23rd February
ARRIVE MUMBAI

Upon arrival in Mumbai, the group will be greeted and transferred to our hotel in the city, the Trident Nariman Point. Your evening is at leisure. Trident Nariman Point offers a spectacular view of Mumbai. Part of the famous Mumbai skyline, the hotel overlooks Marine Drive, a 3-km-long promenade that rings a beautiful natural bay. Overnight at Trident Nariman Point.



Day 2, Tuesday 24th February
MUMBAI

This morning, we'll explore Mumbai with a city tour. We'll see the Indo-Saracenic buildings at Victoria

Station and Mumbai University. We'll stroll the waterfront to see the famous Gateway to India monument constructed by the British. We'll also visit the dhobi ghat, a giant open-air laundry where hundreds of dhobi wallahs vigorously thump and scrub the city's washing. An unusual highlight is a visit to watch Mumbai's dhobi wallahs at work. See the sorting of the tiffin boxes (tin lunch boxes) by the dhobi wallahs, who deliver lunch boxes from private homes to the workplace. Their 100-year-old management system of collecting, sorting and

delivering over a million tiffin boxes is flawlessly executed daily. Later we'll drive through Marine Drive, Malabar Hills and Hanging Gardens. Welcome dinner is at the hotel. Overnight at Trident Nariman Point. *D*



Day 3, Wednesday 25th February
MUMBAI – DIU – SASAN GIR

Today we'll transfer to Mumbai airport to board the flight to Diu. We'll be picked up and transferred to Sasan Gir (approx 2 hrs) upon arrival. The Gir Forest National Park is a forest and wildlife sanctuary in Gujarat, India. Established in 1965, with a total area of 1412 km, it is the only refuge of the Asiatic lion. It is considered one of Asia's most important protected areas due to the number of species it supports. Gir Wildlife Reserve is a tapestry of deciduous forests, evergreen flora, scrublands, grasslands and water bodies. Late lunch at the hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure. The Gateway Hotel Gir Forest is located just opposite the Hiran River at the fringe of the dense Gir Forest. The surrounding Gir Forest lends an atmosphere of calm and serenity to your days here. The spacious rooms are equipped with modern amenities, and a dedicated staff on standby ensures your stay is truly comfortable. Overnight at Gateway Hotel Gir Forest. *B/D*



Day 4, Thursday 26th February SASAN GIR

Today, we'll enjoy morning and afternoon safaris. Gir National Park is the only place outside Africa where lions can be seen in their natural habitat. The entire forest area of the Gir National Park is dry and deciduous, which provides the best habitat for the Asiatic Lion. Approx. 523 Lions and over 300 Leopards inhabit the park. The lions of Gir are majestic animals, averaging 2.75 metres in length, with a larger tail tassel, bushier elbow tufts and more prominent belly folds than his African cousin, which has a larger mane. Apart from these two animals, the park is home to two different species of deer. The Gir forest is known for the Chowsingha – the world's only four-horned antelope. The Jackal, striped Hyena and India Fox are some of the smaller carnivores in Gir Forest. Overnight at Taj Gir Serai. *B/L/D*



Day 5, Friday 27th February SASAN GIR

Irrigated by seven perennial streams and four reservoirs, the Gir National Park was once a hunting ground for royalty. The ecosystem hosts mammals, birds, reptiles and insects – all resilient species that face the annual adversity of drought. The exotic flora of Gir National Park gives shelter to 40 species of mammals and more than 425 species of birds. The sanctuary has been declared an important bird area by the Indian Bird Conservation Network. Gir is also the habitat of raptors like the critically endangered white-backed and long-billed vulture, the Egyptian Vulture, the vulnerable Greater Spotted Eagle and the endangered Palla's Fish Eagle. The crested Serpent Eagle, the Changeable Hawk Eagle and other prey birds breed in the Gir forests. Birds that can usually be spotted while driving around Gir are the Asian Paradise Flycatcher, the Red-breasted Flycatcher, and the Fantail. Overnight at Taj Gir Serai. *B/L/D*



