



PROJECT DOSSIER

THE MOGHUL PATH TO NEPAL

KATHMANDU to DELHI
OR
DELHI to KATHMANDU
15 Days
2,100kms (By Road & Rail)

Nepal, India

Itinerary Guideline

KATHMANDU to DELHI

- Day 1:** Drive to lowlands & Chitwan National Park.
- Day 2:** In Chitwan. Optional game viewing activities by Elephant or Jungle walk.
- Day 3:** West through Terai to India & Gorakhpur.
- Day 4:** Rice fields & rivers of Uttar Pradesh to Varanasi & the Ganges.
- Day 5:** In Varanasi. Sunrise on river; old city, streets & shrines.
- Day 6:** To Sarnath where Buddha preached his first sermon, then into the less populated countryside, small villages and along the Ganges River through the country side to the Deccan Plateau.
- Day 7:** To Panna Hills Wildlife Reserve.
- Day 8:** Free day in Panna Hills/wildlife reserve then to the Karma Sutra temple complex at Kharjuraho.
- Day 9:** From Kharjuraho to Orcha.
- Day 10:** From Orcha to Agra on the Yumuna River.
- Day 11:** Agra - Taj Mahal, Red Fort & Markets.



- Day 12:** Agra to Fatephur Sikri - abandoned 16th Century Moghul city & bicycle into Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary.
- Day 13:** To Jaipur, pink sandstone city of Rajasthan.
- Day 14:** Jaipur: City Palace, Amber Fort & Central Market. Evening the 'Pink City Express' train Jaipur to Delhi (approx. 5 hrs). Hotel.
- Day 15:** In Delhi: tour of old & new cities and sights. End arrangements evening, in time to catch intercontinental flights.

DELHI to KATHMANDU

- Day 1:** In Delhi: tour of old & new cities and sights. Hotel.
- Day 2:** Early morning departure on 'Pink City Express' train Delhi to meet Encounter truck. In Jaipur: City Palace, Central market & Amber Fort. Camping.

- Day 3:** In Jaipur the Pink sandstone city of Rajasthan and depart for Bharatpur.
- Day 4:** A.M. visit into the Bird Sanctuary, then to Fatehpur Sikri the abandoned 16th Century Moghul city. On to Agra:
- Day 5:** In Agra, the Taj Mahal & Red Fort.
- Day 6:** Full day drive south to Orcha.
- Day 7:** Through the backroads of Madhya Pradesh to Khajuraho & Panna Hills Wildlife Reserve.
- Day 8:** Free day in Panna Reserve.
- Days 9 & 10:** Drive through open countryside & small villages to the escarpment; descent from Deccan plateau to populated northern river plains & Varanasi.
- Day 11:** In Varanasi. Sunrise on river; old city, streets & shrines.
- Day 12:** North through the flatlands & rice fields of the Ganges basin, across the Ghaghara River to Gorakhpur.
- Day 13:** To Nepal, and east through the forested Terai lowlands to Chitwan National Park.
- Day 14:** In Chitwan. Optional game viewing activities.
- Day 15:** Drive into mountains along Trisuli River, and the steep pass to Kathmandu. Evening arrival. End of arrangements.

PLEASE NOTE

The above is intended as a guide only and to indicate a typical itinerary and its highlights. While our intention is to adhere to this, it should be understood that group interests and wishes together with the constraints of weather, road conditions and local restrictions can alter our exact route, its activities and timings.

Highlights & Route

To the Royal Chitwan National Park in the low hills along the border with India, and our camp at Sauraha. This wildlife reserve of tall shaded forests, hidden clearings, and high elephant grass sits astride the sandy & slow moving Rapti River. All the Terai lowlands were forest & jungles until the eradication of malaria in the 1950's. Tiger hunts of the aristocracy & the British Raj during the early part of the century frequently killed more of the animals in one day than the total now surviving in Nepal. With malaria gone, hill people moved in to cultivate the rich, flat soil and wildlife came under further pressure. The 1,000 square kilometre Park & reserve was declared by the King in 1973 and the animal numbers are now

growing strongly again. It is a beautiful haven for the great Asian rhinoceros, elephant, sloth bear, deer, gharial crocodile, langur monkeys, wild pig, several hundred bird species, and the elusive leopard & Bengal tiger. There are now estimated to be 80 tigers and some 400 rhino here. (Optional game-viewing through Park on elephant back, on foot with a local guide & in dug-out canoes along the banks of the Rapti River - approx. US\$30 - 40 total).

