Mystical and spiritual, India abounds with riches that invite personal exploration. Begin your adventure by exploring both Old Delhi and New Delhi. Continue to the “pink city” of Jaipur and enjoy a home-hosted dinner with a local family, offering a unique vantage point into the lifestyle of a Rajasthan family. Spend two nights at Ranthambore Tiger Preserve and search for elusive Bengal tigers and other wildlife on this land that was once a royal hunting ground. Travel to Agra to visit the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort. Conclude in Varanasi, witnessing Hindu pilgrims perform their time-honored rites along the ghats leading to the sacred Ganges River.

**GROUP SIZE:** 12-24 guests

**PRICING:**
Per person double occupancy:
- $5,787—Air inclusive from Boston or New York (including airline taxes and fees)
- $4,795—Land only
- $1,495—Single supplement

**OPTIONAL NEPAL POST EXTENSION:**
- $1,495—Per person double occupancy
- $245—single supplement

**STUDY LEADER:** To be announced
SCHEDULE BY DAY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11
DEPART U.S. FOR DELHI, INDIA

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12
ARRIVE DELHI
Spend today en route to Delhi, India’s capital and second largest city. Arriving after midnight, transfer directly to the hotel.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13
DELHI
Enjoy a morning at leisure before meeting for a briefing on the journey ahead.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14
DELHI
Spend another day discovering Delhi, India’s energetic capital, which has been inhabited continuously since the 6th century BCE.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15
DELHI / JAIPUR
Depart this morning for the day-long journey to Jaipur, one of the great cities of the Rajput.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16
JAIPUR
Jaipur was the home of India’s legendary Hindu warriors, whose historic forts, palaces,
and gardens lend a timeless quality to this storied region. Called the “pink city” for its buildings of rose-hued sandstone, Jaipur today retains the exquisite symmetry of its original construction, as well as the eight historic gates that protected the city centuries ago.

Stop first today at Hawa Mahal, the elaborately carved “Palace of the Winds,” whose pink sandstone façade allowed cooling breezes to enter. Continue on to Jantar Mantar, the incredible open-air Royal Observatory and a UNESCO World Heritage Site; and City Palace, former residence of the Maharajas of Jaipur, now converted to a museum that houses the rulers’ magnificent art collections.

After lunch at a local restaurant, visit Amber Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site considered the pinnacle of Rajput architecture. Tour the unoccupied citadel, approaching by jeep to admire the fresco-covered portal, the impressive room of mirrors, walls of jewel-encrusted marble, and the royal apartments.

Late this afternoon return to the hotel. Dinner tonight is on your own.

Overnight: Jai Mahal Palace (B, L)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17
JAIPUR / SANGANER

This morning visit Birla Mandir, the Hindu temple made of pure white marble that enshrines Lord Vishnu and counts as one of Jaipur’s most popular attractions.

Then, tour a local market before visiting nearby Sanganer to watch villagers engage in traditional block printing and handmade paper industries. Using centuries-old techniques, artisans craft coveted hand-printed textiles and unique paper goods. Sanganer also is known for its distinctive blue pottery, which the craftspeople paint free-hand.

After some time at leisure this afternoon, tonight you are dinner guests of a multigenerational Rajasthan family in their home. This provides a fascinating window into Indian life and an opportunity to witness up close the traditional society from which India is transitioning to a more urban lifestyle.

Overnight: Jai Mahal Palace (B, D)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18
JAIPUR / RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

Leave Jaipur this morning for Ranthambore National Park. Bordering the outer fringes of the Thar Desert and the former hunting grounds of the Maharajah of Jaipur, Ranthambore is now a 512-square-mile nature preserve that is home to diverse plant life; historic ruins; and hundreds of species of birds, reptiles, mammals, and of course, Bengal tigers. Please note that road conditions in and around Ranthambore are poor; about two hours of the drive will be on bumpy or unpaved roads. Additionally, the canters used for game drives provide minimal shock absorption: be prepared for very bumpy drives.

This afternoon take a game drive through the park, whose mission is to help preserve and protect the endangered Bengals. Dine tonight at the lodge.

Overnight: Vivanta by Taj - Sawai Madhopur Lodge (B, L, D)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19
RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

On today’s morning and afternoon game drives, set out in search of more game. One of India’s best known national parks, Ranthambore belongs to India’s groundbreaking Project Tiger, dedicated to preserving and protecting the once plentiful Royal Bengal tigers that roamed the land here. Now threatened by poachers, illegal logging, and encroaching civilization, India’s tiger population has decreased precipitously; it is believed that just 74 tigers currently live in Ranthambore.