Day 6, Saturday 28th February SASAN GIR – GONDAL

This morning after breakfast, we'll drive to Gondal (approx. 4 hrs) and check into the hotel on arrival. In the afternoon, we'll visit the Naulakha Palace followed by Swaminarayan Temple. Naulakha Palace is one of the oldest and most beautiful palaces from the 17th century, with pretty jharokha windows and carved stone pillars. It houses the impressive Darbar Hall and a museum of paintings, furniture, brass and silver. Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. The temple includes idols of Dhami, Guru Parampara, Dham, Mukta, Ghanshyam Maharaj and Sukh Shayya. Diwali, Sharad Poornima and Yogi Jayanti are important festivals at this temple. Visit the Private Vintage Classic Car collection at Orchard palace. Overnight – Riverside Palace. Built in the 1880s as the residence of the Crown Prince of Gondal, the Riverside Palace is a colonial-style building set in gardens beside the town's river. It has been converted into a heritage hotel with 11 large, high-ceilinged rooms appointed

with four-poster beds, old dressers, and other colonial-period furniture from the family's heirloom collection. *B/L/D*



Day 7, Sunday 1st March GONDAL – DASADA

Today we'll embark on a morning drive to Little Rann of Kutch, a salt marsh near the Great Rann of Kutch (approx 5 hrs) . It is famous as the world's last refuge of the Indian wild ass (Khur) for the conservation of which it has been declared as the Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary. Upon arrival, check-in at the resort and a late lunch. The rest of the afternoon will be at your leisure. Our accommodation is at Rann Riders by Kaafila, an enchanting, eco-friendly boutique resort that imaginatively combines ethnic architecture with modern facilities. Set in a serene rural landscape near Dasada Village, the resort is a lush oasis at the edge of the Little Rann of Kutch. With its primary focus on nature and wildlife, Rann Riders is an ideal base to explore the Little Rann with its rich and unique community of birds and animals - including the highly endangered Asiatic Wild Ass - and a wealth of cultural offerings. Dinner at the resort. *B/L/D*

Day 8, Monday 2nd March DASADA

Today we will explore the unique habitat of Little Rann of Kutch's salt desert on morning and evening jeep safaris. Driving across the Rann is a safari experience like no other. We'll cross the unique salt-laden landscape of grasslands, Prosopis scrub and bird-rich wetlands with experienced trackers. They can spot a herd of wild ass or nilgai among the rippled air of a heat shimmer. For birders, the winter months are fantastic for getting close to various species, including huge Common and Demoiselle Cranes flocks. Overnight at Rann Riders. *B/L/D*



Day 9, Tuesday 3rd March DASDA - MOUNT ABU

Today we will drive north towards Mt. Abu for transiting to Rajasthan (approx 6 hrs). En route, we will visit the Sun Temple

of Modhera, with its intricate designs carved and precise architecture allowing the sun rays to course through its chambers to strike the centre of the inner sanctum at high



noon. About an hour from here lies Patan, the erstwhile capital of Gujarat in medieval times. Learn about Patan's silk ancestry from the Salvi family, who are the custodians of the Patola silk weaving technique and numerous other stories of trade with south-east Asia and other markets. We'll then continue your drive to Mount Abu. Check into your hotel on arrival. Later visit Delwara Jain Temples, built between the 11th and 16th centuries, one of the first

Jain temples with such expansive and elaborate architectural nuances. Overnight at the Palace Hotel. The building was erected in 1893 under the management of the Council of Regency. The blueprint of this splendid structure was chalked out by Sir Swinton Jacob, an eminent architect of his time. In 1962, Maharaja Karni Singhji converted this majestic residence into a hotel. *B/L/D*

