**Independent Itinerary designed especially for
Exploring India – Mid November 2018**

**Day 1: Arrive at Delhi** by your scheduled flight. ***Our services begin here.*** You are greeted at the Delhi airport by your tour director and our tour facilitator and then then ushered to a chauffeur driven vehicle. You are then driven to your hotel and assisted with check in. The next days’ plans are briefly reviewed and travel documents such as your air tickets and hotel vouchers will be handed over to you.

**Day 2: Delhi**. **Start your exploration** of India with a guided city tour of Old Delhi. Drive, walk and ride through the ancient city’s streets and alleys; explore crowded and colorful bazaars. This excursion includes an exploration of the Jama Masjid (1650 AD), the largest mosque in India. The Masjid (Mosque) is a magnificent example of Mughal architecture and is constructed of red sandstone and white marble. It is an active place of worship and its courtyard can hold 25,000 worshippers. You continue on to the amazing Red Fort that was finished a decade before the mosque. Both structures were built by Shah Jahan, the emperor that created the Taj Mahal. **The great city** inside the massive sandstone walls of the Red Fort offers visitors a large number of architectural and historical attractions; it was once known as the 8th wonder of the world. The Red Fort was the seat of the Mughal Empire for more than two hundred and fifty years and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is an amazing example of a blend of Persian, Indian, and European architecture. You will also experience a fascinating rickshaw ride in the ancient alleys of the crowded and colorful bazaar at Chandni Chowk. After these experiences a short drive will deliver you to an oasis of calm and serenity, which also happens to be your last destination in Old Delhi. The cremation site of Mahatma Gandhi (Raj Ghat) is a simple yet stirring memorial to the father of the nation. Lush lawns extend beyond the enclosure that surrounds the black marble platform occupying the spot where the Mahatma was cremated. An eternal flame burns next to the platform.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Afternoon – Enjoy a city tour** of New Delhi. This excursion begins with the awe-inspiring Qutab Minar (1193 A.D.). This 239 ft tall medieval tower is a symbol of victory and a beautiful example of Persian architecture from that period. There is a winding stairway inside the tower that goes up all the way to the balcony at the very top of the tower – unfortunately they are no longer accessible for visitors. The Qutab Minar and its Monuments are also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
**Within the Qutab complex**, amidst the ruins of the Quwat-ul-Islam Mosque, stands one of the legendary Ashoka Pillars. This large iron pillar has withstood the ravages of Delhi’s weather (and recent pollution) and has not rusted in over 1500 years. After the Qutab complex you will be driven to visit the magnificent tomb of the Mughal Emperor Humayun. **Delhi has such an abundance** of amazing monuments that this Tomb Complex (1562 A.D.) does not quite get the acclaim that it deserves. It is Delhi’s third UNESCO World Heritage Site and its amazing architecture and the elaborate gardens (all currently undergoing restoration) will captivate you.
**From the tomb** you will proceed on a drive to Lutyens’ New Delhi. Time permitting, this drive will include photo opportunities at some of the following attractions - the exterior of the massive and awe-inspiring Rashtrapati Bhawan (known as Viceroy’s House during the British era), Delhi’s landmark structure India Gate, a golden domed Sikh Temple (Bangla Sahib Gurudwara), & the Birla Temple. The last part of this excursion is a drive through Connaught Place, which is New Delhi’s downtown.

**Day 3: Delhi – Mandawa.** You are assisted with check out from your hotel in the morning and proceed on the drive to Mandawa. Arrive at Mandawa and check in to your hotel.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Afternoon** – Proceed for a tour of Mandawa. The tour in Mandawa includes a visit to the magnificent Havelis. You can enjoy admiring the detailed work and intricately painted walls of this place. Some of the popular havelis in the area are the Hanuman Prasad Goenka Haveli, Goenka Double Haveli, Jhunjhunwala Haveli, Murmuria Haveli, Gulab Rai Ladia Haveli and Mohan Lal Saraf Haveli.

**Day 4: Mandawa – Bikaner.** You are assisted with check out from hotel in the morning and proceed on the drive to Bikaner. The countryside is semi desert with patches of greenery. Arrive at Bikaner and you are assisted with check in to your hotel.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Afternoon** – Proceed for a visit of the Fort and the Ganga Golden Museum. Take a walk in the old city if you are so inclined.

**Day 5: Bikaner – Jaisalmer.** You are assisted with check out of your hotel in the morning and drive to Jaisalmer.Arrive at Jaisalmer and you are assisted with check in to your hotel.
Jaisalmer is known as “The Heart of the Desert” City, and is also referred to as the Golden City, because the buildings are constructed of yellow sand stone.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Late afternoon** - Visit the famous local frescoed Havelis (Salim Singh Ki Haveli, Patwon Ki Haveli, and Nathmalji Ki Haveli) if you are so inclined.