Varanasi on the sacred Ganges has been a place of pilgrimage & a centre of learning for more than 2,000 years and is considered to be the world's oldest continuously inhabited city. It is the holiest of Hindu cities, the pious come here to die, their bodies to be burned on the ghats and their ashes scattered over the waters of the goddess Ganges. A boat takes us onto the river at dawn. As the sun rises, the city slowly comes alive and thousands of pilgrims descend to bathe along the steps leading into the water. Back from the ghats the old city is a fascinating maze of narrow streets, of overhanging buildings, hidden temples and small shops, especially noted for silk weaving, and probably the best place in India to buy it. 10 kms away at Sarnath, Buddha preached his first sermon & message of enlightenment. Later, around 250 BC, the great emperor Ashok was converted to Buddhism and built stupas, monasteries & a great pillar of inscriptions and edicts here.

Our road climbs a steep escarpment out of the river plains to the quiet valleys & hills of the central Deccan plateau. At Khajuraho the 10th century Chandella kings raised great stone temples to venerate their gods. Every wall, surface & vaulted ceiling is carved with intricate details, erotic sculptures and spectacular expression of medieval Indian art. Nearby in the Panna Hills the deserted Rajgarh Palace decays with sad grace as the forest grows across its once formal grounds & pavilions. These densely forested hills of gorges & waterfalls make up the Panna National Park. Tiger are increasing here, but are very hard to see. More usually we find gazelle, spotted deer & even wolves.

Agra, capital of India under the Moghuls in the 16th & 17th centuries, stands on a broad curve of the Jumna River. Greatest of all its building is the Taj Mahal - the incomparable white marble monument built by the emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz. Around 20,000 people worked on its building - artisans from across Central Asia, the Middle East & from Europe. Semi-precious stones by the ton, ground

smooth and flat, are embedded in its walls in flowing lines & patterns. The whole structure is a perfection of beauty & symmetry. But the future may not be promising. Airborne industrial pollution is thought to be already etching its way into the glaring white marble of the Taj. The massive Red Fort is a city within a city. Constructed as a military stronghold by the Emperor Akbar in 1570, it was changed by successive rulers into a luxurious palace complex of meeting halls, mosques & Moghul gardens. Agra's bazaars and cottage industries reflect her Moghul past in the best of India's handwoven rugs & carpets, precious stones, jewellery & inlaid marble.

Nearby is Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's 'designer' capital and showpiece that was to have been the most magnificent seat of power and learning in the East. Built over 15 years from 1570, the city was suddenly and completely abandoned only 15 years later. It is thought that the water supply dried up, and Fatehpur Sikri stands today as an eerily empty, unused and perfectly preserved city from the height and splendour of the Moghul Empire. Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary was the exclusive duck shooting preserve of the Maharajahs of Bharatpur - one of Rajasthan's many small princely states. A plaque inside the sanctuary details the thousands of brace of duck bagged on shoots by visiting royalty & heads of state. Then, in 1964 the Maharajah declared his tract of forest, lakes & wetlands a bird sanctuary. Today Bharatpur is home to over 300 local & migratory bird species, some from afar as Siberia & China.