Day 10, Wednesday 4th March
MOUNT ABU - BERA

Today we drive to the land of leopards and shepherds (approx 3 hrs). The village of Bera, Jawai is an untrammelled wilderness. Check into your safari lodge on arrival. Bijapur Lodge Leopard Safari Resort is a newly constructed wildlife boutique property spread over 5 acres amid the natural environment. It is considered one of the best places to stay in Jawai, with the afternoon at leisure. *B/L/D*

 **Day 11, Thursday 5th March**
BERA

This morning, we will experience a Jeep Safari in the habitat around Jawai. Look for Leopards and other desert flora and fauna in the habitat around Jawai. Wildlife sightings are distant using a scope or binoculars, subject to the movement or location of animals. Later in the afternoon, we'll visit a village of the Rabari Shepherd community and learn about the traditions, culture and way of life. Despite the complications of raising sheep in leopard territory, the tribe has a balanced view towards the leopards - and is stoic when some of their livestock is lost yearly. Explore the wilderness with a Rabari shepherd and learn of the eternal link between local tribes, their land and its biodiversity. Overnight at Bijapur Lodge. *B/L/D*

 **Day 12, Friday 6th March**
BERA

This morning and afternoon, experience a Jeep Safari in the habitat around Jawai. We'll look for leopards and other desert flora and fauna in the habitat around Jawai. Wildlife sightings are distant using a scope or binoculars, subject to the movement or location of animals. Overnight at Bijapur Lodge. *B/L/D*



Day 13, Saturday 7th March
BERA - SHAHPURA BAGH


Today, we'll commence our early morning drive to Shahpura (approx 6 hrs). Upon arrival, check in to our hotel.

Enjoy a sundowner at their 400-year-old private fort (12 km away) with 360-degree countryside views in the evening. It is a scenic drive, stopping en route to visit a famous temple and tribal village. We'll

overnight at Shahpura Bagh, a luxury homestay on 45 acres of thickly wooded land surrounded by a lake. Run by a warm and welcoming family, Shahpura Bagh offers an unhurried glimpse into the lives and rhythms of Rajasthan. Antique paintings and photographs belonging to the family for generations line the property walls. A temperature-controlled pool with views over the scrub valleys brings together the best of the past and the present. *B/D*

Day 14, Sunday 8th March
SHAHPURA - RANTHAMBORE

This morning, commence our drive to Ranthambore (approx. 4 hrs). Upon arrival, we'll check into our hotel, the Nahargarh Fort. This charming royal retreat is just a few yards away from Ranthambore National Park Gate. Nahargarh, dressed in ivory white fortification and set amidst thousands of trees, offers a tranquil experience of royalty and wilderness. Lunch at the hotel, with the afternoon at leisure. *B/L/D*

 **Day 15, Monday 9th March**
RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK



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 other mammals like foxes, jackals, nilgai (blue bulls), spotted deer, and other avifauna and offers an unmissable safari experience. Today, we'll enjoy two jeep safaris into the national park, one early morning and the other afternoon post lunch. Ranthambore's sweeping hunting grounds of watering holes and ruins are 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! Overnight and dinner at Nahargarh Fort. *B/L/D*

 **Day 16, Tuesday 10th March**
RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

Start the day early with a jeep safari accompanied by the naturalist. After a relaxed morning and a leisurely lunch, we'll set off for Dhonk Craft Centre. Dhonk Craft is an initiative by an organisation making handicrafts in and around Ranthambore NP with local villagers. By providing craft training to the community living around Ranthambore, Dhonk craft is creating

important employment opportunities for locals and a viable alternative to wildlife poaching. Dhonk also encourages artisans across the globe to come and interact with these groups and exchange ideas and craft skills. Overnight at Nahargarh Fort. **B/L/D**



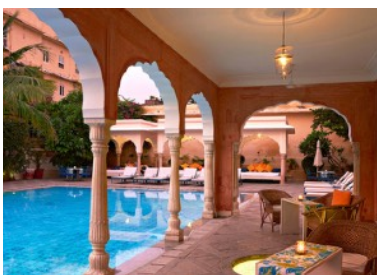
Day 17, Wednesday
11th March
RANTHAMBORE – JAIPUR