**Day 6: Jaisalmer.** Start your day with a City Tour. The tour begins from "The Jaisalmer Fort", built in 1156 by Rawal Jaisal.The fort crowns 80 meter high Trikuta hill. Still inhabited, there are palaces and bazaars within the fort walls. The Fort has 99 bastions around the circumference.
Other attractions include Ganga Sagar Tank and Museum, once the water supply of the city, housing many small temples and shrines. A wide variety of water birds flock here in winter.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Afternoon -** Excursion to Sam for a camel safari and to watch the shifting sand dunes- about 45 kms from Jaisalmer.

**Day 7**: **Jaisalmer – Jodhpur.** You are assisted with check out in the morning and drive to Jodhpur. Arrive at Jodhpur and you are assisted with check in to your hotel.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Afternoon** –Proceed for a city tour - The tour begins with a visit to The Mehrangarh Fort. This formidable hilltop fort is the one of the most impressive in Rajasthan. Many gates lead into the Fort and the main gate is the "Lahapol", with a huge iron gate. At the side of this gate there are 15 hand prints, the "Sati Marks" of Maharaja Man Singh’s widows, who threw themselves upon his funeral pyre in 1843 when the Fort was besieged. Inside the fort, visit the palaces MotiMahal or "Pearl Palace", the Sukh Mahal or "Pleasure Palace" and the Phool Mahal or "Flower Palace". The tour also includes a visit to the "Jaswant Thada", a marble cenotaph built in 1899 as a memorial to Maharaja Jaswant Singh II.

**Day 8**: **Jodhpur - Udaipur.** You are assisted with check out of your hotel and proceed on a drive to Udaipur Enroute stop at Ranakpur.Tour the famous 15th Century Jain Temples, located 90 km's north of Udaipur. The temples 29 halls are supported by 1444 intricately carved pillars, and no two are of the same design. There is an abundance of exquisite sculptures and friezes.
Drive to Udaipur after the tour. Arrive at Udaipur and you are assisted with check in to your hotel on arrival.

**Day 9: Udaipur.** Proceed for a city tour, including a tour of the fabled City Palace. At this Palace complex, explore the beautifully decorated rooms with thousands of exquisite, handcrafted mirrors that cover the walls, the ancient ivory doors that are a dark reminder of royalty’s passion for hunting, the brightly colored glass windows, expansive inlaid marble balconies and the unique peacock courtyard. Enjoy a private tour of the amazing Crystal Gallery which houses the world’s largest collection of priceless crystal. Marvel at pieces like the complete bedroom furniture set in crystal, discovered recently in a store room in the palace. There are amazing views to be had from this structure, especially of Lake Pichola, the Lake Palace hotel and Jag Mandir. After your tour of the City Palace you will visit the historical Sahelion-ki-bari gardens and the local Museum.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Late afternoon/Early evening**: Enjoy a cruise on Lake Pichola and visit the historical and beautiful monuments at Jag Mandir Island (if available – the royal family at Udaipur will occasionally rent out the island for large celebrations and on those occasions the island cannot be visited by tourists).

**Day 10: Udaipur – Pushkar.** You are assisted with check out from your hotel in the morning and proceed on a drive to Pushkar. Arrive at Jodhpur and check in to your hotel.
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Afternoon -** Proceed for a tour of Pushkar. Apart from being a tiny town with 400 temples, Pushkar prides itself on being the site of the only temple dedicated exclusively to Lord Brahma, the Hindu God of Creation. There are over fifty Ghats around the holy lake, built by various rulers over the centuries. Hindu pilgrims visit Pushkar’s temples and the lake throughout the year. Explore the small town and visit the Brahma Temple. There is a village bazaar that you can walk through.

**Day 11: Pushkar – Ajmer – Jaipur.** You are assisted with check out from your hotel in the morning and proceed on a drive to Jaipur. Enroute stop at Ajmer for a tour.
The most famous tourist attraction of Ajmer is the Dargah Sharif (Holy Dargah). The Dargah entombs the Sufi Saint, Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chisti. The Khwaja came from Persia and committed his whole life towards the betterment of the destitute and oppressed. It is one of the most revered Muslim shrines in the country. The tomb of the Khwaja is made up of marble and is surrounded by a silver railing and marble scree. Continue with your journey to Jaipur after tour.
Arrive at Jaipur and check in to your hotel.