The craggy hills of Rajasthan (Land of Kings) are home of the Rajputs - a proud race strong in chivalry, flashing colour and flamboyant lifestyle. Jaipur, the capital and brilliant heart of Rajasthan, is built in rose-pink sandstone. The walled city was founded by the warrior-astronomer Jai Singh in 1727. Its broad avenues and squares show a system of city planning far ahead of its time. The City Palace & hill top Amber Palace demonstrate the fabulous wealth of the Maharajahs from the 18th century until just a few decades ago. Royal apartments are crammed with carpets from Persia, paintings, gilded mirrors and fabulous furnishings from around the world. By train to Delhi. New Delhi was designed & built between 1911 & 1931, a new, more central capital to take the place of Calcutta. Its whole concept was either the most self-serving stroke of pomposity by a soon to dwindle empire, or the best designed & planned

city of the 20th century. Wide tree-lined boulevards connect official, residential & commercial districts. There are parks, squares & open spaces with room to expand, imposing & grandiose government buildings, and quiet secluded bungalows. India Gate & Rastrapati Bhavan, Parliament House & the hub of Connaught Circus. Old Delhi (Shahjahanabad), built in the 17th century by the Moghul ruler, is still the throbbing heart of Delhi. A cacophony of commerce & cottage industry in the bazaars & alleys of Chandni Chowk; the Red Fort and Jami Masjid mosque, largest in India and last building of the great Shah Jahan.

GROUP SIZE

24 max. including Encounter staff. Local guides will be employed at certain places of interest where their knowledge is advantageous to our visit.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

An easy project with no physical demands other than the basic camping lifestyle.

THE LOCAL PAYMENT (as in the brochure)

This is the payment made to the Project Leader at the point of departure. This payment must be made paid in US\$ dollars, either in cash notes or recognised Travellers Cheques. This payment completes the total inclusive price of the project. This amount will be utilised by the project Leader to cover a proportion but not all of the 'on the ground' running costs of this project. There are no hidden extra payments.

INCLUDED IN PROJECT COST

All transport, food (except very occasional lunches as noted under Meals, Cooking & Food below), camping equipment & supplies, camping fees, local guides; entrances to wildlife reserves, museum, site entrance fees, to Khajuraho Temples, Taj Mahal & Red Fort in Agra, abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri, Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, Amber Palace near Jaipur. There are no kitties or similar en route payments or funds.

PROJECT COST DOES NOT COVER

International flights to/from Kathmandu & Delhi, transfers to/from airports and airport taxes (approx. US\$ 20). Vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, malaria prophylaxis, laundry, snacks, drinks, personal clothing/equipment & items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees to museums/sights (minimal cost).

Optional extras: Chitwan National Park - elephant back, on foot with guide, & dugout canoe on Rapti River (allow approx. US\$30 - 40 total). Accommodation & evening meal in Kathmandu or Delhi on the evening of Day 15.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED

Standard Encounter truck equipment including 2 person tents, campbeds, kitchen/dining tent, tables & stools, light, cooking equipment & utensils, mosquito nets, first aid kit etc.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

A sleeping bag (4 seasons), a medium sized bag or backpack and a daypack. A recommended list of what to bring is supplied in the Pre-departure information pack at the time of booking.

TRANSPORT

Encounter expedition truck, bicycles in Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, train between Jaipur & Delhi, chartered small bus in Delhi.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel in Delhi (1 night), otherwise camping throughout. Basic campground facilities in cities & main centres usually extending to simple washing/showering & toilet arrangements only. Otherwise open 'bush' camping in rural areas with no facilities other than standard Encounter truck equipment.

Your involvement is needed in camp set-up, domestic & day to day routines etc. Accommodation on night 15 in Kathmandu or Delhi is not included. Reservations at our Delhi or Kathmandu hotels before Day 1 may be made through Encounter, with payment by you directly to hotel on arrival.

MEALS, COOKING & FOOD

Restaurant meals in Delhi, camp cooked breakfasts & evening meals, picnic lunches (Local fresh vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs, cereals, bread, cheese, preserves & spices; occasional canned & dried goods when fresh supplies insufficient for our needs).