After breakfast, drive from Ranthambore to Jaipur (approx. 4 hrs drive). If there is an aspect of India that neither the

Mughal empires nor the British Era could wipe out, it is 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. This evening you will have a cooking experience at the hotel, followed by dinner. Overnight at our authentic luxurious homestay on the outskirts of Jaipur. Khas Bagh is a heritage-style haveli with a magnificent sandstone pool, sprawling lawns and verandahs overlooking the hills. Every room has spacious jharokhas or an enclosed overhanging balcony borrowed from old palace architecture. **B/D**

Day 18, Thursday 12th March
JAIPUR

Today, explore Jaipur's landmarks, starting with a visit to the Amer Fort - the citadel of the Kachhawaha clan, who later became rulers of Jaipur. With sprawling apartments, pleasure gardens, and temples, Amer is



one of India's most intricate and beautiful Rajput fortresses. Later, experience a Pink City Rickshaw Ride (duration 1 hour). The Pink Rickshaw Company's initiative seeks to

create new economic opportunities for women youth from low-income households. Social capital will be built by enrolling these women and making them equity holders in a social enterprise they will own and manage. It will also impact the environment through the e-rickshaws that are proposed to be deployed under the program. Continue for a sense of history and art, stepping into

the City Palace complex, which exhibits royal collections of miniature paintings, armour, royal garments, textiles, and artefacts. Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II is known for commissioned work to build the outer wall of the city's complex. He shifted from Amer to Jaipur due to water problems and increased population in 1727. Thereafter, 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. Its forbidding exterior belies an inner paradise where a beautiful fusion of Mughal and Hindu styles finds its ultimate expression. 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 who bears witness to Central Asia's rich legacy of astronomy. Enjoy lunch in the city at a restaurant of your choice. (own cost). Later, we'll explore the old city markets where a smorgasbord of delights and crafts awaits! The labyrinthine streets have long been the bustling economic arteries of the city, trading in everything from local handicrafts like the blue pottery and silver jewellery to exotic, imported goods more valued today. Late afternoon visit to Dera Amer, situated on the outskirts of Jaipur. This private retreat was once a scrubland when the Singh family acquired an expanse of 180 acres. Dera Amer today is full of wilderness and natural beauty. Operating with an eco-sensitive mindset, with organic farming practices, implementing solar-panelled water pumps and drip irrigation, engaging and empowering the local communities, and adopting elephants and camels rescued from a life of hard labour. Meet the man striving to positively affect the environment and provide the animals with a natural habitat and a healing touch. Interact with Laxmi, Rangmala or Anarkali, the three resident elephants; You can feed them, bathe them, or stroll around the retreat with one walking alongside you. Savour a special organic farm-fresh meal in exclusive venues in the wilderness of Dera Amer. Return to Khas Bagh for dinner. **B/D**

Day 19, Friday 13th March
JAIPUR – DEPARTURE

Depart for home. Today, we will be transferred to Jaipur airport to board a flight to Delhi. Connect your international flight. **B/meals in flight**

RAJASTHAN EXTENSION

Tour cost: \$2,400 pp

Sing Supp: \$1,190

Day 1, Friday 13th March

JAIPUR

Day at leisure to relax and recharge at the hotel.

Overnight at Khas Bagh. **B**

Day 2, Saturday 14th March

JAIPUR — JODHPUR

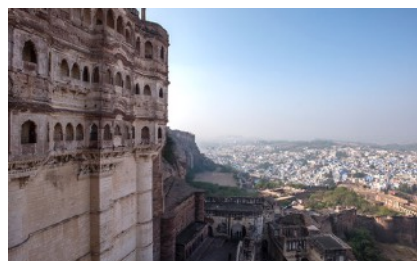
Today depart early for the drive to Jodhpur (approx 6.5 hours). Upon arrival, check-in at the hotel. The evening is at leisure. Overnight at Ajit Bhawan Palace (or similar). **B**