**Day 12: Jaipur.** Start your day with an excursion to Amber Fort & Palace, located 12 kilometers from the center of the City. Just like the Emperors of a few centuries ago, enjoy the ascent up to the ramparts of the fort on top of a colorfully caparisoned elephant (jeeps are available instead of the elephants, if you so desire). The massive Fort complex was originally built by Raja Mansingh and is one of India’s finest examples of Rajput architecture. Explore the chambers and hallways, which are famous for their exquisite designs and handcrafted embellishments. Return to the valley beneath the Fort and proceed back to the Pink City.
**There is a break** for lunch. **Afternoon -** Enjoy a city tour of the walled city of Jaipur, including the magnificent City Palace. Visit Jantar Mantar (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the magnificent stone observatory built by Raja Jai Singh in 1728. After the observatory comes a photo opportunity of the ‘Hawa Mahal’ (Palace of the Wind). This intriguing facade was built in 1799 so that the ladies of the court could use its unique windows and observe the bustling bazaar, without being visible to the people on the streets. Continue the tour with an exploration of the City Palace, the former royal residence (a part of it is still occupied by the Royal family and is not accessible to the public), built in a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architectural styles. This immense complex also houses a number of museums that offer a large and impressive collection of miniature paintings, costumes, and armory.

**Day 13: Jaipur – Agra.** You are assisted with check out from your hotel in the morning and you are driven to **Fatehpur Sikri**. Enjoy an exploration of this beautiful uninhabited city. It was built by Emperor Akbar between 1570 and 1585 and is constructed primarily out of red sandstone. The Emperor moved his capital from Agra to this city and then, a few years later, abandoned it, returning back to Agra. Visit the tallest gateway in the world, the towering Bulund Darwaza (The Gate of Victory). In the northern part of the courtyard is the superb white marble tomb of Shaik Salim Chishti, built in 1570.
**Continue on with** your journey to Agra. Arrive at Agra and check in to your hotel.

**Day 14: Agra.** Proceed for a sunrise visit one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the incomparable Taj Mahal. The world’s greatest monument dedicated to love is obviously a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Taj Mahal was completed by Emperor Shah Jahan in 1653 AD as a memorial to his beloved queen, Mumtaz Mahal. This spectacular white marble mausoleum was created by about 22,000 skilled craftsmen and it took twenty two years to complete. When you experience the Taj Mahal and have them provide unique insights into its innumerable facets, some of their passion for this masterpiece may rub off on you!
**There is a break** for lunch.
**Afternoon -** Proceed for a city tour of the magnificent monuments of this city. Visit the first red sandstone fort of North India, the Agra Fort. It was built in 1565 by India’s greatest Mughal ruler, Emperor Akbar. Its royal audience halls, immense stone courtyards, marble mosque and the private royal chambers give us a glimpse of the grandeur of the Mughal Empire.
**Later** proceed fora visit to the famous tomb of Itmad-Ud–Daulah. This memorial was built by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir’s queen as a memorial to her father. The tombs sheer beauty will surprise you – the only reason it does not get more accolades is because it shares the stage with the incomparable Taj Mahal. Like the Taj it has amazingly intricate ‘Pietra Dura’ inlay and lattice marble screens. The mausoleum rests in a walled garden with a view of the river Yamuna. Constructed in the year 1628, most historians believe that its design provided the inspiration for the Taj Mahal.

**Day 15: Agra – Delhi - International flight.** You are assisted with check out from hotel and proceed on the drive to Delhi. Arrive at Delhi and this is a good time to do any last minute shopping or dining.
**Your vehicle and chauffeur** stay with you until you are driven to airport to board your international flight.
**Our services end at Delhi airport.**

 **Hotels:**

 **Delhi –** Oberoi Maidens / The Lalit

**Mandawa –** Vivana Culture Hotel / Castle Mandawa **Bikaner –** TheLaxmi Niwas Palace / Gajner Palace **Jaisalmer –** Fort Rajwada /Gorbandh Palace **Jodhpur –** Ajit Bhawan / Ranbanka Palace

**Udaipur –** The Trident / The Lalit Laxmi Vilas Palace

**Pushkar –** Taj Gateway / Pushkar Resort

 **Jaipur –** The Trident / ITC Rajputana

**Agra –** The Trident / Taj Gateway

**Inclusions:**

\* Daily breakfast and dinner at the hotels

\* Other meals as specified

\* Hotel check-in is at 2 pm & check-out is at noon for almost all the hotels
\* Cycle Rickshaw ride at Chandni Chowk the ancient city of Delhi
\* Elephant ride at Amber Fort in Jaipur

\* Boat Ride at Lake Pichola in Udaipur
\* Camel ride at Sam
\* All transfers and sightseeing by AC Large Coach

\* Services of the best accompanying tour director as per the itinerary.

\* Kathakali Dance performance in Cochin
\* All monuments fee as per the itinerary

\* Assistance on airport arrival and departure transfers and hotel check in, check out.
\* Bottled water during sightseeing/excursions and long drives.
**\* All currently applicable taxes.**

**Estimated (Yet to be confirmed)
But designed to give you a guide $5795**