The park’s varied landscape of beautiful lakes, lush grasslands, deep ravines, wooded valleys, and open scrub also features picturesque
ruins of old fortifications and the thousand-year-old Ranthambore Fort, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which you’ll stop to admire.

On the way back to the lodge, visit an organization called Dhonk, which works with members of the Mogya tribe. Here see tiger conservation in action as families who once relied on poaching the big cats now have an alternative means of earning income through crafts and artwork. Take all meals today at the lodge.

Overnight: Vivanta by Taj -Sawai Madhopur Lodge (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20
RANTHAMBORE / KALAKHO

This morning embark on the five-hour drive to Kalakho, stopping along the way to visit with village children at a recently built local library.

After lunch together at the retreat, set out on a camel safari through the surrounding villages to meet the local Meena tribespeople, who live in mud huts. Largely an agricultural people, the Meena have maintained much of their traditional culture and customs, as you’ll see for yourselves up close.

Late this afternoon, return to your lodging, where tonight you enjoy dinner accompanied by a local folk dance performance.

Overnight: The Clement Village Retreat (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21
KALAKHO / ABHANERI / AGRA

Leaving Kalakho, travel to the village of Abhaneri to witness an architectural marvel: the Chand Baori step well. To overcome water scarcity during summer months, inhabitants of northern India began constructing step wells in the 6th century CE to collect this precious resource. The 9th-century ruler King Chand built this astounding structure – one of India’s largest and most visually arresting – with 3,500 symmetrical steps descending 13 stories to the well. Ruins of an elaborately sculpted temple dedicated to Harshat Mata, Goddess of Joy and Happiness, stand opposite the step well. Leaving this marvelous site, continue on to the ancient Mughal stronghold of Agra, arriving early this afternoon.

After lunch on your own, proceed to the Itimad-ud-Daulah, often called the “Baby Taj,” the two-story marble mausoleum that inspired the Taj Mahal. Next, preview tomorrow’s excitement as you view the Taj Mahal from Mehtab Bagh, an idyllic garden complex located directly across the Yamuna River from the fabled mausoleum. Tonight dine together at the hotel.

Overnight: Courtyard Marriott Agra (B, D)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22
AGRA

This morning savor a travel highlight as you embark on a tour of the Taj Mahal. The magnificent tomb of white marble was built by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife, who had implored her husband to build a monument symbolizing their undying love.

Next visit the imposing Red Fort of Agra, comprising fairy tale palaces, two beautiful mosques, pavilions, courtyards, and gardens all surrounded by a massive wall, a moat, and yet another wall. An architectural and strategic masterpiece, the Fort is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In a cruel twist, Emperor Shah Jahan was imprisoned here at the end of his life by his own son in a room overlooking the Taj Mahal across the river.

Return to the hotel, then savor a highlight of another sort: an Indian cuisine cooking lesson and lunch together in their home.

The remainder of the day is at leisure; dinner tonight is on your own.

Overnight: Courtyard Marriott Agra (B, L)
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23
AGRA / DELHI / VARANASI

Depart this morning for Delhi, where you’ll have lunch together at the airport.

Late this afternoon, board a flight to Varanasi, Hinduisms’s holiest city and a center of learning, civilization, and religion. Varanasi exudes a mystique unlike any other Indian city thanks to its role as a sacred place of pilgrimage.

Tonight enjoy dinner together at the hotel.

Overnight: Taj Ganges (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
VARANASI / SARNATH

Before breakfast, those who wish can join in a private yoga session. Then, visit nearby Sarnath, where, after achieving enlightenment, the Buddha delivered his first sermon and founded the Sangha – the first monastic community – in the 6th century BCE. A Turkish invasion at the end of the 12th century CE left the city in ruins; it lay forgotten until the 19th century when excavation and restoration efforts began. One of Buddhism’s four holiest sites, Sarnath draws pilgrims from the world over today. See some of the temples and stupas, then tour Sarnath Museum, which houses a superb collection of Buddhist artifacts from excavations here.

Back in Varanasi tonight, attend a traditional aarti offering ceremony (a twice-daily ritual performed to ward off evil) as you cruise along the Ganges. Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

Overnight: Taj Ganges (B, D)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25
VARANASI

Early this morning return to the Ganges, where Hindu pilgrims perform their time-honored rites along the ghats leading to the sacred river. Hindus believe that bathing in the Ganges at least once in a lifetime is both a duty and a privilege. Visit several of the important ghats by boat as you experience the spiritual mystique of these hallowed waters.