Your assistance is needed in shopping, cooking & meal preparation. In larger towns (such as Agra or Jaipur) where a day is spent away from the truck in individual sightseeing or activities, lunch will sometimes be at your own expense. The cost of these occasional lunches is minimal.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than 6 months after the end of the project, and which contains not less than **4 blank pages**. All nationalities require visas for India & Nepal and their costs vary according to your nationality. An Indian visa must be obtained before you leave home. Encounter or your agent can advise you of up to date visa details & their costs applicable to you. We can also help you in obtaining them.

INSURANCE

You must have personal Travel Insurance to cover Adventure Travel and it must cover all the aspects described on p60 of the brochure. Please bring a copy of your policy with you to the pre-departure meeting. The policy or a copy of the policy must be carried with you whilst on the expedition.

MEDICAL & VACCINATIONS

All vaccination requirements and medical recommendations are detailed in the pre-departure information pack at the time of booking.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

You should budget US\$40 per day that you spend in Kathmandu & Delhi before & after the project to cover hotel, meals & incidentals. As a guideline we suggest that you budget approx. **US\$ 100 per week** to cover personal day to day expenditure-drinks, snacks, occasional lunches in major centres, souvenirs, individual museum entry fees not mentioned in the itinerary.

Good buys can include Tibetan & Indian rugs & carpets, Indian kilims, Hindu & Buddhist bronzes & statues, thankha paintings & religious items, jewellery, gems, handbeaten copper & brass work, inlaid marble, textiles & silks. Credit cards are accepted only by well-established outlets in the major cities. Other than the above, Encounter has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money. Please see 'Project does not cover' for the optional extra activities.

ARRIVING AT START OF THE PROJECT

If you have time we suggest you arrive in Kathmandu or Delhi a couple of days before departure date to allow yourself time to acclimatise and get over intercontinental flights.

From Delhi: At 08.00 hrs on the morning of Day 1 there is a brief meeting with our local operators in Delhi, followed by a tour of Old & New Delhi.

(You meet the Encounter truck & leader in Jaipur on Day 2). If you are arriving earlier: National, Nehru & Railway Museums in New Delhi; evening Son et Lumiere at Red Fort; Connaught Circus restaurants, book shops, coffee houses, cinemas & regional handicraft emporiums.

From Kathmandu: There will be a pre-departure meeting at our Kathmandu hotel at 6.00pm two days before Day 1. If you are arriving earlier, Kathmandu is a fascinating city with plenty to see & do: bazaars, palaces, museums & hill temples, interesting selection of restaurants & bars, ancient city of Bhaktapur (30 mins bus), nature reserve (45 mins bicycle), overnight at Nagarkot (45 mins bus)-spectacular sunrise/sunset Himalayan views. Simple bicycles may be hired at low cost from most Kathmandu hotels.

LEAVING AT END OF THE PROJECT

In Delhi: Arrangements end back at our Delhi hotel on the afternoon/early evening of Day 15 in time to catch this same evening's intercontinental flights home.

In Kathmandu: Arrangements end on arrival at our Kathmandu hotel on the evening of Day 15. You should not make onward flight arrangements for this same evening. International flights out of Kathmandu are often overbooked, and late or unconfirmed check-ins will be denied boarding with little prospect of another flight out for several days. Any flight connection on the following day could easily be made.

COMBINATIONS & CONNECTING PROJECTS

Between Kathmandu & Jaipur 'Moghul Path to Nepal' also forms part of the 'Nepal, the Ganges & Rajasthan' and the 'All India' projects. On departures from Kathmandu you may therefore be travelling with some group members who are continuing their travels in India. Departures between September & April can combine well with Encounters trekking & white water rafting programme in Nepal.

INTERESTING READING

Plain Tales from the Raj (Charles Allen), Slowly Down the Ganges (Eric Newby), Saving the Tiger (G. Mountfort). A full list of recommended reading in history, guidebooks and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Local Payment

Return flights.....

Visas.....

Vaccinations.....

Insurance.....

Personal spending money.....

Total _____

The information in this dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However, it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Encounter Overland Ltd.