Day 3, Sunday 15th March

JODHPUR

Epitomising Rajasthan's romance and feudal splendour with the majestic Mehrangarh Fort towering over it, Jodhpur was once a flourishing trade centre for opium, silk and copper. Jodhpur is the last bastion of fort ramparts, colourful bazaars, and animated



people with their storytelling traditions before the desert sands and dunes stretch away towards the horizon. Visit Mehrangarh Fort, one of the most majestic of

Rajasthan's forts, described by the author Rudyard Kipling as "the creation of angels, fairies and giants". Its forbidding ramparts are in sharp contrast to the flamboyantly decorated palaces within. After check-in to your hotel, the rest of the afternoon will be at your leisure. Later today, enjoy a walk in the Blue City, the historic district surrounding Mehrangarh Fort's foot. It has a mysterious quality to its quiet lanes, exquisite havelis, and pale indigo walls. Many believe that the indigo was mixed in the lime to provide a cooling effect against the harshness of the desert sun. Your guide will take you through the by-lanes, and you will learn more about the proud heritage of the city's inhabitants. Overnight at Ajit Bhawan Palace. **B**



Day 4, Monday 16th March

JODHPUR – RANAKPUR – UDAIPUR

This morning, after breakfast, we'll drive to Udaipur en route, visiting Ranakpur. The 15th-century Ranakpur Temple's grand scale, architectural complexity and sculptural ornamentation rank it among the finest examples of temple architecture. The main temple is dedicated to the founder of Jainism, and Ranakpur is one of five holy places for the Jain followers. Continue your drive to Udaipur, and check into your hotel on

arrival. Overnight at Taj Fateh Prakash Palace (or similar). **B**



Day 5, Tuesday 17th March

UDAIPUR

An oasis nestled in the lap of the Aravalli Mountain range and has a tranquil serenity that belies its tumultuous past.

Udaipur, originally a thriving caravanserai, later became the capital of local, royal clans. Udaipur's serene lakes, beautiful gardens and magnificent palaces



lend it a nostalgia that has often earned it the acclaim of being one of the most romantic places in the world. Apart from a place in history, Udaipur has been immortalised in contemporary culture in iconic films from *The Jewel in the Crown* and James Bond's *Octopussy* to *Gandhi*. This morning explore the City Palace, with its blend of stern Rajput military architecture and lavish Mughal-inspired decorative art. This is the largest palace in Rajasthan, sprawled over 5 acres, built between the 16th and 20th centuries. Thereafter, walk through the old city to discover the various facets of markets and artists and artisans at work. Udaipur is famous for its traditional miniature paintings, which are mural-like, depicting incidents from Rajput or Mughal history and legends or stories from Hindu mythology. Udaipur is best known for its painting styles, namely, the Pichwai and the Phad, as well as its Mughal miniatures. The Pichwai and Phad are done on cloth, while miniature is done on specially treated paper in vegetable dyes. Phad is a scroll painting done on long cloth panels that depicts folk and historical stories narratively. The Mughal miniatures depict mythology, court scenes, hunting scenes, and nature, among other motifs - and evolved into different styles across the different desert kingdoms of Rajasthan. End the walk at the Jagdish Temple, a three-storied wonder of architecture comprising an intricately sculpted spire, beautifully carved pillars, decorated ceilings and painted walls dedicated to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer in Hindu mythology. Enjoy your Octopussy moment with a Tuk-Tuk ride through the old city. Enjoy a tranquil ride on Lake Pichola this evening, listening to the lapping of the water alongside your boat, one of the most beautiful ways to take in the city of Udaipur. Overnight at Taj Fateh Prakash Palace. **B**

Day 6, Wednesday 18th March

UDAIPUR – MUMBAI

Today, transfer to Udaipur airport to board your flight to Mumbai. Connect your international flight. The memories of the trip will keep you company on the flight back home. **B**



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.