Returning to the hotel for breakfast, you have some time at leisure with lunch on your own.

This afternoon, visit the home of a famous sitar player for a private performance of classical sitar.

Tonight celebrate your journey at a farewell dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Taj Ganges (B, D)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26
VARANASI / DELHI

Today, fly to Delhi and then transfer to your hotel, which is conveniently located near the airport. Depending on flight times, you will have either the morning or the afternoon at leisure. You have the evening free with dinner on your own.

Overnight: Pullman Hotel New Delhi Aerocity (B)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27
RETURN TO U.S.

Take an early transfer to the airport for your return flight to the U.S.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION: NEPAL

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27
DELHI / KATHMANDU

Fly to Kathmandu, Nepal’s capital and largest city, high in the storied Himalayas. After checking in at the hotel and time to freshen up, visit Swayambhunath Temple, an ancient and sacred Buddhist complex second in importance only to Nepal’s Boudhanath (which you’ll visit tomorrow). The architectural treasure of Swayambhunath features a white dome that symbolizes Nirvana, a 13-tiered golden spire, and the all-seeing “eyes” of the Buddha on each of four sides.
Late this afternoon, return to the hotel and enjoy dinner together tonight.

Overnight: Crowne Plaza Kathmandu-Soaltee (B, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28
KATHMANDU

Today discover Kathmandu Valley, whose three major cities (Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur) boast seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the largest concentration of such riches in the world. Start with a visit to the house of the Kumari Devi, devoted to the tradition of worshipping young girls as a manifestation of the divine female energy.

You then have some leisure time at the Durbar Marg, the city’s center abounding with restaurants and shops, for lunch on your own.

After lunch, visit Boudhanath, the country’s oldest and largest Buddhist stupa (a monument containing Buddhist relics) that serves as the religious center. Dedicated to the teachings of the Buddha, this monument boasts hundreds of colorful prayer flags fluttering in the wind and draws millions of religious devotees, seekers, and tourists annually.

Then, move from Buddhism to Hinduism as you visit Nepal’s oldest and holiest Hindu shrine: the ornate Pashupatinath Temple. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the temple honors the manifestation of Lord Shiva, one of Hinduism’s three most important deities. Please note that non-Hindus are not permitted to enter the temple itself, but you can see the building and its compound from the riverbank on which it stands.

Return to the hotel and enjoy dinner tonight at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Crowne Plaza Kathmandu-Soaltee (B, D)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29
KATHMANDU / NAGARKOT

This morning travel to Patan, Nepal’s third largest city known for its rich culture and artistic tradition. Also known as Lalitpur (“City of Beauty”), Patan was constructed in a circular manner that resembles the Buddhist Wheel of Religion. Enjoy a walking tour including Patan Durbar Square, a UNESCO site of historic palaces, temples, and shrines. During your tour, see some of the city’s many Buddhist monuments and Hindu temples, along with bronze gateways and intricate wood carvings reflecting the time-honored artisan traditions still practiced here today.

Next, visit Bhaktapur where you enjoy lunch together before exploring the city. With a name that translates to “City of Devotees,” Bhaktapur is the least developed of the valley’s three cities and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Virtually a living open-air museum with its ancient square and warrens of medieval streets, Bhaktapur is known for its fine artisans, abundant temples, colorful festivals, and traditional lifestyle, which you have the opportunity to see up close.

The, take the scenic drive up to your hotel in Nagarkot, a hilltop village commanding a spectacular vista of Nepal’s major Himalayan peaks. Enjoy dinner on your own this evening.

Overnight: Club Himalaya Nagarkot (B, L)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30
NAGARKOT

This morning, take a short drive and enjoy an easy walk around the village just below your hotel.

The remainder of the day is at leisure amid the stunning Himalayan scenery.

Enjoy dinner together tonight at the hotel.

Overnight: Club Himalaya Nagarkot (B, D)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31
NAGARKOT / KATHMANDU / DEPART FOR U.S.

Early this morning you have an opportunity for an unforgettable experience: watching the sunrise over the fabled Himalayas from the hotel’s rooftop observatory.
The remainder of the morning is at leisure. Enjoy lunch on your own and, early this afternoon, transfer to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. (B)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1
ARRIVE U.S.